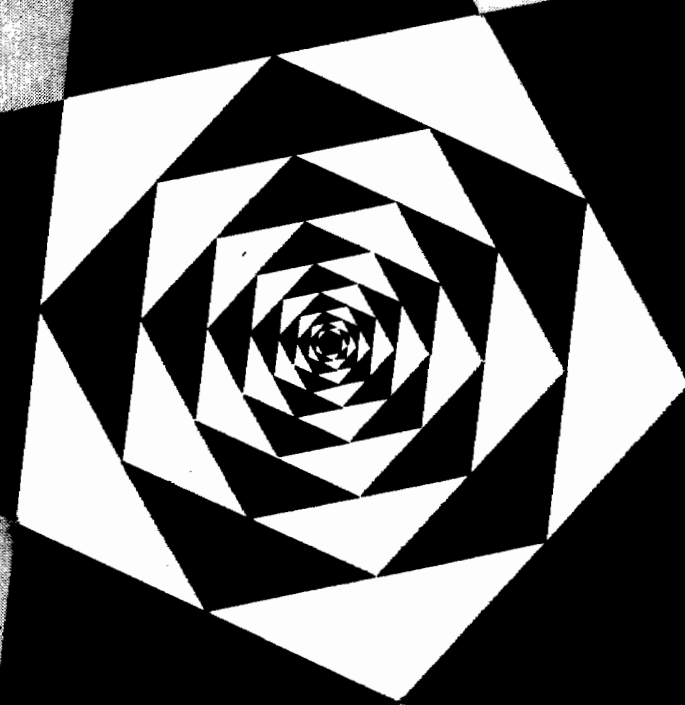


# BLACK ROSE



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## Voltaireine DeCleyre: An Introduction to American Left-Wing Anarchism

Marian Leighton

The history of American radicalism requires much further in-depth exploration. This is particularly true of the American anarchist tradition. Ask an anarchist of today who he/she claims as radical intellectual forebears and, depending upon if he/she is of the left-wing or right-wing, they will reply Bakunin-Emma Goldman-Kropotkin or Benjamin Tucker-Joshiah Warren-Lysander Spooner, respectively.

Interestingly, this reply would lead one to believe that right-wing anarchism is more indigenous a part of the American radical experience than left-wing anarchism which, based on the work of Bakunin, Goldman, Kropotkin, Berkman would seem more rooted in the nineteenth century European urban insurrectionary tradition. Is this in any way a fair distinction? Is it at all significant that the left-wing anarchist tradition intellectually seems to rely so heavily upon an imported radicalism that largely grew out of a European background? If this is true, does it matter in any way? Of course, it also remains to be seen just how much more "American" the right-wing or laissez-faire anarchist tradition is.

Motivation for interest in the above relationships has greater significance than an esoteric quibbling over historical antecedents. Nor do I pose the above questions on any chauvinistic assumption that a radical tradition that is "truly American" is superior to the "imported immigrant variety." However, more legitimately, the relationship of contemporary left-wing anarchism to an ongoing American radical historical experience could be important for sorting out the bases for appeal that may or may not exist between anarchism and various American subcultures other than those of anarchism's usual constituency of counter-culture youth and fairly sophisticated intellectual radicals. In addition to concern with "to whom and for what reasons does anarchism appeal", there is the larger question of accounting for the experiential roots of American anarchism.

Just how much is glib historical simplification in stressing the relationship between left-wing anarchism and European socialism and right-wing anarchism and American indigenous radicalism? After all, the right-wing anarchists also emphasize their intellectual legacy from Adam Smith, Max Stirner, Nietzsche (as did Emma Goldman), and contemporarily the Russian-born

Ayn Rand. Left-wing anarchists affirm their interest in the home-grown radicalism of Thoreau, Eugene Debs, Big Bill Haywood, and other Wobblies. The point remains, however, that the anarcho-capitalists can legitimately "capitalize" on the strain of individualism in native American radicalism. The left-wing anarchists, in contrast, were most active and perhaps most effective in this country during a period when the Marxist-scientific socialist analysis and organizational policies had obvious relevance to urban immigrants faced with the horrors of the expanding factory system.

The comparatively greater knowledge of left-wing anarchism during this particular period, the labor and unemployment agitation of the 1880's through the First World War, should be no surprise. This was also probably the period when anarchism reached the greatest number of Americans. The principal anarchist agitators of that time are those still most well-known to us today. However, this association of left-wing anarchism at its height to scientific socialism should not preclude investigation by contemporary anarchists into left-wing anarchist antecedents in America prior to the 1880's. Nor should we, as has so often been the case, allow the judgments of European socialists to distort our vision of many of the radical scenes in this country prior to the European socialist impact here, particularly the socialist anti-clericalism in looking at American religious radicalism, the oldest radical tradition in this country

Although I do not concur with the author in all of her evaluations, a good basic work to read on anarchism prior to the period of Anarcho-communist activity is Eunice Schuster's **Native American Anarchism: A Study of Left-wing Anarchist Individualism**. Schuster's main point, with which I agree, is that the demise of the left-wing anarchist individualist tradition is in large part owing to its non-class-conscious appeal at a time when the industrial-labor situation increasingly required self-conscious immigrant labor spokespeople and organizations. In spite of this limitation, native American anarchists, like the Anarcho-communists of European background, "assailed the same evils, but in a different manner, and aimed at the same theoretical objective, but proposed to arrive there by different routes," according to Schuster. She further believes there is a valid analogy to be made between Anne Hutchinson's judg-

ment and expulsion at the hands of her Massachusetts Bay Colony inquisitors and the treatment which Emma Goldman suffered from the US government nearly three hundred years later.

The crucial period to consider in the relationship of the two main strands which create American anarchism, native American left-wing individualism and Anarcho-communism (later Anarcho-syndicalism), is the 1880's through the First World War. Not only was this the time of greatest immigrant labor activity and Anarcho-communist growth and agitation, but was also the scene of the left-wing anarchist individualist demise. Benjamin Tucker, probably the most important popularizer of the tradition, left America in 1908 and never returned. The style of protest which he had known and many before him, that of stern ethical judgment and verbal protest, and a course of withdrawal from and passive non-resistance to the unethical government, had been replaced by more active forms of protest, larger organized resistance, and direct actionism as a form of protest.

Certainly not all American left-wing anarchists left their homeland. Among those who stayed was Voltairine deCleyre. As a native American anarchist, her politics and ethical choices had been for the most part typical of those held by left-wing individualist anarchists of the period preceding great influence by European socialism. She was in her early anarchism both a pacifist and non-resistant, favoring individual solutions to social problems

During her early radical days she was a Free Thought lecturer, stressing the rights of the individual against encroachment by larger social/political units. She relied for inspiration upon and was widely acquainted with the earlier American Republican ideals and their possible radical implications. Thomas Paine and Thomas Jefferson and their ideals furnished subjects for her free thought lecture.

She was thoroughly acquainted with notions of the rugged individualism of the American frontiersman and of the indomitable will of the individualist who would "move on" rather than allow his rights to be encroached upon by neighbors or politicians who didn't mind their own business. She was susceptible to the force of this image as part of the early American experience.

Even after her rejection of religion and her turning to free thought, her view of life was strongly tinged with a basic religious idealism, a belief that the long-suffering and compassionate individual "will win out," having been supported against the evils of materialism, conformity, and apathy by the march of history. Consequently, a narrowly materialistic determination of the individual could never be compatible with Voltairine deCleyre's temperament and politics. Mere desire for material betterment would never be sufficient motivation for the revolutionary, who must also basically be motivated by a devotion to a vision of life beyond the self.

Her choice of non-resistance as a form of protest is thoroughly American and very rooted in her religious idealism. "Non-resistance," refusal to pay unjust taxes, refusal to military induction, refusal to participate in electoral practices of corrupt governments is as American as apple pie and has been a traditional form of protest adopted by such native American radicals as Quakers, antinomians, transcendentalists, abolitionists, Shakers, and so many others. Underlying this stance is the belief that the Good Man is he who waits, who is passive, who will not respond in kind to the wickedness and tyranny of the Malevolent Man. Goodness is manifested in passivity.

Voltairine deCleyre's ideas on how radical social change can be effected were altered drastically during her lifetime, just as the "American System" itself was undergoing drastic transformation. The Haymarket Square legal atrocities and subsequent martyrdom of several anarchists not only outraged members of the immigrant labor population like Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, but also outraged native American radicals who, as regards the needs of labor, had been bred in another age. Thus, as a result of the Haymarket incident, Voltairine deCleyre records her first recollection of total disillusionment with the "justice" of the American legal system.

With the passage of time, she came to feel that her emphasis upon the virtues of Americans bred in isolated, self-sustaining, independent pioneer communities had little relevance to an America whose trends in labor were directed toward construction of huge manufacturing conglomerates. This trend made evident the need for new radical solutions to the needs of labor. concomitantly, she ceased to believe in the effectiveness of lecturing, as she had in her Free Thought days, on the virtues of the American Revolutionaries of 1776. In summary, she felt

that during the American colonial and pioneer period, the harshness of making a life in a new land had fostered a kind of sectarian independence jealously guarded, that being thrown upon their own resources the settlers had been made into well-rounded and well-balanced individuals, and that this experience had also made strong such social bonds as existed in the comparative simplicity of their small communities.

But this old Golden Age had virtually disappeared and the new reality of America, she felt, was its huge manufacturing plants, and the terrifying and depersonalizing experience of urban poverty and isolation. With good reason Voltairine deCleyre could testify to the latter realities in her role as English teacher among the urban immigrant poor of Philadelphia. Amid material conditions of utter deprivation, she was forced to choose teaching as her only means of subsistence. (Goldman, *Living My Life*, vol. 2, p. 504).

In her social activist vision of a transformed future, there was a constructive transition made in her thinking that mirrored her analysis of her country's changes. Voltairine deCleyre did not - as many individualist anarchists did and continue to do - posit as a solution the restoration of that state of pioneer sovereign individuality. (Modern anarcho-capitalists behave as if they believed money, "running your own little capitalist enterprise", has the power of bringing back the golden days of the Great American Individual, as if the frontier had never disappeared.) Instead, she felt "...the great manufacturing plants will break up, population will go after the fragments, and there will be seen not indeed the hard self-sustaining, isolated pioneer communities of early America, but thousands of small communities stretching along the lines of transportation, each producing very largely for its own needs, able to rely upon itself, and therefore able to be independent." (p. 134, *Selected Writings of Voltairine deCleyre*). Is this not similar in some respects to what many anarchists are now attempting by decentralizing new technologies, alternate energy and food production systems, to make smaller neighborhood areas more nearly autonomous by means of cooperation among the neighborhood residents? The result of her thinking, thus, pointed neither to resurrection of the ideal of isolated frontier individualism, nor to the faceless bureaucracy of State Socialism.

Toward the end of her life, Voltairine deCleyre came to accept "direct actionism" as a form of public protest, thus obviously revising her earlier stance of pacifist non-resistance. Even after her acceptance of direct actionism, Voltairine deCleyre, unlike Emma Goldman, could not approve of advising anyone to do anything "involving a risk to herself," since each individual can only assume such great responsibility over their own lives ultimately; she nonetheless declared that the "spirit which animates Emma Goldman is the only one which will emancipate the slave from his slavery, the tyrant from his tyranny - the spirit which is willing to dare and suffer." (pp. 9-10, Hippolyte Havel's introduction to *Selected Writings of Voltairine deCleyre* In 1894, with such words as the above, she greeted the unemployed of Philadelphia as stand-in for Emma Goldman who had been arrested a few hours earlier for her expropriation speech to unemployed New York workers the previous night. Thus, Voltairine de Cleyre lent her support to the expropriation fo private property, a far cry from the traditional individualist anarchist stance on the sanctity of private property.

In her ideals at least, Voltairine deCleyre made a constructive transition from a style of fairly narrow left-wing individualist anarchism to an anarchism more attuned to the evolving economic realities of an expanding industrial age. However, it would be false to assume that she made her way to an acceptance of what in her time was called Anarchist Communism, Bakuninist Anarchism.

Faith in individual awareness as the crucial factor in the molding of the social/political/economic environment is, and always has been, a major emphasis in native American radicalism. Voltairine deCleyre was able to make the cognitive leap from the narrow, frontierist conception of individuality to an understanding of the breadth of individuality in its more complex social context, and thence to direct actionism and expropriative rights and their implications. However, it is significant that in her essay on her close friend and co-worker, Dyer D. Lum, who was largely responsible for convincing her of the correctness of direct actionism, she stresses his belief in transcendence as the most basic positive force in individual development, rather than his labor agitational activities. Her insistence that individual consciousness must accompany social

development and change is a synthesis with no less validity for anarchists today. As Voltairine deCleyre affirmed: **The free and spontaneous inner life of the individual the Anarchists have regarded as the source of greatest pleasure and also of progress itself, or as some would prefer to say, social change.** (p. 186, *Selected Writings of Voltairine deCleyre*).

The following is taken from the *Selected Writings of Voltairine deCleyre*, edited by Alexander Berkman for Mother Earth Publishing in 1914.



Kuebler

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PHILADA

Voltairine DeCleyre

# The Making of an Anarchist

by Voltairine DeCleyre

"Here was one guard, and here was the other at this end; I was here opposite the gate. You know those problems in geometry of the hare and the hounds - they never run straight, but always in a curve, so, see? And the guard was no smarter than the dogs; if he had run straight he would have caught me."

It was Peter Kropotkin telling of his escape from the Petro-Paulovsky fortress. Three crumbs on the table marked the relative position of the outwitted guards and the fugitive prisoner; the speaker had broken them from the bread on which he was lunching and dropped them on the table with an amused smile. The suggested triangle had been the starting-point of the life-long exile of the greatest man, save Tolstoy alone, that Russia has produced; from that moment began the many foreign wanderings and the taking of the simple, love-given title "Comrade," for which he had abandoned the "Prince," which he despises.

We were three together in the plain little home of a London workingman - Will Wess, a one-time shoemaker - Kropotkin, and I. We had our "tea" in homely English fashion, with thin slices of buttered bread; and we talked of things nearest our hearts, which, whenever two or three Anarchists are gathered together, means present evidences of the growth of liberty and what our comrades are doing in all lands. And as what they do and say often leads them into prisons, the talk had naturally fallen upon Kropotkin's experience and his daring escape, for which the Russian government is chagrined unto this day

Presently the old man glanced at the time and jumped briskly to his feet: "I am late. Good-by, Voltairine; good-by, Will. Is this the way to the kitchen? I must say good-by to Mrs. Turner and Lizzie." And out to the kitchen he went, unwilling, late though he was, to leave without a hand-clasp to those who had so much as washed a dish for him. Such is Kropotkin, a man whose personality is felt more than any other in the Anarchist movement - at once the gentlest, the most kindly, and the most invincible of men. Communist as well as Anarchist, his very heart-beats are rhythmic with the great common pulse of work and life.

Communist am not I, though my father was, and his father before him during the stirring times of '48, which is probably the remote reason for my opposition to things as they are: at bottom convictions are mostly temperamental. And if I sought to explain myself on other grounds, I should be a bewildering error in logic; for by early influences and education I should have been a nun, and spent my life glorifying Authority in its most concentrated form, as some of my schoolmates are doing at this hour within the mission houses of the Order of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary. But the old ancestral spirit of rebellion asserted itself while I was yet fourteen, a schoolgirl at the Convent of Our Lady of Lake Huron, at Sarnis, Ontario. How I pity myself now, when I remember it, poor lonesome little soul, battling solitary in the murk of religious superstition, unable to believe and yet in hourly fear of damnation, hot, savage, and eternal, if I do not instantly confess and profess! How well I recall the bitter energy with which I repelled my teacher's enjoinder, when I told her that I did not wish to apologize for an adjudged fault, as I could not see that I had been wrong, and would not feel my words. "It is not necessary," said she, "that we should feel what we say, but it is always necessary that we obey our superiors." "I will not lie," I answered hotly, and at the same time trembled lest my disobedience had finally consigned me to torment!

I struggled my way out at last, and was a freethinker when I left the institution, three years later, though I had never seen a book or heard a word to help me in my loneliness. It had been like the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and there are white scars on my soul yet, where Ignorance and Superstition burnt me with their hell-fire in those stifling days. Am I blasphemous? It is their word, not mine. Beside that battle of my young days all others have been easy, for whatever was without, within my own Will was supreme. It has owed no allegiance, and never shall; it has moved steadily in one direction, the knowledge and the assertion of its own liberty, with all the responsibility falling thereon.

This, I am sure, is the ultimate reason for my acceptance of Anarchism, though the specific occasion which ripened tendencies to definition was the affair of 1886-87, when five innocent men were hanged in Chicago for the act of one guilty who still

remains unknown. Till then I believed in the essential justice of the American law and trial by jury. After that I never could. The infamy of that trial has passed into history, and the question it awakened as to the possibility of justice under law has passed into clamorous crying across the world. With this question fighting for a hearing at a time when, young and ardent, all questions were pressing with a force which later life would in vain hear again, I chanced to hear a Paine Memorial Convention in an out-of-the-way corner of the earth among the mountains and the snow-drifts of Pennsylvania. I was a freethought lecturer at the time, and had spoken in the afternoon on the lifework of Paine; in the evening I sat in the audience to hear Clarence Darrow deliver an address on Socialism. It was my first introduction to any plan for bettering the condition of the working-classes which furnished some explanation of the course of economic development, I ran to it as one who has been turning about in darkness runs to the light. I smile now at how quickly I adopted the label "Socialist" and how quickly I cast it aside. Let no one follow my example; but I was young. Six weeks later I was punished for my rashness, when I attempted to argue for my faith with a little Russian Jew, named Mozersky, at a debating club in Pittsburgh. He was an Anarchist, and a bit of a Socrates. He questioned me into all kinds of holes, from which I extricated myself most awkwardly, only to flounder into others he had smilingly dug while I was getting out of the first ones. The necessity of a better foundation became apparent: hence began a course of study in the principles of sociology and of modern Socialism and Anarchism as presented in their regular journals. It was Benjamin Tucker's *Liberty*, the exponent of Individualist Anarchism, which finally convinced me that "Liberty is not the Daughter but the Mother of Order." And though I no longer hold the particular economic gospel advocated by Tucker, the doctrine of Anarchism itself, as then conceived, has but broadened, deepened, and intensified itself with years.

To those unfamiliar with the movement, the various terms are confusing. Anarchism is, in truth, a sort of Protestantism, whose adherents are a unit in the great essential belief that all forms of external authority must disappear to be replaced by self-control only, but variously divided in our conception of the

form of future society. Individualism supposes private property to be the cornerstone of personal freedom; asserts that such property should consist in the absolute possession of one's own product and of such share of the natural heritage of all as one may actually use. Communist-Anarchism, on the other hand, declares that such property is both unrealizable and undesirable; that the common possession and use of all the natural sources and means of social production can alone guarantee the individual against a recurrence of inequality and its attendants, government and slavery. My personal conviction is that both forms of society, as well as many intermediations, would, in the absence of government, be tried in various localities, according to the instincts and material condition of the people, but that well founded objections may be offered to both. Liberty and experiment alone can determine the best forms of society. Therefore I no longer label myself otherwise than as "Anarchist" simply.

I would not, however, have the world think that I am an "Anarchist by trade." Outsiders have some very curious notions about us, one of them being that Anarchists never work. On the contrary, Anarchists are nearly always poor, and it is only the rich who live without work. Not only this, but it is our belief that every healthy human being will, by the laws of his own activity, choose to work, though certainly not as now, for at present there is little opportunity for one to find his true vocation. Thus I, who in freedom would have selected otherwise, am a teacher of language. Some twelve years since, being in Philadelphia and without employment, I accepted the proposition of a small group of Russian Jewish factory workers to form an evening class in the common English branches. I know well enough that behind the desire to help me to make a living lay the wish that I might thus take part in the propaganda of our common cause. But the incidental became once more the principal, and a teacher of working men and women I have remained from that day. In those twelve years that I have lived and loved and worked with foreign Jews I have taught over a thousand, and found them, as a rule, the brightest, the most persistent and sacrificing students, and in youth dreamers of social ideals. While the "intelligent American" has been cursing him as the "ignorant foreigner,"

while the short-sighted working man has been making life for the "sheeny" as intolerable as possible, silent and patient the despised man has worked his way against it all. I have myself seen such genuine heroism in the cause of education practiced by girls and boys, and even by men and women with families, as would pass the limits of belief to the ordinary. Cold, starvation, self-isolation, all endured for years in order to obtain the means for study; and, worse than all, exhaustion of body even to emaciation - this is common. Yet in the midst of all this, so fervent is the social imagination of the young that most of them find time besides to visit the various clubs and societies where radical thought is discussed, and sooner or later ally themselves either with the Socialist Sections, the Liberal Leagues, the Single Tax Clubs, or the Anarchist Groups. The greatest Socialist daily in America is the Jewish *Vorwaerts*, and the most active and competent practical workers are Jews. So they are among the Anarchists.

I am no propagandist at all costs, or I would leave the story here; but the truth compels me to add that as the years pass and the gradual filtration and absorption of successful professionals, the golden mist of enthusiasm vanishes, and the old teacher must turn for comradeship to the new youth, who still press forward with burning eyes, seeing what is lost forever to those whom common success has satisfied and stupified. It brings tears sometimes, but as Kropotkin says, "Let them go; we have had the best of them." After all, who are the really old?

Those who wear out in faith and energy, and take to easy chairs and soft living; not Kropotkin, with his sixty years upon him, who has bright eyes and the eager interest of a little child; not fiery John Most, "the old warhorse of the revolution," unbroken after his ten years of imprisonment in Europe and America; not grey-haired Louise Michel, with the aurora of the morning still shining in her keen look which peers from behind the barred memories of New Caledonia; not Dyer D. Lum, who still smiles in his grave, I think; nor Tucker, nor Turner, nor Theresa Clairmont, nor Jean Grave - not these. I have met them all, and felt the springing life pulsating through heart and hand, joyous, ardent, leaping into action. Not such are the old, but your young heart that goes bankrupt in social hope, dry-rotting in this stale and purposeless society. Would you always be young? Then be an Anarchist, and live with the faith of hope, though you be old.

I doubt if any other hope has the power to keep the fire alight as I saw it in 1897, when we met the Spanish exiles released from the prison of Montjuich. Comparatively few persons in America ever knew the story of that torture, though we distributed fifty thousand copies of the letters smuggled from the prison, and some few newspapers did reprint them. They were the letters of men incarcerated on mere suspicion for the crime of an unknown person, and subjected to tortures the bare mention of which makes one shudder. Their nails were torn out, their heads compressed in metal caps, the most sensitive portions of the body twisted between guitar strings, their flesh burned with red hot irons; they had been fed on salt codfish after days of starvation, and refused water; Juan Olle, a boy nineteen years old, had gone mad; another had confessed to something he had never done and knew nothing of. This is no horrible imagination. I who write have myself shaken some of those scarred hands. Indiscriminately, four hundred people of all sorts of beliefs - Republicans, trade unionists, Socialists, Free Masons, as well as Anarchists - had been cast into dungeons and tortured in the infamous "zero." Is it a wonder that most of them came out Anarchists? There were twenty-eight in the first lot that we met at Euston Station that August afternoon, homeless wanderers in the whirlpool of London, released without trial after months of imprisonment, and ordered to leave Spain in forty-eight hours! They had left it, singing their prison songs; and still across their dark and sorrowful eyes one could see the eternal Maytime bloom. They drifted away to South America chiefly, where four or five new Anarchist papers have since arisen, and several colonizing experiments along Anarchist lines are being tried. So tyranny defeats itself, and the exile becomes the seed-sower of the revolution.

And not only to the heretofore unaroused does he bring awakening, but the entire character of the world movement is modified by this circulation of the comrades of all nations among themselves. Originally the American movement, the native creation which arose with Josiah Warren in 1829, was purely individualist; the student of economy will easily understand the material and historical causes for such development. But within the last twenty years the communist idea has made great progress owing primarily to that concentration in capitalist



production which has driven the American workingmen to grasp at the idea of solidarity, and, secondly, the the expulsion of active communist propagandists from Europe. Again, another change has come within the last ten years. Til then the application of the idea was chiefly narrowed to industrial matters, and the economic schools mutually denounced each other; today a large and genial tolerance is growing. The younger generation recognizes the immense sweep of the idea through all the realms of art, science, literature, education, sex relations, and personal morality, as well as social economy, and welcomes the accession to the ranks of those who struggle to realize the free life, no matter in what field. For this is what Anarchism finally means, the whole unchaining of life after two thousand years of Christian asceticism and hypocrisy.

Apart from the question of ideals, there is the question of method. "How do you propose to get all this?" is the question most frequently asked us. The same modification has taken place here. Formerly there were "Quakers" and "Revolutionists"; so there are still. But while they neither thought well of the other, now both have learned that each has his own use in the great play of world forces. No man is in himself a unit, and in every soul Jove still makes war on Christ. Nevertheless, the spirit of peace grows; and while it would be idle to say that Anarchists in general believe that any of the great industrial problems will be solved without the use of force it would be equally idle to suppose that they consider force itself a desirable thing, or that it furnishes a final solution to any problem. From peaceful experiment alone can come final solution, and that the advocates of force know and believe as well as the Tolstoyans. Only they think that the present tyrannies provoke resistance. The spread of Tolstoy's "War and Peace" and "The Slavery of Our Times," and the growth of numerous Tolstoy clubs having for their purpose the dissemination of the literature of non-resistance, is an evidence that many receive the idea that it is easier to conquer war with peace. I am one of these. I can see no end of retaliation unless someone ceases to retaliate. But let no one mistake this for servile submission or meek abnegation; my right shall be asserted no matter at what cost to me, and none shall trench upon it without my protest.

Good-natured satirists often remark that "the best way to cure an Anarchist is to give him a fortune." Substituting "corrupt" for "cure," I would subscribe to this; and believing myself to be no better than the rest of mortals, I earnestly hope that as so far it has been my lot to work, and work hard, and for no fortune, so I may continue to the end; for let me keep the integrity of my soul, with all the limitations of my material conditions, rather than become the spineless and ideal-less creation of material needs. My reward is that I live with the young; I keep step with my comrades; I shall die in the harness with my face to the east - the East and the Light.



Voltairine DeCleyre

photos courtesy Labadie Collection, U. Mich.



# PREFATORY TO VANEIGEM

Murray Bookchin probably didn't realize how correct he was when he wrote "All the old crap of the thirties is back again... in a more vulgarized form than ever." [Post-Scarcity Anarchism, p. 173] Not only do we have the various sect-droppings from the "great" leninist revival of the '60s, we now have the attempted resurrection of the old Socialist Party[NAM], new interest in the bureaucratized labor movement, and, to top it all off, the return of the great depression. The official left, enthused with the nostalgia affecting so many in our society, lives in the past. Not content with the happy days of the '50s which power yearns to recreate, the official left seeks its salvation via the law of eternal return in the reincarnation of the '30s. The "post-leninist sects, tiny ferocious creatures devouring each other in a drop of water" [George Lichtheim, Imperialism] are busy gearing for the great collapse, anxiously awaiting their one big chance. Nearly forty years after the horrors of fascism, lenino-stalinism, and world war they have yet to learn anything. Like Zeno's Achilles, they never catch the bounding hare. For the official left, all change has been illusion.

Society is in an advanced state of decomposition, a fact impossible to ignore. Everyone feels, even if only dimly, that something is fundamentally wrong. Cold uncertainty chills the familiar warmth of everyday banality. But it's not like it was in the thirties, even if the movie costumes are the same. And the revolutionary project cannot — if it ever could — be conceived in the terms of the past. "The social revolution... cannot draw its poetry from the past, but only from the future. It cannot begin with itself before it has stripped off all superstition in regard to the past," wrote Marx in the 18th Brumaire.

It is with this in mind that Vaneigem considers the problem of the "spectacle in decomposition" and what a revolutionary attack on it would be. Despite its title, "Terrorism or Revolution," this piece is not a standard mechanical official left exercise in ennui. On the contrary, it is rather a provocative, sincere attempt at continuing the development of the revolutionary critique of our times, a critique still in process. In the course of the piece Vaneigem rejects much of what passes as leftism today. He steps on many toes. While perhaps difficult stylistically, his argument is forceful and compelling and we think contributes strongly to the "rediscovery and reformulation of the revolutionary project itself in a manner adequate not only to the present but also to the future." (Black Rose #1, Introduction)

Raoul Vaneigem was born in 1934 and was a professor in romance philology. In 1960 he became a member of the now defunct Situationist International until his resignation in 1970. He wrote extensively for the revue *Internationale Situationniste* and with Guy Debord [author of *Society of the Spectacle*, *Black and Red*, Box 9546, Detroit 48202] is probably the best known of the ex-situationists.

## Translator's Note

It is a hot topic in contemporary American philosophy as to whether something can be translated from one language into another. Be that as it may, an exact translation is at any rate virtually impossible. Some words don't quite fit. With this in mind, I have chosen not to translate certain words from the French into English: *dépassement*, *passional*, and *contestation*. *Dépassement* means the dialectical supercession of the current system, its passing away, and transformation into something different and new, a high stage. *Passional* means related to the passions, the passion-charged atmosphere. *Contestation* is any and all forms of opposition brought against the system in a "progressive" sense. It is being anti-war, anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-whatever, similar to the way this is done in America, as passionately and as incoherently. It is hoped that the use of these words will have a benefit that will far outstrip whatever inconveniences may initially arise.

Many will perhaps remember their feelings of humiliation when they couldn't produce on request the stages of people's war, the components of the 2, 4, 6, 8 point peace proposals, or the birthdays of various other world heroes, and were faced with the smug superiority of the initiated heavies, and the contempt of their buffaloed idolators. Now we can turn the tables! Imagine the gratification of dropping "I'm with the party, the party of *dépassement*," attempting to regain a *passional* existence and consciously avoiding the danger of possible recuperation by falling prey to uncritical, spectacular *contestationism*," on some unsuspecting left sophisticates and seeing the look of incredulity and fear on their faces. The advantages of obscure jargonese are not to be held lightly in the struggle to demythologize the official left. Intellectual contempt is surely one of the most efficacious weapons in the pursuit and successful realization of such a worthy project. Caution: use only on party hacks and left imitators. Not for use on real people.

## Synoptic Outline of Parts I and II

May 1968 drew the *Line of Demarcation* "between the reformists of survival and the insurgents of the will to live." Despite the ebbing of the revolutionary tide and the return of the class struggle to the contours it followed the day before the great upheaval, nothing is quite the same, for in that moment the "party" of *dépassement* was reborn. Now. The Social question has ceased to be posed in terms of *having*. It appears now as what it has been in fact, a construction of concrete *being*, an emancipation not of the citizen, but of the individual.

Survival is extending itself to all of existence. In generalizing itself under the pressure of its own inner drives, the imperialism of the commodity simplifies the choices. There is nothing more urgent than quick and effective intervention against the system of survival.

The experience of May 68 brought the political once again to class consciousness, consciousness of itself. It will either liquidate the power of the commodity and substitute generalized self-management for it, or it will survive to regret its failure.

The outcome of the confrontation to come depends on the offensive and defensive power of the revolutionary wing of the proletariat, on those who have not only consciousness but also the power of in-

tervention: the workers at the point of production and distribution. They have in their hands the roots of a reversed world; they can destroy the economy. Now shields receiving all the blows and serving after the battle as safeguards for new bosses, they must become the invincible army of generalized self-management.

We are experiencing the *Last Days of Culture*. There is no more anti-culture, no counter-culture, no parallel or underground culture. Operating under these sociological distinctions or the progressive reduction of culture to the spectacle, a spectacle which reduces the sum of the categories of real life to survival in a space-time when the commodity is not only produced, distributed, and consumed but also generalized as necessity, chance, freedom, duration, and representation.

Culture then enters the economy as a luxury article available to all. Blessed with the label of intellectuality, culture is the thought of the spectacle, its separated intelligence. Formerly preoccupied with glory or posterity, today artists and thinkers punch in as skilled workers in the language factory, to be paid in tokens of prestige.

Culture becomes one of the self-regulating mechanisms of power, incitement to the overconsumption of images and knowledge corresponds to the necessity of balancing the overproduction of ideological attitudes, of lies imposed on daily life by the dominant society. Its decline and subsequent reinforcement follows the movement of the spectacle itself. Thus it creates a propitious zone for sabotage and diversion, for direct subversive action.

At the same time as it reveals itself as a separated sphere, culture acts against it. As it issues from daily life and its creativity, the cultural work cannot be reduced purely and simply to the spectacle without revealing the trace of human practice impinging it. Even as the language of power fails to fully supplant poetry, and just as life is never quite reduced to survival, so the market system fails to transform the cultural creation into a pure commodity. This check marks at the same time the place of the reversal of perspective, the point where the creativity brought forth in the past is reinvested in the project of generalized self-management.

Dada and surrealism erred in not associating the liberation of life-like poetry with the revolution of everyday life. As soon as culture begins to question itself as separation, it attempts to continue itself as radical theory. But it falls backward into ideology if it fails to develop the expression of the will to live underlying it in a perspective of collective struggle. Thus culture faces two choices: to be reduced to the spectacle as a renewable and immediately absorbed pseudo-autonomous fragment, or negate itself by realizing itself in real life.

At the instant it rediscovers its origin, spiritual creation also reaches its end as separated activity. Those who strive to seize it at the roots of multidimensional life cannot be distinguished from those who are prepared to divert history to realize the imaginary.

# Terrorism or Revolution

by Raoul Vaneigem

## III THE NIHILIST STATE AND ANTI-STATIST NIHILISM

Society of survival is founded on the system of absolute exchange. Values and principles commonly admitted, and universally transgressed, are swept along into the infernal cycle of interchangeability. In an irregularly accelerated rotation of shitty water toward the discharge hole, the spectacular whirlpool reunites the ensemble of praised, blamed, encouraged, permitted, condemned, and judge attitudes.

The commodity system produces the objectivity of vacuity through a developing movement which sucks in all of humanity to the profit of its concrete and oppressive abstraction. Formerly we were quiescent for a boss; henceforth we survive for an entity, a phantom. What weighs on us is no longer capital but the logic of the commodity; no longer does the power of a person or a class conscious of its predominance, nor even of a cynical caste, rule; rather a machine whose directors, like the officers of Kafka's penal colony, are only despicable cogs condemned to rust of hardening arteries and early senility runs the show.

The State — the nerve and muscle centre of spectacular-commodity organization, the mind and secular arm of exchangeist totalitarianism — has been converted, through decline and reinforcement, into a cybernetic power, into self-regulation of general disorder, into a legality in-itself of that which no longer has any laws. Its power succumbs to the imperatives of accumulation, reproduction, and socialization of the commodity to the degree that it disperses itself to reach every nook and cranny in order to transform people into citizens of the whole (in the sense that one speaks of all-powerful eunuchs).

Citizenship is identified with the right to be forced to partake of the spectacle, at which time the spectacle transforms the promotion of all beings and all things reduced to commodity status into varieties of nihilism. It is this double feeling of frustration, as human being and as citizen-spectator-producer-consumer of encroaching emptiness, which in May 1968 unleashed a first chain reaction in which subjective energy in process of liberating itself shook French society to its foundations. In a flash, the immense hope of the reversal of a world reversed was illuminated — were it only taking the time to ask oneself "and if it was possible?" — to even the darkest consciousness.

The anger and rancor which today continue to nourish physical repression, exorcism, and the sort of psychological repression in which they want to hold one as insane because she/he denounced the dominant madness show more than ever with what violence destroyed passion is converted into the passion to destroy.

For the first time, the return of the social revolution has thrown the old world into chaos. The great fear of the *million pourri* has marked its class frontiers with emotional excrement. Even if it is quite well known in the offices and factories that the bosses stink, it is good to know from now on that they smell only of the commodity system they protect. And especially where there are bosses you can sniff the State, and the hierarchical power which is its essence.

May 1968 revealed to a great many that ideological confusion tries to conceal the real struggle between the "party" of decomposition and the "party" of global *depassement*. But the reflux of the revolutionary movement, which undertook the collective realization of individual desires, recompressed the memory of authenticity, of real life without constraint, back into the spectacle.

Without a doubt the interrupted feast has brutality returned to all the anguishes, all the phantasms of stasis, but the general dissatisfaction bears the mark of the blow which failed to drain it as one would an abscess. Spectacular commodity society has recuperated a greater part of the forces struggling radically against it into a new dichotomy. The pocket ideologies are regrouped around a bipolar distinction of an antagonism between leftism, which takes and falsifies the spirit of global revolution, and rightism, which opposes it with all the energy of agonized or accepted renunciation.

The illusion of possible confrontation bears the alienating reality of a confrontation of illusions. Thus the spectacle stages the major contradiction of the "party" of survival as a comedy-drama; and it palms off the anti-spectacular hostility of the "party" of life and the project of generalized self-management onto an ideological left. The insurrectional reality of May disappeared under the lie and enters into the perspective of power. But the leftist clowning is so poorly disguised that the space-time momentarily suspended now appears as a vacuum which nothing but revolution can fill.

Since, for power, the revolution does not exist outside of the spectacle, rightism and leftism express in the dominant language the necessary recuperation of the real conflict. Moreover, if the "party" of *depassement* is late in efficaciously revealing itself, there will be nothing to oppose the launching of a grotesque and bloody civil war, the melodrama of fascism and anti-fascism.

The protagonists polish their roles. The choir of the right chants: order, State, hierarchy, commodity. This runs, not without some difficulties, from altos to basses: neo-fascism, conservatism, stalinism, social democracy, trade unionism, trotskyism. In the choir of the left, where they shout until breathless, contestationism has fallen heir to the remains of anarchism and the handful of partial claims taken as absolutes (women's liberation, gay liberation, children's liberation, koala liberation), groupism, anti-groupism, individualism, spontaneism, and councilism, all vocalized in critical-critiques. Whereas situationism, alone in a corner, gives the pitch, and makes as if to strike all that passes within its reach.

All this beautiful old world has lost nothing from its splits, its divergencies, and its conflicts. But the clandestine pressure of enraged consciousness and its practice imposes on the spectacle a manichean style division, where rightism and leftism support and mutually praise each other in the vacuum they both experience as common horror. Nihilism only increases all the more.

As deficient as it is, leftist ideology, precisely because it is deficient, holds the trace of radical theory in custody. Recuperated into crumbs of the global critique, principally elaborated by the situationists, leftism keeps in its own way the memory of the radical theory it falsifies. The contestation brought everywhere takes the place of unity, and its ideological refusal of all ideology that of radicality.

All contestation enters into the mechanisms of self-regulation which characterize the imperialism of the commodity. But it precipitates the decline of the system, and the decline generalizes contestation. Where else can one measure most simply the efficiency of contestation as an element of decline if not at the centre of gravity of spectacular-commodity society, the State? The strikes of functionaries, police, magistrates are only amusing epiphenomena. What really reaches the State, and which it reflects everywhere as an organ of mediation, repression, and seduction, is the tendency of power to fall. Thus it is that the force of nihilism, roused by the development of the commodity system, takes hold and spreads willy-nilly. How does the interaction of the tendency of power to fall, spectacular antagonism, and the State on the road of cybernatization present itself?

The question has no meaning outside of the passional interest underlying it, and which it is necessary to briefly recall. From the beginning of the 60's it was clear that the social malaise came from the degradation of the passional atmosphere. Not only was the restriction of the space-time of daily life condemned to repetition and linear flow, but roles, substitutes for authentic realization, were thrown into the general devaluation. The appearance of passion was disappearing. It was foreseeable, then, that the accumulation of exchange values without passional value had to involve an empty passional usage, a taste of nihilism which will go from crime without reason to the absurd defense of defunct values, and which only the revolutionary project will be able to restore to positivity. The deposition into leftism and rightism organizes and regroups the nihilistic impulses, and puts

political back on its feet, giving it a renewed passional vibrance. Such gratuity does not occur without increasing the importance of the ludicrous.

The more the tendency of power to fall becomes marked, the more rightism clamors for a return to a strong State, with demonstrations of xenophobia, nationalism, mediocrity. Its intervention slows the reduction of the State to a cybernetized power, to the profit of its national and police functions; it shackles the dynamism of the commodity system, but not in a permanent manner, as the struggle between the old francoism and the Spanish technocrats shows. If, lacking regulation, pressured by oppositional ideologies and local revolutionary actions, cybernetization slows down, the tendency of power to fall slackens. The extreme wing of rightism sets the tone, in the concurrent struggle for the reinforcement of the State, for the statist reformists (liberals, stalinists, socialists, trotskyites and their baggage of parties, unions, organizations, economic councils). Leftism is reinforced to the degree that contestation responds to the reestablishment of power, recuperates real opposition, and then aims at borrowing from situationism its ideology of dépassement, creativity, and immediacy, to which it can give, in the real violence of abstraction and concrete consciousness of vacuity, only a practice of terrorist play.

To the contrary, as cybernetization progresses it revives the extreme right within rightism and confirms the power of the technocrats. The fall of authority deactivates leftist violence to the profit of an ideology which asks from situationism its unitary appearance and its anti-ideological ideology, and which is going to bring forth the "humanization" of the commodity system from a reformism of daily life and from communal experiences.

The irregularity of the commodity system allows such tendencies to occur today simultaneously, without reaching a paroxistic stage. However, outside of the revolutionary perspective, the only way is terrorism. If the ideological antagonism between rightism and leftism prevails, civil war is inevitable. If on the contrary the self-regulation of the State intervenes, if the antagonism rots, we are here returned to insoluble problems of survival and boredom, to the passion to destroy. In one case as in the other nihilism wins.

Apparently the State enjoys the game of exciting the Cossacks of nihilism only to immediately calm them with the spectre of civil war and by repression distributed from one side to the other, though keeping to the tradition of class justice. In so far as it tends to be seen as social conciliator, in this sense all the programs of the parties or political groups specify its ideal unfolding. But a slight regression, a grain of sand in the network, is sufficient for a crisis to break, or better for it to reveal its immediate reality. If capitalism stimulates crisis, the spectacular-commodity system itself runs no risk on this account for the simple reason that it is in a state of permanent crisis, that it is the self-regulation of the disorder provoked by the accumulation and socialization of the commodity. Image of the "solved" crisis in the inverse world of the spectacle, it absorbs the everyday more profound crisis of the will to live in a time reduced to duration — to a time which measures and is measured itself.

At the slightest pretext — economic recession, police brutality, football riot, settling of scores — social violence will retake its course. Isn't this the best moment to become involved with radical theory, to conduct oneself with moderation in working to forward the international revolution? Because if the "party" of dépassement fails to liquidate the conditions of survival, it is self-destruction for all. If the Cossacks are loosed, if the mercenaries and desperadoes of nihilism begin to march, we have not done with laughing in blood.

There is no return to the past. If society of survival has sworn to paralyze us little by little, it is better to avoid dying slowly in the cesspools of solitude, between boredom and pollution; it is better to precipitate joyously the course of things and the death of reified beings.

If the vise is tightened, many will think it preferable to die, taking along with them, via the bomb, the machette, or the mortar, all the petty officers of survival: judges, priests, cops, bosses, foremen. These are the conditions which Coeurderoy, Maldoror, the Scythes of Blok, and Artaud called the basis of oppressed subjectivity. They wait in the street, where the newspapers redistribute criminality, sifting the diverse deeds which bring them to the accounting of rightism or leftism, specifying roles and nourishing them according to stereotypes of anger or indignation.

Good souls of the dominant language, it is you who incite to order, hatred, pillage, and civil war. In the shadow of a cruel and fabulous spectacle arises the old war of the poor against the rich, which today, masked and falsified by ideological refraction, is the war of the poor who want to stay poor and the poor who want to stop being poor.

If history should wait to pronounce, through the voice of the proletarians of the anti-proletariat, the liquidation order of the commodity system, which they are capable of executing, the old forms of legal and illegal violence would unify the two camps in the same antagonistic self-destruction. In the extreme wing of rightism and in the situationized left the terrorist game already prevails as ideological practice of the end of ideologies. If we do not save the ludicrous, it will work out its own salvation against us.

Rightism has unleashed its unfortunates. The white terror announces itself with the usual musty smells of fear. The leftist game hunt aligns the dejected pieces in the satisfied resentment of the inability to experience unconstrained pleasure. Young insolents, longhairs or arabs, pay the price of passions blocked in the spectacle, the price of a voyeurism which approaches the efficiency of a police reflex in repressing, in what it sees and seeks to see, the desire to really participate.

Through the play of antagonisms, it will suffice that the cowardice of friends of victims and victims in power cease to respond to the cowardice of the petit-bourgeois cops for the tactic of reprisals to prevail over exorcising demonstrations and boyscoutist protest.

A worker fires at his foreman, misses him, clumsily hitting a policeman instead. The attorney of the Assises Court of Loire-Atlantique demands and obtains the death penalty. The circle is closed. When the example of the Baader gang spreads — and everything is set up to incite it — the attorney will submit the punishment he inflicts himself, through an intermediary, each time that in the name of others he represses his own refusal of humiliations. A month does not go by without an intervention by union hacks and bosses' commandos against wildcat strikers, without the police imprisoning, mistreating, or accidentally killing. What better incitement to urban guerilla warfare, to a savage self-defense? As long as it is not admitted everywhere and without reservation that it is necessary to destroy the commodity system and

lay the bases of generalized self-management, no repression, no promise, no reasoning will succeed in deterring the rebels of survival from general self-destruction and the train of logic according to which it is better to kill a policeman than commit suicide, to kill a judge than a policeman, to lynch a boss than kill a judge, and to loot a department store, burn the Stock Exchange, devastate the banks, dynamite the churches than lynch the bosses, because in the rules of the terrorist game these are the pigs — the judges, bosses, chiefs, the defenders of the commodity and its system of death which they impose and whose representation they multiply.

Today illegalist exhortation has lost its obsolete voluntarism. Spectacular organization incites more imperatively to violence than did the anarchists of the past. Hatred of the family does not need apologists because the commodity system does not need the family. But from the instant that rightism — spectacular function of negative nihilism — resuscitates paternal authority — despotic or reformist, who cares? — it becomes the ludicrous reason for positive nihilism to compensate with parcelled violence for the loss of the unitary project of generalized self-management.

The failure to bring children to awareness of their richness and their spoilation, the trouble which the commodity system introduces among them, which gets to them directly and through the mediation of the family, suffices to inject uneasiness into homes and parental associations. There is nothing prophetic in assuring that such uneasiness is far from being ended.

Splintered hatred strikes more cruelly than the unitary shock of refusal. After the prisoners from without become the supporters of the prisoners within filthy bastilles, when the socially alienated freed the so-called mentally alienated, it is their despair at not seeing the end of society of survival which presides at the massacre of screws and white-shirted police.

Lubricating the spectacular lie with the rest of the heavenly illusions, priests attract popular anger more surely than the lightning which they called of yore on the impious. Bandagers of intimate alienation, mountebanks of sacrifice, traditional messengers of inversed reality, travelling salesmen of the toad of Nazareth and Saint Guevara, they should know that nothing will save them save the critique in acts of religion, the return of the bonfires of the Commune and the Spanish Revolution, the flame ecumenically brought from churches to synagogues, from mosques to buddhist temples, until not a stone of divine infamy remains standing.

march of nihilism scorns apocalyptic invocation. If the proletariat does not promptly get rid of class society, society of the commodity, the spectacular-commodity system, the perspective of the commodity; if it does not found generalized self-management and harmony through the play of sovereign assemblies and their councils; then the sickness of survival risks generalizing the congealed reflex of death.

In the past the Nazi fury has, in conditions much less favorable, set the tone. The bait of abstract immediate profit — ecological destruction is only one aspect — expresses, in repression and inversion, the individual tension experienced by all regarding a multi-professional life. If the weight of such social inversion, objectively discouraged by the logic of the commodity, blocks the reversal of perspective, interdicts global depassement, despairs revolutionary consciousness, isolates and destroys attempts at insurrection, there remains for us only the game of destruction in every sense, the pleasant suicide of terrorism, the shooting of judges in a social western where no one has become unworthy of the bullet that strikes. All or nothing but not survival. The revolution or terrorism.

But the ascendancy of the spectacle today is not such that the proletariat is completely dissimulated to itself. In vain, under cover of culturization and its barkers, increasing proletarianization reveals itself as a new negritude, as pride of being nothing, that is to say something on the levels of appearance. No proletarian feels at ease, which is hardly reassuring to those who would persuade her/him of the contrary.

Even more, everything which evokes the dreams of subjectivity and the hopes of the will to live continues to exercise, in spite of ganguous ideologies, an animating power on the majority. As situationist theory encountered, before 1968, in spite of its limited diffusion, the best reception from souls spontaneously disposed to understand and practice it, its ideological falsification has lost its rational and passional attraction only by winning the power to fascinate. The absurdity of the use of words such as spectacle, survival, individual realization, and global critique in the rounds of the dominant language shows well enough that the spectacle recuperates radical theory poorly, and even more poorly those who practice it with critical consciousness of possible recuperation.



If situationism became the panacea of leftism, its pseudo-unity in decomposition, that which can only disappear, be it in the alienated reality of the terrorist game or in the movement of the realization of the situationist project. From critical ideology, it can only become ideology in arms; from pseudo-unity of refusal, front of delinquents *separately* bringing partial revolt on all fronts of oppression and the lie.

At its ultimate stage such recuperation also throws light on an essential separation, principle of all hierarchy, of all sacrifice, of all separations: the division between intellectual and manual.

While the accumulation and socialization of the commodity entails the tendency of power to fall, the devaluation of the role and function of the intellectual coincides with the culturalization of the spectacle. In absorbing culture the spectacle tends to reduce the intellectual role to bureaucratic function while self-abstraction, in the roles to which the intellectual is submitted, is felt keenly as promotion and a regression toward intellectualism.

The spectator is intellectualized proportionately as the spectacle drains the reservoirs of culture. So that in refusing to accept one's self as spectator, as participant in general passivity, as ensemble of roles, each comes to criticize her/himself in one's forced intellectualization.

Different from the old rancor of the self-taught and the ignorant toward the people of patented culture, the spontaneous refusal of intellectualism responds to a confused critique of the spectacle and roles. It is also pleasing to see how in the antagonism of the ideologies of right and left the intellectualism of the anti-intellectuals is dead set against the intellectuals of anti-intellectualism. The intellectual — that of the academy, the cafe, or the groupuscules — secretes ideology as generalized ideology intellectualizes the most sottish of the old combattants. Social changes have been roused even in the present only by the agitation of intellectuals, under their control, through the mediation of culture. To consider how the radicality of Marx, Sade, Fourier disappeared, how it begins to revive in the situationist project, and how it is privvy to becoming in the hands of the new university intellectual an incomprehensible hodgepodge condemned two times by terrorist practice — as its occult source and as its useless abstract dimension — it seems urgent to transmit to those who know its use since it comes from their practice and

practice can continue it without end. High time that transmit it and continue it be already déclassés continue the struggle for the liquidation of classes, revolutionaries as unitarily as possible and want to prove their efficiency by destroying the world of separations. Those who are prepared to act alone because they know thousands of others are acting in the same way will be born of "praxis" of dépassement, this resurgence, in much more favorable conditions, of what Marx and Engels had called "our



## IV THE SUBVERSIVE GAME

### AND THE "PARTY" OF DEPASSEMENT

*"... Humanity will be destroyed neither by the Disorder of anarchy nor by the confusion of Despotism (...); the result of the new conflict of these two primordial powers of humanity will be nothing but a new Revolution which will conserve it."*

(Hurrah or the Revolution of the Cossacks)

As it moves along with the movement of accumulation and socialization of the commodity, the old opposition between private capitalism and State capitalism is abolished in the totalitarian reality of the spectacular-commodity system.

Individualizing alienation, commodity universality reveals to each the identity existing between all forms of repression and the lie and the reductive movement in which life is changed into survival. Contradictorily, all forms of refusal bear within themselves the collective propagation of the will to live, individually experienced.

Everything tends to become a commodity in a process in which what is opposed to commodity imperialism tends to become everything. The revolution corresponds to this awareness. The root of spectacular-commodity society is the commodity, being and object totally transformed into exchange value. The root of generalized self-management is humanity itself, the concrete individual in her/his unitary and collective movement of liberation.

As indispensable as the refusal of hierarchy, the global critique, and permanent analysis are, the diffusion of radical theory and its practice will not escape the risks of ideological backsliding and ethical voluntarism which attempt to oppose them as long as the root of the commodity system remains untouched by a collective action where individual passions dominate and gather together, by a subversive game where real life adventure experiments with the destruction of the commodity, through diversions and sabotage, and generalized self-management.

To strengthen the will to live, to clarify the rationality of radical subjectivity, to call for struggle against sacrifice, roles, and militancy makes real sense only in a practice whose efficacy objectively finds hope of radically changing the dominant conditions. In the periods in which the analysis of new historical conditions was elaborated, the exigencies imposed on the revolutionary in the unity of her/his theory and practice necessarily called for the establishment of coherence in an essentially defensive manner, in a world in which everything attacked her/him. Failing to directly shake alienating conditions, the offensive technique consisted of attacking persons, treating as an enemy anyone who supported the dominant conditions.

From now on it is possible to demand less and obtain more from the anti-militant revolutionary, because it is possible to pass to the attack of the system, to participate in efficaciously striking it, and to prove by the practice of the *subversive game* the excellence of the rationality which animates it.

Theory is not apprehended radically if it is not tried out. It only superficially touches the individual who does not discover in it a way of drawing out the will to live. Outside of such unity the passions are blocked up, turning against themselves. Theory is crumbled, ideology and passions harmonize in an identical inversion. Either terrorism, or the subversive game. The stakes are critical. Since what the sociologists have called the explosion of May — because it blew them up — the wild beasts of spontaneity are on the loose. The self-regulation of power, menaced on all sides as it menaces everywhere, puts its money on the antagonism between rightism and leftism, and on its decline, to harness subjective energy. But for anyone who suddenly discovers the unique character of her/his subjective universe, the plurality

of desires, the violence of the will to live; can she/he exist any longer not being innocently amenable to the act of throwing a little monkey-wrench into the machinery of daily brutality? The "party" of *depassement* will be born from such acts, from such individuals. Its existence as a collective manifestation is tied to this question: can each individual multiply his/her chances for authentic life by destroying that which destroys her/him? Generalized self-management will come from the answer given in deeds.

Not only does the subversive game exclude, by virtue of its simple coherence, all militant practice, all action which implies sacrifice, renouncement, or the accumulation of misery, but the apprenticeship of self-management — which is positivity — incites to all the joys of everyday life. At the places of intervention, the quest for impunity is the most succinct tactical form of creativity.

Thus, instead of preaching revolutionary fortitude to the world, as is the case when one resorts unilaterally to books, speeches, leaflets — even if done critically — it is better that radical theory be communicated inseparably with the propagation of methods of sabotage and diversion; on condition that the subversive players spread it on their part, by every means, by propagating their particular techniques and the types of actions they judge opportunely appropriate for disrupting the system.

In fact, there is no factory, no office where sabotage and diversion are not cheerfully practiced. It is necessary to generalize them through consciousness of the project which unites the liquidation of the commodity system and apprenticeship in generalized self-management. The presence of global critique gives maximum import, impunity and pleasure to actions taken against fragments of the commodity. It is the revolutionary dimension in the subversion and emancipation of everyday individuals, the opening for collective *depassement*, the guarantee of tactical and strategic rationality. The radical critique, in rejoining the spontaneous subversive game, will reinforce the fundamental practical unity which will permit all varieties of revolutionary action.

It is important that each person individually proves her/his autonomy and its efficacy so that, accustomed to act alone with consciousness of a common project, she/he learns never to

... what is done in her/his name, never to act in the name of ... and to discover in the reinforcement of her/his will to live ... practical truth of collective action.

... from the start it is out of the individual, with her/his passions, ... ivity, imagination, and insatiable lust for real experiences that ... ments for social change burst forth. And no collective move- ... will reach the qualitative force of radicality until it proves ... it increases the power of individuals over their own daily life. ... radical, it places history at the service of individual hap- ... ss.

... the conscious masses, the opposite of crowds, conditioned ... conditionable, are composed of individuals aware of their ... jectivity and its global exigencies! The imperialism of subjec- ... ty develops, in the course of the struggle, the spontaneity of ... lective self-management! Each for themselves and self- ... nagement for all.

... Natural enemies of the bourgeoisie, which now is the group of ... rganizers of survival, proletarians become revolutionaries only by ... thwarting ideological tricks in the movement where their spon- ... taneous practice elaborates radical theory and is confirmed as ... ractical consciousness. At present the accent has been placed on ... the one hand on the elaboration of radical theory through the ... nalysis of the old world and through practice in which the analyst ... negates her/himself as separated consciousness; on the other ... hand — but inseparably — on its diffusion. The problem was to ... say everywhere to people: here are the real reasons which guide ... your action. Thus becoming conscious of their misery and their ... richness, they recognize themselves in a common project and, ... from there, act more efficaciously with a better understanding of ... what they really want. The May Days have revealed the result.

Now that degenerated leftism manipulates the remnants of the possible revolution into the perspective of hierarchical power, it is time to replace despair with pleasure: to arouse to radical theory by the stimulation of its uses.

The principle that that which is easiest to overthrow and destroy is also that which is most immediately concrete in the mechanisms of the spectacular-commodity system indicates well enough that the simplest and most concrete function allows the best clandestine revolutionary practice.



"The Screaming Budns"  
PAUL ARSENAULT

Were it only with regard to the ease of execution, with impunity and efficiency, the pleasure of ludicrous subversion is, from all evidence, the privilege of those who have the upper hand on the commodity in gestation, of the workers in the sectors of production and distribution: factories, warehouses, department stores; agricultural cooperative centres, freight transport (truckers, railwaymen, dockers ...)

Practiced everywhere, sabotage and diversion are experienced here with a maximum of happiness. In the vital sector of spectacular-commodity society the manual worker is, from the point of view of revolutionary struggle, the one who holds the raw material of generalized exchange. Isn't it scandalous that with or without factory occupations strikers have to this day never touched the commodity?

At best, in suspending production (rarely distribution), they only superficially disturb the self-regulating mechanisms. But, at this stage of intervention, it is no longer sabotage which has the most import but rather diversion, the diversion of raw material of exchanges, all the ways of removing it from the circuits of production and distribution where it becomes exchange value, is accumulated, reproduced, socialized; all the ways of putting it into the collective service of the individual will to live.

The warehouses, supermarkets, priority industries (that is, those which furnish the material equipment necessary for the realization of our desires) could truly recover, at their actual level of development, the functions filled in ancestral communities of free style (the Trobrianders for example) by the forge and the communal granary. The impending strikes will be less boring, and thus more revolutionary, when they offer the lure of human usage of the goods of production and consumption.

How could strikers neglect, if the strike were truly theirs, if they acted with full autonomy, to seize the stocks to distribute them, to utilize them for their profit (arms, means of pressure on the management and union leaders), or to destroy them if they have no use value (gadgets, boxed putrefaction, polluting products, etc.)?

Against the terrorism of theft, pillage and legal exploitation, salesmen, women and check out clerks should utilize trustworthy tactics. They should, under any chance of a strike, organize the

free distribution of products traditionally transformed into commodities and the diffusion of texts explaining how their new practice announces the mode of social organization managed by all. It is possible to slip on the individual label of a product a note giving the price of becoming real again, specifying its wretched quality, its function as illusion and so on. Subversive activity, more surely than calls to revolutionary practice, brings into play this principle of satiable and insatiable pleasure, this grain of authentic realization which is spread everywhere, affirms liberty, specifies autonomy, destroys roles, ideologies, authoritarianisms, repugnant behaviors (jealousy, avarice, contempt for women, men, children...). From within autonomy generalizing itself through subversion aimed at the commodity system, it is survival which is put into service in the name of life, thus founding the movement of generalized self-management.

Thus each profession discovers what hastens its end as each worker discovers how she/he can destroy all that which is appropriated from her/him, in order to appropriate her/himself all that she/he is allowed to construct. Creativity has no limit.

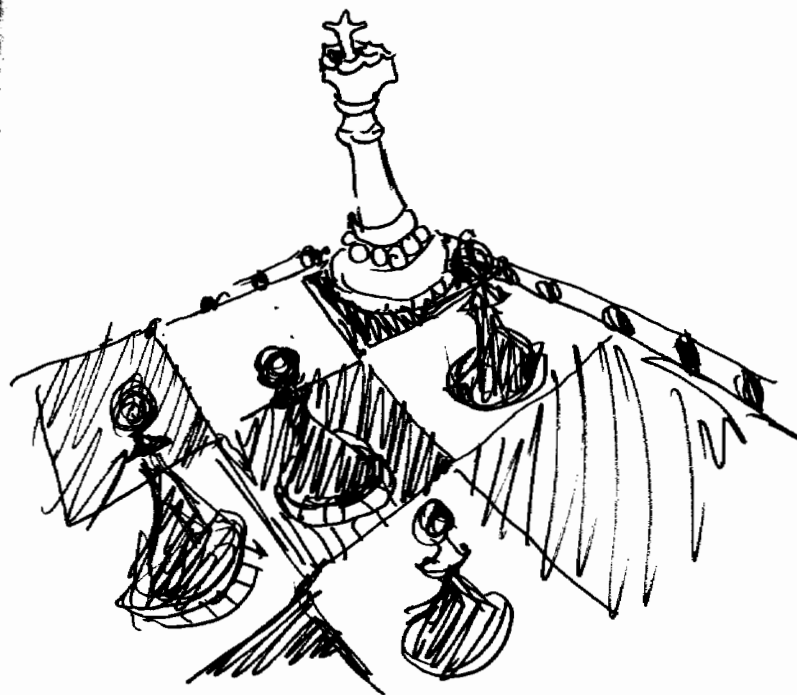
From fear that only the death logic of terrorism has the upper hand, it is necessary to open the gate to an anonymous and consciously oriented insight against the order of things, not against its servants. Ideologies are directed against people, the subversive game against conditions. Terrorism shows small bosses that if they don't consume the bigs they will be consumed first. The subversive ludicrous is content just to shake the coconut tree of hierarchy so that no one remains there — if it is not they who are strung up and hung there — and at that time to burn it. Likewise it is preferable, in the tactic of taking hostages, to threaten destruction of expensive prototypes, stock, computers rather than bosses (who one will execute in despair, for example if one fails to obtain the disarmament and retreat of repressive forces sent to break the insurrectional strike). Clandestine experience and anonymous subversion offer to those who fear hierarchical "superiors" — not out of cowardice but because they know well enough that a proprietor of authority, ridiculous as it is, has powers of boredom and repression — the occasion of regaining assurance, of measuring the deception of roles, of discovering her/himself as original subjectivity, of no longer having this fear which is the source of

terrorism, of knowing this secret feeling of authentic richness which gives courage and resolution in the strike or insurrection.

We are millions discovering, in confirming our own possibilities, a revolution whose pleasure we want to relish at the point of running risks, and we recognize fully the force of repressions in order to study all the ways to avoid displeasure. Prudent or flamboyant, the subversive player is never candidate for martyrdom. The *grand game* of anonymous subversion prepares the international appearance of the "party" of *depassement* in exemplary collective actions. In this style of radical intervention the individual is seized at the root in seizing the root of the commodity world, becoming her/his own leader hostile to all leaders, giving to her/his authentic passions — to love, play, encounters, hate, creation, dreaming — their dimension of multidimensional realization, their bed in the making of history.

*(The ensemble of these notes constitutes the outline of a work which will be prepared under a more appropriate form.)*

January 5, 1972



PAUL ARSENAULT



## Autopsy of an Occupation: Post Mortem Critique of the LIP

by John Hess

If nothing else, spectacular-commodity society has solved the problem of the ontological reality of nothingness. Unwittingly, following the course laid out by Marx in the second of his *Theses on Feuerbach*, it has shown in practice what has been debated abstractly in theory. In spectacular-commodity society, as the commodity moves to reduce everything to itself, it inexorably spreads nothingness in its train, overwhelming space and things till it appears virtually an omnipresent reality. Within this nihilistic vacuum daily lives are acted out in a distressingly repetitious fashion. We tend to do the same things in the same way over and over again. Banality becomes so ingrained in routine that it is overlooked, ignored as a normal fact of existence, an unchangeable given. Spread over the plane of "objective" reality, nothingness invades subjectivity as well, as humanity continues to reduce itself to little more than commodity status.

Nothingness gnaws silently at subjectivity; the vague sense of disquiet it engenders seeps through collective consciousness. Strange, troubled cauldrons bubble doubly beneath the seemingly solid social exterior. The desire for something different, however dimly perceived, can scarce be repressed, however inane or incoherently expressed. The very success of spectacular-commodity society in extending itself to all corners of reality spawns the possibility of its own supercession in the coming to consciousness of what can never be fully integrated: radical subjectivity, the will to live for the collective, free realization of individual desires.

The movement of radical subjectivity breaks out everyday, everywhere. Generally individual, overlooked, misunderstood and misdirected, at times it erupts on a scale that commands attention, those odd historical moments when common people act directly for themselves, forging new social organizations and relations to express and realize their burgeoning hopes and desires.

Capital is not money or goods, merely something external we produce. It is rather a system of interlocking social relationships, centering around commodity production for the realization of a certain type of value, in which we intimately participate and in fact reproduce every day. Such being the case, as proletarians we need a reasonably developed level of consciousness in order to really abolish capital and end our

existence as chattel, through direct action for ourselves. As everything conspires to keep the source of alienation secret, we must know who we are, what we want, what stands in our way, and how to overcome it. "And it is this gap between consciousness and practice which remains the fundamental mark of unsuccessful proletarian revolutions. Historical consciousness is the sine qua non of the social revolution." (Rene Vienet, *Enrages et situationnistes dans le mouvement des occupations, Paris, 1968, p. 153.*)

It is in this perspective in which the Lip affair will be considered. This "strange strike," as the New York Times christened it, became an international scandal. Yet, for the most part, it remains unknown to Americans. This being the case, an account of what happened must precede any critical commentary. Since a reasonably adequate expository article has already been published in a past issue of *Radical America*, I feel justified in curtailing the expository section of the article, referring readers to the already published article should they be interested.

The Lip watch factory was founded in Besancon, France, a city of some 100,000 near the Swiss border, as a small workshop in 1867. By 1970 it had grown to be the largest producer of watches in France, employing more than 1200 workers. Despite this, the company had been in difficulty for some time, in part due to the mismanagement of the Lip family which retained ownership, but primarily due to inability to compete with the giant modern multinational watch corporations, largely a result of the failure to modernize the mode of production of the factory. Mass production was limited to certain sectors, with final assembly of the watches performed by highly skilled crafts workers. "As a result of this situation, salaries at Lip were much higher than at most other watch factories . . . The Lip workers thus formed a workers' aristocracy, attached to its privileges and given to defend them dearly. They benefitted from a number of advantages...and were opposed to any restructuring (of the enterprise) which threatened their situation." (Lutte de classe, p.2)

In 1967 Ebauches S.A., a large Swiss watch producer bought one third of Lip; by 1970 it had acquired a majority, later ousting the Lip family from management in favor of their own personnel. By 1971 Ebauches had developed a plan of "dismantlement," the transformation of the factory to meet its own corporate needs. The implication was obvious: "layoff of a great part of the personnel, menacing employment throughout the region, and the national watchmaking industry threatened by the considerable power brought to bear by the multinational Ebauches S.A. group." (Lip, dossier, p.3) In fact a series of layoffs and cutbacks had already begun in December 1969. "All these attempts met with a lively resistance from the personnel." (dossier, p.4)

The occupation of the Lip in June 1970 was preceded by several years of sharp struggle within the factory. "The struggle of today has been possible only because May 1968 took place. It was unthinkable in the early 60s . . . In May 68 we rediscovered for ourselves, and discovered for others, forms of struggle which had not been used for some time . . . May 68 was a good school . . . At Lip after May 68 we became much bolder . . . The important thing is that May 68 brought democracy back to us. We also rediscovered the capacity for collective action, that it was possible to change life, that capitalist legality was not unchangeable." (Piaget, pp.19-20)

In February 1970 management announced a reduction in hours for some 400 workers. Immediately word spread throughout the factory, meetings were held, union delegates made the rounds, collecting ideas and coordinating actions. "For the first time the 'snake,' a line of workers passing through the shops and growing at each step, was utilized successfully several times." (dossier, p.4) A partial compromise was reached after negotiations.

In June of 1970 more layoffs were scheduled. On June 2 the workers decided to block a main road passing by the factory to explain the struggle to the population of the area. Sensitive about their "good name and image," the company conceded. On June 5, nonetheless, workers of the "mechanical" sector raised demands for wage increase and improvements in the apprenticeship program. Other sectors joined in, raising their own demands. By the 12th the majority of the personnel were on strike. "All the important discussions were made in general assemblies." (dossier, p.4) Part of the factory was occupied. Discussion groups formed and the struggle was "popularized" by visits made to other factories, blocking the main road, and establishing picket lines. "These picket lines did not stop non-strikers from crossing, but were charged with discussing things with them when they entered and left work." (dossier, p.5) By the 24th a settlement was reached.

Many of the important forms of struggle used in 1970 first appeared in "the year of struggle; 1970" (Piaget, p. 20): the "overture to the outside," the general assembly, the constant dispersal of information, the formation of discussion groups. "I believe that 1970 contained the seeds of 1971 ." (Piaget, p. 22)

Not surprisingly, management had conceded to demands, but not surrendered. In January 1971 more layoffs were announced which, after a vigorous campaign, were annulled. In February Fred Lip was replaced by the Ebauches representative, M. Saintesprit. In March 1972 Saintesprit attempted to alter job

classification. Resistance was very strong and an agreement was finally reached, an agreement which this holy spirit refused to sign, breaking the promise to do so, though he partially respected it. In October 1972 management refused to discuss wage accords. Ninety percent of the workers went on strike and an accord was signed a day and a half later.

The financial difficulties of the enterprise continued, calling for sharper action on the part of Ebaucher. On April 18, 1973, Saintesprit was removed and two provisional administrators named by the Besancon Chamber of Commerce. "It was a stratagem utilized by Ebauches S.A. to retain management 'invisibly' and better apply its plan of dismantlement." (Dossier, p. 6). The removal fully revealed the gravity of the situation and, coupled with the legacy of three years of activity, sparked response among the workers, the opening act of the drama unfolding.

A vigorous campaign began immediately. The unions (primarily the CFDT. The CGT, the union controlled by the Communist Party, played a much smaller role. Indeed, the head of the CGT refused to buy a Lip watch because it was "illegal.") united to act, a Defense Committee was formed, and information again distributed throughout the plant. On April 20, an Action Committee was formed, composed of both union and non-union workers. Recognizing the necessity of publicity outside the factory, a campaign of popularization was initiated immediately. Walls were postered, slogans painted, demonstrations held, and new contacts established. "From the beginning, even before the factory was occupied, the Lip workers were open to all those who wished to come to see them, to discuss and participate in the action." (Mise au point, p.5)

The administrators remained silent throughout. Finally, angry at not knowing what was awaiting them, though knowing it all too well, the workers confronted the administrators, trapping them in their office. A document revealing plans for a massive layoff and other threats to job security was "discovered" in the briefcase of one of the administrators. The cat was out, and the workers could not overlook what stared them in the face.

On June 10 the workers decided to occupy the factory. To ensure their safety the better, they secreted some 60,000 watches elsewhere in the city. "We replaced a natural hostage with a material one." (dossier, p.7) On June 12 it was announced that negotiations with management had impassé. On the 15th a large support demonstration occurred, with more than 15,000 marching and ending in a fight with the CRS, the special State security police force established after WW II by a socialist administration. Many were arrested as the police zealously performed their task. "That night, 'hot, hot, hot,' as the journalists dubbed it, reinforced the appeal to the population." (dossier, p.7) 44

For the immense success of the demonstration, we asked ourselves: how to continue the struggle? It wasn't possible to continue with just demonstrations. We had to search for new ways to reinforce unity and to develop the popularization of the struggle under new forms. We had to find ways to hold out because the adversary counted on the absence of pay to make us in.

Best, the watches we had seized meant four months wages on an equal basis for all. This was no ultimate guarantee. That's why the union delegates and the members of the Action Committee on June 18 proposed to the ensemble of the personnel to use the equipment at our disposal to produce watches and sell them at the usual price 'outside the factory' to assure our salary. The General Assembly approved this proposal." (dossier, p.8)

On August 1 the workers rejected the first Charbonnel (Minister of Industrial Development) Plan for the future of the factory. On August 2 the first wages were paid from the "illegal" sale of watches. Popular support was increasing to immense proportions and the dispute had to be solved as quickly as possible. The government so moved.

On August 14 at 5:30am, taking advantage of a holiday week-end, the CRS evacuated the factory. Word spread quickly and by 7am a crowd had gathered at the factory entrance. It was somehow decided that a demonstration would be held that day at 3pm. Nearly ten thousand people marched for more than three hours.

Earlier, a meeting of the General Assembly had been held. It decided to set up production at a new location under the slogan "The factory is where the workers are." The next day a "factory" was set up in a local school, 400 meters down from the CRS factory, and christened "Lip Jean-Zay."

The week following saw a series of violent clashes between the CRS and Lip supporters, much to the dismay of the unions. Thirty-one were sent to prison with sentences ranging from ten days to six months. "Ninety per cent of those sentenced worked in the Besancon area." (dossier, p.9)

The intervention of the forces of disorder failed to resolve the conflict and the government was forced to seek another settlement. Negotiations were resumed, with a M. Giraud acting for the government. On October 12, a Giraud Plan was rejected by the CFDT and the General Assembly.

On October 2, the police intervened again, this time raiding the "Maison pour tous" (Open House, literally "House for All") in an unsuccessful attempt to prevent a second wages payment.



Negotiations then resumed and on November 10 an agreement was signed with the Supremac Corporation to return to work at the Ornans plant, which resumed on the 19th.

On November 20 the "Interfinexa Plan" was proposed by some of the "progressive" businessmen in France. The plan was amenable to the unions and a settlement seemed offing, but adequate financial backing could not be secured from the large banks and in early December the plan was abandoned. In the middle of the month a new negotiating team, formed by Charbonnel and led by a M. Neuschwander, sought another plan. At virtually the same time, on December 1, the armament section of the Lip was taken over by the Spemdac Corporation.

In January 1974 the Neuschwander Plan was completed and on the 26th negotiations began between a M. Bidegain, representing a group of French and Swiss industrialists, and the unions. On January 29 an accord was signed by the unions and approved by the General Assembly, even though this agreement was much less favorable than others previously formulated and fell far short of the stated demands. The following evening the remainder of the watches and the money from the sales were returned to the employer. The CFDT then set about hailing the agreement as a "victory" and promising the large number "temporarily" laid off to vigilantly keep watch (sic) and ensure they would "eventually" be re-employed somewhere.

The appearance of the Action Committee was particularly significant. It was the expression of a deep mistrust of union bureaucracy and a desire to act autonomously against pressing evil. According to the dossier (p.13), the Action Committee was born "of a need to reinforce and sustain the activity of the union militants..." and according to Piaget (p.148), its purpose was "...that the non-union workers participate completely and actively in the workings of the union local," that is, they were to be integrated into the union local. A real tension thus existed between the Action Committee and the union apparatus, a tension which always threatened to explode, which underlies the entire struggle, and which even affected union members at the base. "Thus the Action Committee appeared at its origins as the result of two conceptions of action. That of some militant workers desirous of acting independently of the union and that of the union militants who wanted to create an organ which could complete the union." (Mise au point, p.27)

This in turn is the reflection of an unrest lying at the heart of the struggle: the real conflict between what could be, the possibility of a new way of life, and the reform of what is, the rationalization and humanization of the Old World, scrubbed, trimmed, presentable, palatable alienation. The fact that the

struggle had to be carried on in a different manner, a more open manner, freed to a surprising extent hitherto unsuspected subjective creative forces and thus potentially dangerous new vistas, patches of light in the gray stone wall.

The struggle to succeed could not remain within the confines of the factory wall. To stay there meant certain defeat. Alone, there was no hope. Consequently, the surrounding area was regularly leafletted and traffic delayed on the main road. Delegations composed of union militants and just plain folks were sent to other factories and cities to speak, often before large audiences. "No picket lines to isolate yourself, no stopping "outsiders" from entering the factory, such had been one of the first positions taken by the Action Committee." (Mise au point, p.6) Visitors were encouraged to come, tour the factory, see for themselves. Even after they were expelled from the factory, the Lip workers maintained an "Open House" (Maison pour tous) where people could come at any time. Even left sectarians who came to lay raps on the workers were politely listened to. Things were so open that some came to refer to the Lip as a "glass house."

Circumstances also compelled the so-called "illegal" actions. In order to best press their demands, the workers had to seize the factory. Faced with the question of survival, they "stole" watches for hostage and produced watches for sale, at first within the factory and later at the "Lip Jean-Zay." Initially this was a very difficult step to make. By force of habit the workers were loath to break with the interdictions of the collective super ego. "From the nature of my education by a guardian of the peace, illegality was very difficult to deal with." (Michel, in Piaget, p.164) This was the case with most. "It is not easy to make the leap; only a situation of struggle could give birth to this rupture with the past. What was unthinkable and impossible becomes possible." (Mise au point, p.19)

Possible, but not necessary, and perhaps within limits. The Lip did indeed break with many of the traditional ways. Many, but certainly not all, and, alas, not nearly enough. Despite its seemingly radical nature and the apparently revolutionary actions taken, the Lip remained as a **fundamentally conservative struggle** on the level of conscious objectivity, concerned with the reform of the existing order, the return to normal. All the breaks with the tradition were taken merely to realize a set of very conservative demands. The struggle, therefore, takes place within the framework of "normality," and within the union structure.

This last point is crucial. The union was the agent of recuperation of the struggle, the representative of capital within the

ranks of the revolt. The Action Committee initially represented a real possibility of going beyond the union. The unionists themselves were fully aware of this, as yet another indication of the increasing world crisis of trade unionism faced with new conditions of life and the possibilities engendered thereby. The union delegates thus consciously sought, under the constraint of the situation, to alter their practice and develop a new *modus vivendi* which would allow space for some autonomy as price for continued survival of the union, a sort of parallel to the movement to reform national governments.

The Lip has become exemplary model of struggle in France for several reasons. The workers fought against problems facing the working class as a whole, at least in apprehension, problems with which people could readily empathize and identify. But more importantly, the Lip broke with the traditional workers' movement in many interesting creative ways and also raised again the real possibility of an autonomous movement with forms of genuine self-management and real participatory democracy, if only as a possibility. The difficulty lies in critically distinguishing act from potency, the form from the substance.

The struggle was initiated by the local union delegates and non-union workers, with the former being in the stronger position by virtue of their organization and the weight of all the dead generations lying on the brains of the living." From the start, it was clear that no action could succeed without the active support of the vast majority of the workers. While it is true that the factory had a tradition of struggle and that the urgency of the situation sufficed to propel many to action, the majority tended to remain apathetic, either from the inertia of good breeding or from wary distrust of union hierarchy. This last was particularly the case with the younger workers. As a result, the action had to be carried out in a way that would ensure the participation of all. Thus, the union has to operate in a different manner than usual. "We did not want to impose the word of order because we knew it wouldn't work. The workers had to become conscious and act on this consciousness as they saw fit." (Piaget, p.23)

Action is difficult without proper information and an arena for intersubjective contact and discussion. Consequently, the struggle was marked by a great degree of openness, particularly at its inception. This was intended to be both the cause and the result of the organizational framework established: a daily General Assembly, the union locals, the Action Committee, and Work Committees.

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The most important thing was to assure the unity of the Lip workers. The role of the General Assembly is here primordial. It had to have the maximum available information so proposals could be made there and decisions taken by all the workers. Unity is also this: we were fighting against an oppressive hierarchy. We could not possibly in the course of the struggle create another, just as oppressive. That's why the General Assembly had the decision-making power. But that was not enough. Once decisions were made, they had to be carried out. That's the role of the committees we created. All the workers could participate in them, and thus once more it is the workers who carry out the decisions taken in the General Assembly. (Piaget, pp.4-5)

The General Assembly met throughout the struggle and voted on all major proposals as ultimate "sovereign body." The action mandated was to be realized in the Work Committees. "The different committees are each responsible for an ensemble of tasks, which each accomplishes by the mandate and under the control of the General Assembly. They are not rigid organizations, and the number and use of these Committees can change according to the needs of the movement." (dossier, p.1 ) In fact a large number of committees functioning on a daily basis was established including a Management Committee, coordinate daily tasks; a Welcoming Committee, to receive visitors; a Mailing Committee; a Security Committee; a Restaurant Committee, to feed well and cheaply; a Production Committee, to keep watches coming; a Sales Committee, to dispose of the watches. The largest committee, and the one regarded as the most important, was the Popularization Committee, charged with spreading word of the struggle and building support. Its subcommittees prepared the regular bulletin **Lip-unite**, helped make a film, distributed cassettes about the struggle, sent delegations to speak at other factories and cities, etc.

In France, there are no closed union shops. One plant may see workers doing the exact same job and belonging to different unions, with many fellow workers being non-union. This was the case at Lip. For the action to succeed these non-union people were crucial. In fact, non-union people played an active role from the beginning. "They wanted to participate in the decision-making as well as the action. That was the birth of the Action Committee. We favored this movement to a point where at one time the union delegates said to themselves: 'Shit, there's nothing for us to do anymore in the struggle.'" (Piaget, p.2 )

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Occupation d'usines en 1936



Union control over the struggle was established beyond all doubt during the confrontations with the CRS after the expulsion from the factory. Numerous workers from the area had joined in support of the Lip and violent clashes broke out. "This was the moment when the struggle of the Lip workers seemed to have the largest social impact. Its check marked the condemnation of the struggle to isolation. That check showed especially the domination of the unions over the working class. Concrete solidarity with Lip is weaker than obedience to the unions. The first moments past, the unions moved to return the workers to their cages..." (Mise au point, p.10) The given excuse was that power lies in the workplace, not in the streets, that violence would hurt the movement, and that street violence was to play the game on the enemy's field. Yet despite all the talk about May 68, one lesson appears for certain not to have been learned: the violent clashes between police and students triggered the wave of mass wildcat strikes and occupations that nearly issued in total revolution. Some members of the Action Committee expressed amazed indignation: "That's what we don't understand. You make an appeal to the population, you march before the factories, all that, and once the people arrive here, they (the unions) say: 'Don't get excited, stay calm!' and then that's all..." (from **Lip: interview avec des membres du CA**, in *Mise au point*, p.10) Thus the possibility of retaking the factory from the CRS in the midst of rising public indignation and support was lost. The unions had triumphed in the present, but only at the expense of the future.

The catchword of the union, "To negotiate is also to struggle," to me points out precisely what is wrong with trade unions from the perspective of revolutionary change of everyday life. "In modern capitalist society the unions are neither a degenerated workers' organization nor a revolutionary organization betrayed by its bureaucratic leaders, but a mechanism for the integration of the proletariat into the system of exploitation. Reformist in essence, the union - whatever the politics of the bureaucrats who run it - remains the best defense of an employing class become reformist itself. It is the principle obstacle to all desires of the proletariat for total emancipation. From now on, all revolt of the working class will be in the first place against its own unions." (Vienet, pp.111-112. This point is argued forcibly with regard to the CNT in Spain by Murray Bookchin in his article "Reflections on Spanish Anarchism.")

This was possible because the union was the most readily available tool for the successful realization of the **expressed** demands of the workers, in themselves essentially reformist. "Our demands are clear. We want: no shut down, no layoffs, continuation of acquired benefits. For that we have pursued the struggle under appropriate forms so long as a solution con-

forming to our demands does not occur. We are open to all solutions implying no layoffs, no shut down, and we are ready to engage in serious discussion." (dossier, p.2) And again, "There is only one solution for us: saving the business without shut down or layoffs." (dossier, p.9)

Despite all the verbiage about autonomy and participation and control, the unions continually asserted that "the solution is entirely in the hands of the Public Authorities which directly participated in the plan to shut down." (dossier, p.2) The solution to be sought, then, had to be a political one, and not a social one, in dependence (two words) on the State. The seemingly radical actions taken and the apparently revolutionary forms of participation adopted in fact had no immediate conscious revolutionary import. Rather than altering the way in which daily life is felt and experienced by actualizing the opportunity for generalized self-management which was presented, what was at stake was nothing more than the past as future. "In producing and selling the watches ourselves, we have no illusion of attempting 'self-management.' We have simply chosen, at a given moment, a form of struggle which allows us to assure our salaries and defend our jobs." (dossier, p.2) Surely a worthy cause, but certainly not a revolutionary one.

In the Action Committee and the General Assembly a great deal of discussion took place. This was necessary to assure participation and to achieve unity by airing disagreements. On the positive side, many learned to express themselves in public. Yet things remained in the hands of the unions. The comparison is not exact, if only because they are less adept, but anyone who has been to any of the old anti-war conferences or strategy meetings knows how organized forces can allow much discussion and still control the outcome, relying in part on their organized unity and in part on the conservatism of the participants. "In fact decisions (in the General Assembly) were made by vote of raised hands, following speeches by the leaders." (Lutte de classe) p.11) This allowed the unions to control the negotiations under the guise of their expertise in such matters. "...the real role of the union was to select the boss most capable of modernizing the company from among the various postulants who presented themselves." (Lutte de classe, p.7)

Participatory democracy, then, was only formal and for the most part social relations remained essentially as before. "Thus the wildcat production (of watches) necessitated no change in the organization of work and the social relations which it determines...Even the pay was hierarchical." (Lutte de classe, p. 1)

And rather than attacking capitalism, the Lip acted in a way to strengthen it. "There were no other reasons for this choice (of means of struggle) than the wish to continue as before: the continuation of salaries necessitates the continuation of capital.

The 'no layoffs, no shut down' signifies the 'safeguarding of the business,' that is, of capital." (Negation, p.27)

This sounds rather pessimistic. In fact it is not. The important thing is to see the Lip for what it is, a part of a continuing historical process. In isolation the Lip has no meaning. And in fact it cannot even be properly considered that way. On one level, the Lip remains fundamentally conservative, on the level of what was consciously expressed. But a great deal went on within those who participated in the struggle. A taste of the new was had, if only fleetingly. The fact that many refused to return to work gives real ground for optimism. We are in a time that has been variously described as a "New Enlightenment," a "New Epoch," and the "re-emergence of the communist movement (by Bookchin, the Situationist International, and Barrot and Martin respectively). Whatever the name given, we are in a period of prolonged transformation. Given the initial level of consciousness, one should not be overly disappointed that the initial breakthroughs brought confusion and finished being recuperated, at least temporarily. The continuing historical process is "...altering the unconscious apparatus of the individual even before it can be articulated unconsciously as a social theory or a commitment to political convictions...These profound changes tend to occur almost unknowingly, as for example among workers who, in the concrete domain of everyday life, engage in sabotage, work indifferently, practice almost systematic absenteeism, resist authority in almost every form, use drugs, and acquire various freak traits - and yet, in the abstract domain of politics and social philosophy, acclaim the most conventional homilies of the system. The explosive character of revolution, its suddenness and utter unpredictability, can be explained only as the eruption of these unconscious changes into consciousness, as a release of the tension between unconscious desires and consciously held views in the form of an outright confrontation with the existing social order." (Murray Bookchin, "Spontaneity and Organization," p.7)

This process is not irrevocable, determined. It is the outcome of the action of all of us. Capital is, again, not some abstract externality. It is a social relationship; it is what we do every day. Thus, the possibility of its change.

The real meaning of the Lip will be known in the future as the process I have spoken of is realized or not. The significance of this article will lie in how it contributes to the development of consciousness, the sine qua non, the one necessary element in the winning of the future, the creative, poetic expropriation of expropriated life.

Below are the various works consulted.

**Lip: Charles Piaget et les Lip racontent**, Stock, Paris, 1974.

**Lip-unite**, nos. 1-14, bulletin of the Lip workers.

**Lip: dossier d'information**, published by the Popularization Committee

"Lip: c'est bien fini," *Lutte de classe*, March 1974.

**Lip: une breche dans le mouvement ouvrier traditionnel**, *Mise au point*, 2

**Lip et le contre-revolution autogestionnaire**. *Negation*.

The latter two are the best commentaries I have seen. The *Negation* pamphlet is to soon be issued in translation by Black and Red, Box 9546, Detroit, Mi. 48202.

The following provide theoretical background.

Murray Bookchin, "Spontaneity and Organization," *Anarchos* 4.

"Reflections on Spanish Anarchism," *Our Generation*, Vol 10, no. 1.

Raoul Vaneigem, "Some Advice Concerning Generalized Self-Management" and *Treatise on Living for the Use of The Young Generations*.

Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*.

Jean Barrot and Francois Martin, *Eclipse and Re-emergence of the Communist Movement*, Black and Red

Munis and Zerzan, *Unions Against Revolution*, Black and Red.

Rene Vienet, *Enrages et situationnistes dans le mouvement des occupations*, Paris, Gallimard, 1969.

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Solidarit tskomitee

## TIME PAYMENTS: REGULAR OR REVOLVING

### the heart lesson

I was in a room full of respectable people who never worried about overdrawing; it wasn't that they didn't keep an account of expenses, but they didn't think about prices. The oranges were flown direct from Valencia, they drank Chablis with pheasant in season. I came from the slums of Spanish Harlem.

We had just finished drinking early sixties French burgandies with dinner and en masse walked into the ballroom. Now was time for dancing. Listening intensely to the comments those around me to record them later in my journal, I wanted to place words in the mouths of my middle-class characters when I wrote fiction.

The man and woman I lived with as mistress-companion approached; "Come dance!" she exclaimed, her satin dress swirling. "In front of these persons whose good opinion you value?" I answered, "you who are so frightened that someone will suspect?" We'd had all-night arguments about integrity, when she accused me of living openly without discretion and I told her she was a coward. I brought my body close to hers, trying to recapture the pleasure between us.

Something glistened as her hand moved under my breast; I thought she must be wearing her diamond bracelet but it was the knife she had forced into my chest. "Now will you be silent!" she said. I screamed as I sobbed, "Why have you done this?" Men in tuxedos placed me on a stretcher; she was smiling standing by her mother and husband.

I woke up in a hospital, a doctor was saying, "Which one of these would you like? Sit up and pick one out." A nurse presented a tray covered with candy mint hearts of green, purple and orange, in the center messages were written. They were the kind we used to buy as children, only larger; they had the same fluted edges and the words were still printed in red.

I chose one saying, "Love Forever." As he lifted up one side of my rib cage however, I objected, "Aren't these made of sugar? Won't it melt?"

"Of course, he replied, shrugging, "what else did you expect?" Suddenly he stopped sewing it. The nurse said, "Get off the table, please. It's 5 o'clock. Union regulations." The doctor added, taking off his powdered rubber pink gloves, "Nothing to worry about. This always happens. We'll begin promptly at 9 tomorrow." He turned as he left: "One word of warning--you must keep the rest of your blood warm. I'm taping a thermometer into the opening of this jar, see that it doesn't fall below 95 degrees." When I asked how I was to prevent this, he answered, "I haven't the slightest idea. But I understand those in this bed before you had some ingenious solutions. Ask the floor attendants."

They placed me on a mattress in a white metal frame. I called out asking for suggestions but the aides were playing cards. The patients in the next beds explained wearily that the aides never responded and offered no help themselves.

In terror I thought, "What if I die before my books are written?" I was watching the temperature in the jar drop "They must have candles." In a broom closet I found some and set up a chaffing dish which worked fine at first. Then I noticed the sediment collecting at the bottom was turning into jelly, perhaps because of the flame and dehydration. So I decided to hold the jar under running warm water. I was very tired.

"Sure you are," an old woman said as she followed me into the bathroom. "Since they've left you so little blood there's not enough oxygen. You'll suffocate. Forget about that jar and go back to bed. Don't move. Save your strength."

"If I do will I last until morning?" I replied. She explained I would have to hold on longer. The wards were full of people with unfinished treatments; "Almost

half of us die," she informed me. I left the room in a panic, and started walking through endless corridors before I found an exit to the street.

It was 2 in the morning; I couldn't find a taxi. Shivering I walked toward Paul's. The area was deserted. I was soon lost, gasping for air. A man stood before me in ceremonial Aztec robes, he wore huge, heavy glasses though which he glared with disapproval. "Did you forget?" he said, "You've been given a tongue that speaks. Why are you not telling about our people? What it means to be poor and suffer. Remember your heritage. Do not forget your duty!"

Paul's door opened, I turned to introduce them but the man in robes had vanished. "My god you're pale," Paul said, and brought me into the livingroom. I didn't notice at first that the furniture was missing as I told him about the evening, Phyllis and the hospital. He called a private physician who finished the stitching and gave me a transfusion.

"Why can't you view women as I do?" Paul demanded. "You get involved and they ruin your life."

"It was because of your women that I left you," I said to myself. We had been lovers for a decade until he wanted someone else to do the overwhelming. I learned to prefer women.

He brought me a cup of coffee and it was only then that I realized why I felt so uneasy. I said, "He brought me a cup of coffee," but I did not actually see the cup. All I saw was his grey eyes and black hair above me and I saw steam rising from a brown circle, and the steam smelt like coffee. Then glancing around the room I saw that it was large, white and empty. I could not see my body.

"I must really be delirious. Very ill. I'm having hallucinations," I told him. "The room looks totally empty, even I am not in it! Your hair and eyes are the only

color here; they're floating in space without a face." He laughed and I saw the pink redness inside his mouth, his tongue, and the outlines of his teeth. He replied, "I've installed special lighting that eliminates distractions. Everything only seems white, made of bones and essentials."

After coffee, he said, "For the sake of your writing I'm going to lock you in this room and let you out for a walk each day; what Collette's husband did for her. Once a week you'll come downstairs when I give a party ;I'll arrange a roomful of women for you. Oh I know by now the type you like physically. But you must promise not to speak to them and wear a blindfold. You cannot allow any more of these emotional disruptions. You've been wasting your talent for years."

I began writing and several days later he guided me toward the sound of laughter and women's voices. Records were playing, the room was scented with hashish. He had chosen well; although I couldn't see, I could tell this by touching and caressed the wrists of the one I had chosen. She gathered up my hair and ran her opened lips across my shoulders. "Why is it only women who know how to touch?" I wondered. Taking the band of cloth from around my eyes I asked her what her name was.

Paul rushed over yelling, "You will never learn, never, never never!" I asked her to follow me upstairs. The next morning he knocked on my door and said it was time for her to go. I suggested we have breakfast together first. He served the orange juice and eggs in total silence. When she left I told her I would like to see her again. As I turned and walked back up the stairs Paul detained me and said we were driving into town to have my teeth fixed.

As he tipped me backwards in his chair, the dentist assured me, "This won't hurt. Im going to give you an injection." I watched him insert the needle. "Count backwards from ten." he instructed.

"Eight, seven..six--," horizontal, I was flying swiftly face downward through a long black tunnel and woke up inside my room.

I could see nothing but the keys of a typewriter and the black print of an open book

Something was wrong. There was a knock and Paul's eyes and hair appeared before my face.

"I wish to explain," he began, "How many lovers have there been?" I replied, "25 or 26."

"By now you know about the nature of love: its futility. At what age did your mother die?" he continued. I answered, "Thirty-six."

"Your grandmother from the same cause, cerebral hemorrhage. You are a fragile blood vessel that will burst. You have little time left; however, other people remain more important to you than your own abilities. There was nothing else I could do." he said.

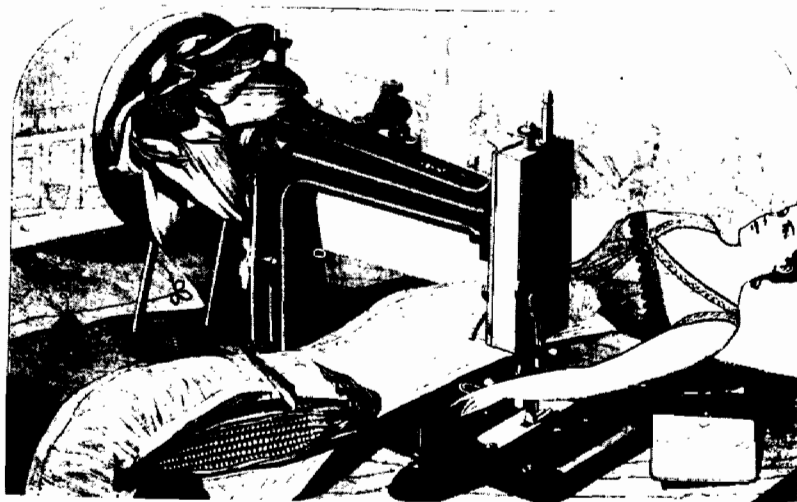
"What do you mean?" I whispered, terrified, because somehow my legs and hands didn't seem to be there.

"I have had your body removed," he explained. "Your head is what is now sitting on top of this desk. By speaking to your left you can dictate your stories, the sounds transform into electronic impulses that press the keys of this typewriter. To your right is an open book. When you want the page to turn, touch the space in front of you with your lips. I will comb your hair, change the books, take you out whenever you wish. Perhaps in this way you will complete your novel."

He brought me a mirror. For days I cried but soon I saw it could not be undone. I must live, continue. I even began to think, "Yes I would have gone on to another, and when the relationship ended still I would not have written." I began to feel happy; my work was going well.

One day I asked Paul to take me to the park. Some of his friends were there, men who were playing golf. One of them was an editor, another wrote articles for encyclopedias. Paul wanted to get back to his painting, he spoke of an unfinished canvas, asked them to look after me until he returned. I spent the day looking at trees, getting warm in the sun. I was spring.

One of the men approached me and picked up my head. "This will work," he said to his friend, "it's round." They had lost all their golfballs in the hedges. Before I could protest I felt my eye and cheek in the dirt. With each blow of their clubs I lost a part of my memory. I tried to scream but my mouth would not open. The metal crashed against my head and I rolled into the next hole, again and again. Before I lost the ability to think I laughed.



1970-74 Marie Nares

## TIME PAYMENTS: REGULAR OR REVOLVING

### double image

She was stretched out on a sofa covered with antelope skins. "We brought them back from Marrakesh last year and Benares," he told her, handing her another cigarette, "ah, you'd love it there!" A lighter appeared before her, his polished fingernails gleamed pink. As he leaned toward her, she breathed the scent of his perfume. He had the social skin of a woman, lips covered with a faint rose hue and his eyelashes were painted deep blue.

"I knew what I was when I was five! Darling, can you imagine me flying across an Idaho plain riding side-saddle on my pony! Wrapped up in a long blanket, I arranged a train that flew behind me in the wind," he moved and the black silk kaftan clung to his willowy body. "I always let the older boys sweep me onto the ground," he continued, his bowed head brushed his hair against her cheek. "Come with me," he told her, "I want to show you my sculptures."

They were in his studio, a large room made of heavy wood, she was on top of a chair looking into the open skull of a tall male figurine. "Look inside," he said, "I collected all that in garbage dumps." There was an old fashioned mouse trap, a tiny 19th century doll, and a pack of playing cards.

His arms encircled her hips as he carried her back to the ground with his fingers pressed into her flesh he said, "I think it's time for me to have a lesbian affair." His kiss left a trace of wax on her mouth.

"Wouldn't your friend object? I know Jane would," she mused, still in his arms. "Not in the least," he replied, "after all, I've lived with him twelve years."



"You're a Monet pastel," she said. His eyes were light grey, his shirt a pale coffee made of crepe. He handed her another joint and her face turned into foam rubber as it rose to the ceiling she said, "Last night I dreamt I was just a head. I'm so stoned, what kind is this?"

"Jamaican kief," he replied, showing her some photographs of himself dressed as a blonde woman. "Do you like me this way? A disk jockey used to hire me to go out with him and his wife, when we left for dinner, three women walked out: that was before my commercial success."

"Jane and I are the only females at this party," she said, "where is Jane?"

Kahn replied he had last seen her lover in one of the front rooms, playing chess. It was 1 a.m., and he was drinking cold champagne from a chilled silver glass. "She once drew me floating, a balloon attached to her wrists. Otherwise, Jane said, I might just drift away."

"I think you're your own anchor," he replied, "There's no harm in dancing with a lady," and caught her close round her waist. His smile invited like a woman's. He said, "Will you pose some afternoon?"

Dismayed she answered, "All my life I've served as someone's model. This summer I went into the water in a flowing black dress, it stuck to me afterward as I lay in the sand. A shadow fell on my face; there was a man standing over me. 'Don't move,' he said."

"Good stuff," Kahn interrupted saying, his hand barely passed over her thigh.

She shivered and continued, determined to remain in control, "That's what I hate the most about it...the staying still. The man held a camera. 'Aren't you Jane Samuels?' he said, 'I saw your etchings at the museum.'"

"I told him I was not Jane, just the woman she lived with. Each time I think they're going to show me who I am, but I should know by now I can only get

at from myself. I'm so glad you're wearing perfume."

He pulled her closer, his hardness reminding her he was not a woman. She said, "I'm a lot like George Sand, someone who does all the wooing with her head." He finally pulled down her dress. "Don't let him be like the others, pounding their own satisfaction," she thought.

"We lesbians, we're legendary lovers. I'm in no hurry," he ran his fingernails over the palm of her hand, the tips of her breasts. When she said, "I can't stand anymore," he remembered how her first man fumbled with her clothing. "Don't bother," she had said, "I can do it myself."

Then as now her feet turned to concrete but she rebelled. "Now you lie down," she kneeled above him and whipped his skin with her hair, enjoyed it when she made him swollen in her mouth, until the wallpaper was printed all over with a sentence in 2 foot high letters:

**DON'T FORCE YOURSELF DON'T FORCE YOURSELF  
DON'T FORCE YOURSELF DON'T FORCE YOURSELF**

so she fell back against the pillows. The face beside her was a woman's.

"Open your legs," he said. A fox fur coverlet thrown across the bed felt like softened wet straw, she sighed, "I can't move. You needn't be anxious, I've slept with men."

"I never thought you hadn't," he replied. "We'll be what we are for a while." His flesh was leather. It was bone. Her sounds were the moans her mother used to make; there was an explosion in her head, her nipples burst open so did her lips.

# Interview with Esther and Sam Dolgoff

by Doug Richardson

## INTRODUCTION

"To me, anarchism is a process," explains Sam Dolgoff. "There is no pure anarchism - there is only the application of anarchist principles to the realities of social living." With their 'credo' thus established, Sam and Esther Dolgoff go on in this interview to describe the American anarchist tradition of earlier in the century, and their experiences in that movement.

There is generally very little known and even less that is understood about this period of anarchist history. It is a history which has been highly distorted. The official re-scripting of anarchist events, for obvious political reasons, has been universal, almost a matter of course. This has been as consistently and thoroughly accomplished by the state 'communist' press as it has by the capitalist press. The Spanish revolution of 1936 is only the best-known instance of the historical mugging anarchism has characteristically received.

From about the 1880's to the 1920's there existed a North American anarchist movement that represented a significant social force. This period of anarchist activity in the United States is quite well-documented, as is the post-script event of that movement, the Sacco-Vanzetti case. Then, around the 1920's, it disappeared and we enter something of a Dark Ages for libertarian politics, with centralization and a presumed efficiency the obliterating trend. Corporate capitalism and state capitalism swept everything else out of the way. From this period of the early 1920's until the middle of the 1960's and the emergence of the new left, there is practically no mention of anarchism as a force in American society.

Even the best histories available, those that try to be honest, usually end about 1920. The classic analysis given for the decline of anarchism then is the old-age theory. This explanation assumes that anarchism is basically an anachronism today, an idea rooted in the past whose time has come to die. The tendency is to pay homage to anarchism in a sentimental way, suggesting that it was a nice idea in a simpler past, but woefully inadequate to the 'realities' of today's complex world.

As a result, nearly every history of American anarchism ends about 1920 with an artificially and comfortably (for historians) containerized movement, relegated to the proverbial dustbins.

This "anarchism is dead" theory, of course, eliminated the need to explain the abrupt decline of the earlier movement in any specific terms, and also precluded questions of continuity. There have been no attempts to trace the threads through to the present.

In this interview, Esther and Sam Dolgoff talk about the decline of the old movement and some of the activities that were carried on during the low ebb that followed. Their descriptions of the waning of traditional anarchism during the 20's and 30's offer real explanations for these events in terms of the specific nature of that movement and historical forces affecting it, and raise questions about ideological continuity and the relationship of that earlier anarchism to the anarchism of today. The parallels are often striking, though the times have certainly changed, and the two movements are separated not only by a gulf of time but also by the enormous social and material changes which have glutted those intervening years. And though there is much that is valuable in the experiences of that earlier movement, and there is much to learn from the past in general, we do not, of course, recommend emulating the past, nor are we interested in enshrining an anarchist "heritage" or creating individual heroes. Instead, the past must be de-mystified and understood, for the creative syntheses necessary for the future will require a serious analysis and thorough understanding of the developments of the past.

The Dolgoff's, both in their seventies, now live in New York City. Esther lectures occasionally and Sam, a house-painter by trade, is also the author of numerous pamphlets, labor articles, and two books - *The Anarchist Collectives* and *Bakunin on Anarchy*. This interview is from a series of oral-history interviews compiled by some members of the Black Rose magazine collective. The series covers various aspects of North American anarchism (such as the Italian movement, the Jewish movement, the decline of the 20's, etc.). For more information, contact the Black Rose Oral-History Project, P.O. Box 463, Cambridge, Mass. 02139.

*Doug:* We're going to talk about North American anarchism during the last fifty years or so, from the 1920's on up to the present. How did you two become involved in anarchism?

*Sam:* Well, I started out as a young Yipsle. You know, a Young People's Socialist League; they were social-democrats. And then, about the time of the Russian revolution, Morris Hillquit, the socialist running for office, he came out for better milk, babies, etc. — very reformist program, and so forth — and so we had a real knock-down, drag-out fight in there. I said that the social democrats were too reformistic, they were a movement without a soul, that they were trying to imitate the democrats and republicans, and I had a lot of disputes with them, you know. So they told me, "You don't belong

here, you belong with the anarchists." And I said, "That's very interesting. Have you got their address?" So I went down and I got acquainted with a group, used to be called the "Road to Freedom." The editor was a fellow named Hippolyte Havel, and another friend of Emma Goldman's named Walter Starrett Van Valkenburgh. He had a wood leg — lost it in a railroad accident in Schenectady. Well anyhow, when I got among the anarchists, they said, "You're not a good anarchist, you're really a Wobbly!" So I says, "What's their address?" Then I went down there and got acquainted with the Wobblies. And ever since then we've been arguing the point of who's an anarchist and who isn't. And that's fifty years ago or more! And we still haven't come to a conclusion on it.

**Doug:** Fortunately, there is no one to sit and pass judgment on these questions. How did you get involved with the anarchist movement, Esther?

**Esther:** Well, my father's nephew who was five years younger than himself because in the old country, you know, they had large families . . .

**Doug:** Which country was this?

**Esther:** Russia-Poland; and the oldest daughter would be carrying at the same time that her mother was, because they married young and had large families. Anyway, my father's nephew was an anarchist and he was in that movement where the students went to the people to teach them how to read.

**Doug:** The Narodniki?

**Sam:** No, the Narodnaya Volya (Will of the People), a later group.

**Esther:** And even before he came to America, my mother would tell me how he didn't care about himself, how she would get a hold of him and make him mend his clothes, and feed him up because he looked like he forgot to eat. And he and his wife staged a strike, and his wife became very ill, she caught the flu, and he was arrested and was going to be sent to Siberia. And during all this trouble his wife died of the flu, and according to Jewish law they have to bury the body before sundown, but his mother-in-law at a time like that was arranging to get him out to London through the sort of underground railroad that they had then. The people threw stones into the house because she hadn't buried the body of her daughter.

**Doug:** So you had sort of a radical family history . . .

**Esther:** Yes, these were some of the sources.

**Doug:** Were you both around N.Y. City for most of your lives?

**Sam:** Well, I met Esther in the 30's during a speaking tour in Cleveland, and had become an anarchist in the 20's, maybe ten years before.

But I want address myself to another question first — about being anarchist. To shed a little light on the situation in the

movement. Anarchism is a big umbrella, and under that umbrella are many different anarchists. And the people around that group, called the Road to Freedom group, which I was connected with, was what we would call a corned-beef hash — an amalgam, you know. All sorts of people. And there were as many brands of anarchism as there were people there.

**Doug:** Were they all able to work together?

**Sam:** Well, that was the trouble with them. A great many of them did not believe in organization. Or didn't believe in the mass struggle. Or didn't believe in immediate demands, like shorter hours. Or they didn't believe that anarchism could be a movement of the people, but only a movement of the elite. And they complemented themselves that they were among the elite who were able to understand what was going on. No rational approach to the problem social. They were worse than utopians (and I don't consider utopians so bad, by the way). But their anarchism began with their belly-button and ended with it. The sacred ego, and so forth. In other words, the most antisocial type of individualism, a type of bohemianism.

And, naturally, among themselves, it was allright. But for us young fellows, it was no good. They wouldn't even tolerate a committee of relations between two groups. And they went in for the most esoteric cults, which they identified with anarchism, such as vegetarianism, nudism, etc. There were some semi-religious ones too: Rosicrucians, Tolstoyans, colonists who were going to set an example for the world, and so forth. Well, I was never happy with that, but I had no other answer, since I didn't know anything about it. And I became very curious. I read Kropotkin, and I taught myself how to read a number of languages, so I could read the literature, the anarchist classics. And when I read the anarchist classics, and the history of the revolutionary movement, and all these things, I could no longer live with them. They were too much of a disparity. I was an anarcho-communist, you know, and an anarcho-syndicalist; that I knew. But not a Stirnerite, and what have you. And I got to the point where anarchism didn't mean anything to me unless it had a hyphen. So that we should know where we stand and where we don't stand. Now this was not an automatic process. I was very unclear, and I met a man by the name of Gregory Petrovich Maximoff, out in Chicago. You heard of him?

**Doug:** Sure.

**Sam:** And I started to talk with him, and I start to give him the regulation anarchist blah, you know, and he looked at me and he says, "Boy, your education is sadly neglected." And he says "You know, do you realize that you don't know what you're talking about? What you're telling me has absolutely nothing to do with anarchism, or the anarchist movement as a living force. And I see that you have been (and he used the equivalent of the word "brainwashed") by those numb-skulls

out there in New York.”

*Doug:* That’s an attitude that a lot of people in the midwest share about New Yorkers!

**Sam:** Oh yes. And Maximoff gave me holy hell, and he took me under his wing. And with my reading and a lot of discussion, he helped me to clarify my ideas.

*Doug:* Was this in the twenties?

**Sam:** Sure, ’23-’24, a long time ago. And, not that I agreed with everything he told me, by any means, but I got what I call a correct orientation. And, with me you have to specify what kind of anarchist.

*Doug:* I think that the significant tradition historically — both intellectually and in terms of social movements — is that of anarcho-communism, or libertarian socialism.

**Sam:** My anarchism is an organizational anarchism, part that of Proudhon, part of Kropotkin, of Bakunin, of Anselmo Lorenzo. To me, anarchism is a movement of the people, not only a standard of personal conduct. I am interested in anarchism as a *social* movement. It’s not for me a religious faith or the equivalent thereof. Therefore, you have to consider me a sectarian, if you want to. I am an anarcho-communist, an anarcho-syndicalist, and an anarcho-individualist-pluralist! Because all of these things go into my social anarchism. I’m not a strict anarcho-communist, or a strict syndicalist; I’m a social anarchist who appreciates the importance of the individual in a social context.

I am in agreement with Kropotkin and Bakunin and the rest of them — I consider anarchism to be the truest expression of socialism. I don’t even like the term anarchism. I’m a heretic in that respect. If I had my way, I would call myself a “free socialist.”

And one more thing. The word anarchism is of comparatively recent origin. The earlier anarchists did not call themselves anarchists.

*Doug:* It’s probably the establishment of authoritarian parties and state-capitalist governments which label themselves as “socialist” that has brought about the use of distinguishing terms.

**Sam:** I consider that anarchism is the equivalent of free socialism. There can be no anarchism without socialism. I’m not an individualist in the sense of Stirner.

*Doug:* There’s also been some confusion introduced by these “laissez faire” capitalists who have called themselves anarchists. “Anarchism” has come to have almost as many connotations as socialism.

**Sam:** This is precisely why I’m of the opinion that an organization of individuals should have a set of fundamental principles which clearly says what they are about. Another thing, I don’t believe in this idea that all the anarchists can

work together. They can work together for certain specific things where their interests are in common — maybe a protest against oppression, or jail, to raise money, or in a protest movement, something like that — but as a working relationship, no. If people who do not agree with each other on fundamentals try to work together, they split up anyhow. And they confuse themselves, and what’s worse any people who might be interested. So it is best for each one to do their own thing, as they say now, and to get together **when** they have something in common. I believe in autonomy, diversity, and people getting together when they want to get together.

**Esther:** I want to say something about the individualist anarchists. We have to put ourselves back in time to understand them, when people lived under extremely repressive societies. For instance, Stirner was a kind of reaffirmation of the ego of the person which the repressive society was trying to smother. And you could see where this kind of emphasis on the individual would come from.

*Doug:* A sort of reclaiming of part of your own soul, you mean?

**Esther:** Yes. We can’t look back from our position today and glibly judge societies. We have to place ourselves as much as we can in that condition. And that explains why certain things arise.

**Sam:** I want to clarify yet another point. I know you’re not asking me, but I want to give you my slant on what I consider to be anarchism. I’m an anarchist who is willing to settle for something less than the millenium. Which will never come.

*Doug:* **People have** to eat today.

**Sam:** I wrote an article a long time ago, and I’m going to read to you that which I want to tell you, which I expressed in a better way here:

“There is no pure anarchism. There is only the application of anarchist principles to the realities of social living. The aim of anarchism is to stimulate forces that propel society in a libertarian direction. And it is only from this standpoint that the relevance of anarchism to modern society can be properly assessed.”

To me, anarchism is a *process*.

*Doug:* What I would like to do now is talk some about the concrete forms that process has taken in this country. You know, what organizational ways, what types of educational and cultural programs, what sorts of labor activities, etc.

**Sam:** Well, from the organizational point of view, once I got myself straightened out about what I considered to be my credo (social anarchism), it led me and others in two directions. First of all, it led to ideologically distinguishing ourselves from tendencies in anarchism which ran counter to our concepts.

*Doug:* How did you do that?

**Sam:** Simply by forming a group of our own. And calling ourselves an anarchist-communist group. And putting out a paper, a journal called the *Vanguard*, which was one of the best papers of the 30's and latter part of the 20's.

*Doug:* How long did that paper come out?

**Sam:** About 8 years or so. It can be found in the Greenwood Reprints. But before that we were active in other things. We had a group called Friends of Freedom, and so forth, but they all went along that line. First, we constituted ourselves as an anarchist-communist group. Secondly, there was no antagonism with us between anarcho-syndicalism and anarcho-communism, which are two facets of the same concept. And we put out a propoganda paper. And we joined the IWW, since it was, as far as we were concerned, the most likely to be receptive to our ideas, and was closer, not identical, but closer to what we considered a labor movement should be. And wherever we worked, at the point of production where we were, we endeavored to advance our ideas. Not merely by preaching, but by acting.

*Doug:* What kind of work were you doing then?

**Sam:** I've been a house painter all my life. That's one thing. Then we had street meetings. We organized a federation.

*Doug:* A federation in N. Y. City?

**Sam:** In the United States.

*Doug:* What was it called?

**Sam:** The Anarchist-Communist Federation. In the early thirties.

*Doug:* How many people were involved?

**Sam:** Well, not very many. It sounded big, but it didn't amount to too much. We had a chain of groups and individuals.

*Doug:* Was Emma Goldman involved in that?

**Sam:** She used to correspond with us all the time. About Emma I'll talk some more some other time. And then, we engaged the other groups in debate. We used to argue with the Trotskyites and with the Communists and with the socialists. We used to debate them, accuse them of being impractical, that they weren't socialists at all. And so, we educated a lot of people. From us came a whole generation of rebels.

*Doug:* Were people like Chomsky and Bookchin around N.Y.C. then? Were they part of that new generation of rebels?

**Sam:** They did not come out of that tradition, no. Bookchin came from more or less the communist camp. He originated from the dissident communist camp, and evolved toward our ideas. I never was in that camp.

So, that was pretty much how we operated.

*Doug:* You had small groups throughout the thirties, then?

**Sam:** We had small groups then, right.

**Esther:** For instance, in Cleveland where I come from, everyone was all excited about the communists and the Russian revolution. And they were reading all the Russian literature, and so forth. That's when I met Sam, you know. And we tried to put out anarchist and libertarian literature for them to read, but all the talk during that period was about Centralization, how "efficient" centralization was. Centralization and Efficiency were their big words. The government was the Alpha and Omega to them, and that's where I differed from my communist friends in Cleveland. But we put out a mimeographed sheet, and also tried to get the student groups to read other literature

**Sam:** I was on a speaking tour for the anarchists and the Wobblies then, and in those days nobody paid expenses. I was on a box-car tour! And I came to Cleveland and debated a communist about Russia.

**Esther:** "Is Russia Going Toward Communism?" was the topic of the debate.

**Sam:** The issue is this, see. During the Thirties when the New Deal developed and all these things — we were against those. We took a position that they were going to satify society. And we wouldn't jump on the bandwagon — the AFL, CIO, New Deal, etc. And our paper always had a big column "On the Class War Front," where we analyzed the labor situation.

*Doug:* Were the anarchists very active in the union organizing?

**Sam:** When you come down to it, we had a lot of disputes with other anarchists about labor organizing. Quite a few anarchists became euphoric with the New Deal. And, their anarchism was never very well grounded, you see, and that comes from being so god-damned self-centered, you know. And instead of interpreting events from the anarchist point of view, they were actually helping the state to grow. It was a sad situation.

What we did was to take part and be active in mass meetings. We tried to offer practical alternatives.

*Doug:* Such as . . . ?

**Sam:** Well, take for example a strike situation. We were against the union bureaucracy settling the strike, or being the only ones to call them. And we were continually with the rank-and-file wildcatters, or the equivalent there-of, and against the bureaucracy.

**Esther:** Not all anarchists were, though.

**Sam:** No, our group. I'm not talking about the others. And we did a lot of things like that. We organized what they called an unemployed union. During the relief days during the thirties, they'd come and dispossess somebody and move them downstairs. We'd come and move them back in again.

*Doug:* Flying squads?

**Sam:** Yeah. If somebody would be getting the run-around for

relief money, we would storm the office. We'd raise so much hell, that they'd do anything to get rid of us.

**Esther:** We formed unemployed counseling groups, too, to help people deal with the authorities.

**Sam:** We picketed places where people worked, demanding shorter hours, and we told them to quit at 2:00 in the afternoon so there would be more work for those who were unemployed. And we did these kind of things. And whenever we saw a grass-roots movement along those lines, we helped. In other words, dissident groups and people who were lonely, that is, couldn't get help from anybody, they'd come to us, and we'd help them. We'd help them to picket, we would run off their leaflets, etc.

**Esther:** If some fellow couldn't get his wages in a restaurant, he'd tell us about it and we would go and picket the place and see that he got his due.

**Sam:** We would do all these things, see, and the people who came didn't have to be anarchists, you know. Whenever other people were trying to do these things, we would be there to help them.

**Esther:** We had a strike against the employment agencies.

**Sam:** Yeah, they used to charge people money to get a job! So we went out there and picketed it and told people not to patronize it, and we publicized what was going on. Sometimes it didn't do much good, but the point is that we were always there; we were an identifiable current among the people. We were not an elite up there in the sky.

**Doug:** Do you think that that identity all through the last 40 years has in some ways helped carry over anarchism from the times when it was a powerful social force (earlier in the century) to the present day?

**Sam:** Well, unfortunately, you see, there is a dark side to all this. Unfortunately, our groups were about as welcome in the anarchist ranks as a toothache.

**Doug:** Did your group work with the FREIE ARBEITER STIMME people?

**Sam:** To a certain extent we did, but then we had a big fight with them.

**Doug:** Your group did — the Vanguard group.

**Esther:** We were the youth group then. You know how they look upon the youth.

**Sam:** Most of the anarchists in the country were of that gaseous type, you know. Indeterminate, unclear, etc. And they comprised most of the movement. We were only a very small group.

**Doug:** Was your group mostly Russian immigrants?

**Sam:** No, we had all kinds of people.

**Doug:** Were you born in Russia, too, Sam?

**Sam:** Yeah, but I didn't know Russian. I came as a very small

boy. I don't remember it.

**Doug:** Were the ethnic groups in N.Y.C. pretty divided among themselves, through the 30's and 40's?

**Sam:** Well, yes and no. Here in N.Y. and other places, we had what they called a "Centro Libertario." We hired a big hall and the Italians, the Spaniards, and the Englishspeaking, and Portuguese, etc., we all got together and hired this hall and kept it going by having socials and contributions. They ran a lunch bar there, they had wine . . .

**Doug:** Were there classes going on there too?

**Esther:** The Wobblies had a school here, you know. They had a school in N.Y.C. and also in the midwest, in Duluth, Minn.

**Sam:** Yeah, all the various groups were doing all sorts of things there. And the Jews had another hall . . . Only certain groups got the one central hall, others kept their own hall. But there'd always be an exchange. Wandering in and about, all interpenetrating. The Jews had a hall on Second Avenue, called the Jewish-anarchist Cultural Center.

**Doug:** Has all that died out now?

**Sam:** There is practically no more.

**Doug:** What years were these things going on, Sam?

**Sam:** In the thirties. My period was the middle twenties and the thirties.

**Doug:** That was a period when the anarchist movement declined significantly, and the communist movement grew. Why do you think that was?

**Sam:** The communist movement grew by leaps and bounds.

**Doug:** Why?

**Sam:** Well, it was the aura of the Russian revolution, for one thing.

**Esther:** They had money, too.

**Sam:** They had good organizations, too. I have to come back to this whole swing toward centralization and statism that was taking place then. See, we had really an uphill fight. And we were also pretty disjointed; there was really no organic connection, as far as a common program of action was concerned. And the language groups, well, you know the language groups died out. The immigration was stopped. And they were very sectarian.

**Doug:** The language groups were sectarian, you mean?

**Sam:** They didn't think so, but they were.

**Doug:** Was there much actual antagonism between them?

**Sam:** Some of the Italian groups were carrying on real feuds, between a Tresca group and this group and that group.

**Doug:** Feuds with other ethnic anarchist groups, or among themselves?

**Sam:** No, among themselves, with other Italians. The Italian group represented a brand of anarchism of the kind I talked about earlier, you know, very moralistic, didn't believe in

organization, didn't believe in a chairman at meetings, etc. *But*, when it came to acting, they had a mysterious unanimity.

*Doug*: Yeah, they were pretty well coordinated when it came to acting.

**Sam**: Well, I'm convinced that a lot of them never got over their provincial Catholicism. Their vehemence was something else. They were good people, though. And the Spaniards. We had two kinds of Spanish groups. The Spanish group who lived in North America and tried to do something here, besides talking Spanish. And the Spanish group who still lived in Spain, even though they were physically here.

*Doug*: How did all these ethnic groups relate to the English-speaking groups?

**Sam**: Well, I'll tell you what it was. Strange as it may seem, we had a lot of solidarity **from** these groups. For all their differences, there was one thing the ethnic groups wanted — they loved to see an English-speaking anarchist group. They would help anybody who would start an English-speaking group, no matter what their differences. And there is no native anarchist movement in this country. In all the years that I've been around, there was never a native, real American anarchist movement. There would be a few people who would start an English-speaking group. And they would be helped by the foreign-language groups.

**Esther**: What I wanted to say, going back a little bit, to the growth of the communist movement. You found such a strange thing happening, because there used to be, in the American psyche or idea, an emphasis on individualism. But during the twenties and thirties you found that a change was taking place and the emphasis was not on the individual anymore. There was a party-line or a corporate policy that had to be followed. They made the individual feel "What do you know?" There is an elite to tell you what to do, you'd better get in line and march.

**Sam**: See, we were really swimming against the current. The current was running so strong for the "bogus socialists" as I call them, and they had money and people — the intellectuals, etc. They didn't come to us, they went to them. It's only lately that we've had a little bit of a renaissance.

*Doug*: Why do you think that has happened?

**Sam**: Well... first of all it was the communists getting together with the Nazis. And with the unfoldment of the bankruptcy of the Russian revolution, the aura was gone. It took years for it to percolate.

**Esther**: The weight of bureaucracy began to tell everywhere.

**Sam**: The evils became so manifest that there developed a reassessment of the socialist movement. And in reaction to the bogus socialism, our ideas became current. The events made

people receptive. Whereas the intellectuals had gone to the communists before, they come to us now.

*Doug*: It appears that it has simply taken 40 or 50 years for the influence of the Russian revolution to wear off, and for the mistakes of that experience to become clear to people.

**Sam**: That's right. A sort of generation gap. It took world wars, the rise of fascism, the betrayal of the Spanish revolution, the crushing of the Hungarian revolution, you see, all of these things were percolating. And it took all this to make people see that the totalitarian solution was no solution to the social problem. It took two generations before they got over it, they are still not over it.

**Esther**: The Age of Belief, in the party, in the state, in the leader... people don't recognize it with the facts right in front of their noses.

**Sam**: People finally came to the conclusion that the authoritarian communist parties and those ideas were bankrupt, with Stalin and everything else, and they start to look for new ways. Disappointment came and a reassessment took place. This is what made people receptive to other ideas, and an interest in anarchism has flared up. And it will continue to grow if we are in a position to offer viable alternatives to the problems social. In other words, we have got to make anarchism relevant to modern society, complex society.

*Doug*: Murray Bookchin has made some attempts in that direction, talking about decentralized technologies, etc.

**Sam**: I have a bone to pick with him too, although he's a very good friend of mine. I am not an abundantist.\* Their foundation is an assumed unlimited progress and plenty for the whole world. And my point is, *if* the realization of the socialist ideal is *dependent* on affluence and abundance, then we are finished. No such thing is gonna take place within the foreseeable future. And therefore, the realization of socialism, or anarchism, which to me are synonymous, will not depend on that factor. It will depend on human factors. Therefore there is no such thing as post-scarcity anarchism. There might be a scarcity of brains; there might be a scarcity of mutual aid. If we can't learn to live together in a condition of scarcity, we're sunk. And basically, that whole idea of post-scarcity and abundance is an authoritarian Marxist idea. That the economic situation is bound to do this, that, and the other thing.

*Doug*: Well, 'progress' is certainly not inevitable.

**Sam**: That's right, Progress is not inevitable. Inevitability is tied to fatalism, and fatalism is fatal to anarchism.

\*Nor is Murray Bookchin an abundantist. In a recent interview with Murray, which we hope to publish soon, he objects to this interpretation of post-scarcity. The text of the interview, in which Murray discusses the evolution and development of his work, is available in photostat from Black Rose for \$1.00 (cost of copying and mailing).

*Doug:* Did the Spanish revolution do much to rejuvenate North American anarchism?

*Sam:* During the revolution itself, sure. We started lots of things. But the communists, they were in the forefront. They had money, newspapers, everything. And they tried to monopolize the whole question of Spain. We could not match their resources. We couldn't compete with them in the thirties. In order to counteract their propaganda and tell people about the revolution, we organized a United Libertarian Organization. All the libertarians of every persuasion, that were interested, joined in one organization, to raise money for Spain; and we put out a paper, *The Spanish Revolution*. And we collected money and sent it there, and we put out propaganda, a lot of propaganda.

*Esther:* And some people went to the front.

*Doug:* Did the anarchists who went to Spain from here fight in the International Brigades?

*Sam:* Well, the Spanish anarchists from here who went there, they didn't go in any brigade. They just went to Barcelona and that was it. Some of the anarchists in the Wobblies, they were in the Lincoln Brigade or the Debs Brigade. The communists killed them.

*Doug:* That treachery in Spain is pretty well documented now. Were there any similar problems with the CPUSA and American anarchists? What was that relationship? Did they ever attempt to interfere much with your activities?

*Sam:* Oh yeah. They'd raid meetings, try to break up meetings. Not debate, physical interference. We used to fight with them. We used to take a lead pipe wrapped in a *Daily Worker*, and konk 'em.

*Esther:* We had to. They'd break up the meetings.

*Sam:* Yeah, we had pitched battles. We exposed them for what they were. Tell him about the "North American Committee."

*Esther:* Oh yes, we lived in Stelton, N.J., at that time. My oldest son went to the Ferrer School there. So everything centered around the school there. And when Sam came there to speak, the parents complained to us that the youth were going over to the communists. So we decided to put out a paper, called *Looking Forward*, in which all of the anarchist youth wrote. Some wrote the poems, others wrote about the school, and of course the question of Spain came up, since this was during the Spanish revolution. And the communists then were saying how they were the revolution itself, how the money was collected for an ambulance and it saved the life of one of the communist fellows that went over to fight in Spain, and all kinds of the regular propaganda stuff. And then they had the North American Committee. That was supposed to be the communist committee to collect funds, and they collected money for Spain like they did for the Sacco-Vanzetti case.

They collected a lot of money, and then there was a big scandal when they were supposed to report on how much money was collected, and how much was used in the U.S. and how much went to the cause for which it was collected. Well it so happened that with both the fascists and the North American Committee, most of it remained in the U.S. and very little of it got over to Spain.

*Doug:* The fascists were collecting money in the U.S. for Spain at that time too?

*Esther:* Yes, there were all kinds of organizations collecting money for Spain. And, about the North American Committee, you can verify this, the reports were listed in the *N.Y. Times*. Look it up. And so we publicized this. They had been lording over us so. And then, also, we got young people back — wobblies and anarchists who had fought on the front and came back and told how the communists were maneuvering even with the drinking water! And with the arms. And all the tricks that were played. The whole secret police apparatus from the Stalinist purges that were going on in Russia at that time was carried over into Spain.

*Doug:* What about relations between the anarchists and the Trotskyists?

*Sam:* Mortal enemies.

*Doug:* The anarchists and the Trotskyists have sometimes found themselves fighting together, as in Spain for instance . . .

*Sam:* Oh, you mean the POUM?

*Doug:* Yeah. Did that affect their relations in this country?

*Esther:* Well, not really, because the POUM was not a real Trotskyist group, but rather a dissident group that the C.P. had branded as Trotskyist. And they went along with the C.N.T., because the C.N.T. sort of gave them protection.

*Sam:* yeah, they wouldn't have lasted ten minutes without the C.N.T. The people who started the POUM were two anarchists, Andres Nin and Joaquin Maurin. They were both members of the C.N.T. and then both fell victim to the euphoria of the Russian revolution. Nin and Maurin went to Moscow to represent the C.N.T. and ended up becoming communists. But they couldn't get along with the regulation communists, so they formed a splinter group, and that was the POUM. And after a certain point, the anarchists and the POUM worked together, but by no means as much as most people think. There were some very deep-seated disagreements.

Here, take a look at this. This is a picture of me with the Free Society Group in Chicago in 1925. (Photo including Rudolf and Millie Rocker, Maximoff, and Sam Dolgoff, all grinning shyly.)

*Esther:* We had an open forum here for many, many years.



**Sam:** Yeah, we ran a school, had forums.

*Doug:* Tell me more about the school. Where was that?

**Sam:** In New York.

**Esther:** It was like a free school. We gave courses in public speaking, in journalism. We had several professionals who would volunteer their time.

*Doug:* What about the Ferrer School?

**Sam:** That was in Stelton, N.J., near New Brunswick. I consider that to be one of the most over-rated things going; they got myths like barnacles on them.

*Doug:* Your son went there, right?

**Sam:** Yeah, but what of it. I'll tell you; between me, you, and the lamp-post, it ain't worth two whoops in hell. It was a miserable flop. They produced nothing, except cabbages which they grew once in a while.

**Esther:** Well, you're being a little too extreme.

**Sam:** I know, I know. I'm given to a bit of hyperbole now and then.

*Doug:* How long did the school go on?

**Sam:** Oh man, that went on from about the 20's and I think it expired shortly after World War II.

**Esther:** You see, we came near the tail end of it. It was in decline then. We went through a bad experience with it.

*Doug:* What was the attitude of anarchists toward WW II?

**Sam:** Well, we had a big dispute. There were anarchists who said, "We're against the war, and that's the end of it. We don't give a damn, it is an imperialist war." There were others, like Maximoff, Rocker and the rest, who were adamantly against WW I and went to jail about it, but who felt that in WW II we should defeat the Nazis. And I was one of them. And if this be treason, alright, and all that. In fact, my biggest fear was that they'd make peace with the Nazis and they would get together, you know.

But we took the position that we're not going to have any wage freeze during the war, and that there shouldn't be any profits made out of the war, and that all the rich should go to war too.

**Esther:** We fought fascism wherever it was, and that included the United States, too.

*Doug:* What forms did fighting fascism take?

**Esther:** Well, we had strikes if we had to, it didn't matter if the war was going on.

**Sam:** We didn't stop the class struggle and the struggle against the state on account of the war; that was our position. We carried on our propaganda, we didn't fly no flag, we didn't adjourn the class struggle. We remained militant, but we also wanted to get rid of Hitler.

About 90% of the anarchists were in favor of the war, with a lot of reservations, and in varying degrees. At this time there

was not much abrogation of civil liberties, but in WW I it was unbearable.

*Doug:* Was anti-semitism ever a factor within the anarchist movement?

**Sam:** No, never.

**Esther:** In Europe there was some, but not here.

*Doug:* What about the relationship of anarchism to feminism? Were the anarchists involved in spreading birth control information?

**Esther:** Oh yes, we were pioneers in that. Emma Goldman was active in that; she went to jail for it. But I want to tell you, though, that in the question of birth control, we didn't take it from the Malthusian point of view. We were interested in the human question — that the woman wasn't an incubator.

*Doug:* Have you found that the anarchist movement has been very open to women and to women's initiative?

**Esther:** Well, you can't imagine what it was like then for women. If you weren't a very conservative "good girl," you were considered to be beyond the pale. Women's status in society was very precarious.

*Doug:* Emma Goldman was definitely beyond the pale in that respect. Was she sort of an exception among anarchist women would you say, in terms of her lifestyle?

**Esther:** Well, in order to buck this thing you had to be exceptional. Someone said to me that she was "disturbed." Well I should say she was disturbed. In order to get up such a fire within you, you can't be sweet and "normal" and passive. You have to have a very big fire! Women today do not have an understanding of what it was to be a woman in those days. You were chaperoned all the time. If you were pregnant you weren't supposed to look here or look there, because the child would be born a horse if you looked at a horse, for instance. The fears and superstition that you lived under. They kept young women in perpetual fear. If you sneezed, pull your left ear, etc. Imagine living in the whole body of these fears. Of course, certain girls were different.

And no one realizes what the union movement did, really, to break down those barriers. Working together in the unions. And the Jewish woman was comparatively very free as compared to the woman coming from the Mediterranean countries, Italy and Greece, etc. And working in the unions did very much to liberate her from this kind of slavery.

*Doug:* Were you involved much with union organizing?

**Esther:** No, I was involved more with the propaganda. Though our house then, during the depression, was often used as a union meeting place.

*Doug:* Were there attempts to form alternate economic institutions then? For instance, now there are food coops, etc.

**Esther:** Yes. The Spanish anarchists always had their

apartments cooperatively. They'd rent a big apartment and live cooperatively there. And they had different arrangements about food, etc. And in California, some old Jewish anarchists who had known each other in their youth, have for their old age formed a cooperative and they live together and are able to support each other. They are very old but they still make a home for each other. There were lots of things like that. There was a lot of self-help. They day-nursery, for instance. People always think that the day-nursery started with the government, you know. But they were started by workers. I remember when I was in the hospital, we left my children in the day-nursery which was supported by the workers and didn't get any government funds. We had a lot of self-help organizations like that, out of necessity. The woman who was with the day-nursery here was a friend of Emma Goldman's.

*Doug:* Were you around New York when Emma was here?

**Esther:** I just met her once, when she came back from Europe, and she was a very old lady then. And I heard her speak once, and she had a powerful voice, very clear. They had no microphones then. Her repartee, her answers after a speech were brilliant.

But a lot of the women who knew her personally did not like her. I heard that over and over again. She was inclined to be intolerant of others less able than herself, and also, though she mellowed later in life, I can see how some of her early writings would have been very abrasive to the average married woman.

*Doug:* You said the anarchists had day care for children. Did they also organize any medical self-help services?

**Esther:** They had mutual-aid organizations. Berkman was one of the organizers of the Workmen's Circle, and to this day certain branches are anarchist.

*Doug:* Anarchists have always placed a lot of emphasis on cultural and educational aspects of change, in addition to the political. What sorts of cultural activities were the anarchists around N.Y. involved with?

**Esther:** They used to put on a lot of plays with social import, you know, with social ideas involved. I remember one dramatic group that was around the Vanguard, for instance, that would translate the Jewish plays that dealt with the proletarian Jewish life here in N.Y.C. I remember one play they did, telling about a worker who went to work when he was ill and he took sick while he was at work, and he was afraid throughout that he would lose his job and all, and it was very effective.

*Doug:* That sounds interesting. Now let's talk some more about labor, and then wrap things up. What trades were the anarchists especially strong in?

**Sam:** Among the Jews, it was mostly the needle trades. With the Italians it was a lot of construction workers. The cigar-makers were also very anarchistic. And among the Russians we

had quite a few house wreckers. The house wrecker's union was once dominated by Russian anarchists, after WW I and in the 1920's. Among the Spaniards there were quite a few seamen, and an awful lot of them worked in coal mines and steel mills.

*Doug:* How did the anarchists get along with the U.M.W. and Lewis?

**Sam:** Well, most of the anarchists were in opposition to the Lewis machine. Most of the anarchist miners were foreigners: Spaniards, Italians, Bohemians. They were very good militants.

*Doug:* Did the IWW really have much influence in the labor struggles of the 30's and 40's?

**Sam:** In the 30's, it was significant in the metal-machine industry in and around the Midwest. To some extent they were influential in the maritime industry. And they had strength in the mines in Colorado.

*Doug:* How anarchistic was the IWW?

**Sam:** The IWW is not really an anarcho-syndicalist organization. That's one of the misconceptions always made. It's a peculiar kind of an organization, not really anarcho-syndicalist. It so happens that in the course of their development, and so forth, they developed forms of action and a certain emphasis on spontaneity, which are similar to anarcho-syndicalist ideas. Which is proof of the vitality of the anarcho-syndicalist ideology, in that they evolved toward it through their own experience. But they came to it only to a very limited extent. So the Wobblies were not influenced so much by the anarchist's propaganda or theories but rather have developed on their own some of the same ideas.

*Doug:* You wrote a lot of labor articles under the pseudonym of Sam Weiner. Where were you able to publish those?

**Sam:** Well, I had a lot of articles in the various papers that we were connected with. In the *Road to Freedom*, in the *Vanguard*, in a little paper called *Friends of Freedom*, in the paper called *Why*, for a while in *The Resistance*. Then I had a lot of articles in the IWW paper, *The Industrial Worker*. A lot of articles for them. And I wrote pamphlets for them, one called "Ethics of American Unionism."

*Doug:* Was there any reason that you used the pseudonym?

**Sam:** Somebody tacked it on me. When I was young, we were connected with one or two older comrades who had the "bull hollers," you know. They thought that nobody should ever go under their own names, and all that. One of them gave us names, and my name happened to be Weiner, because it was a common Jewish name. So I didn't think anything of it, but then the goddamn name stuck. But then it became unstuck when I wrote the book on Bakunin. The editor said I might as well use the name Dolgoff. It's the Russian name and all. So

the minute they stuck my real name on there, that was it. No more Sam Weiner.

*Doug:* So, Sam, would you like to sum up the major factors that you think influenced the decline of the anarchists in the earlier part of this century?

*Sam:* Well, I ascribe the decline in general to two factors; first, the effect of the Russian revolution, which in the 20's had not yet really unfolded itself so that people could see what was really happening. The euphoria of the Russian revolution. And the second reason was the failure of the anarchist movement to participate fully in social life and to become a mass movement, a real movement of the people.



# Wildcat

**dodge  
truck  
june 1974**



WORKER RAGES AT UNION OFFICIALS WHEN THEY ORDER POLICE INTO THE UNION HALL TO EVICT THE STRIKERS ON TUESDAY, JUNE 12, SECOND DAY OF THE STRIKE.

The following article was recently printed as a pamphlet, with several more photographs, by Black and Red. All photos are by Millard Berry. Copies of the pamphlet, either individually or in bulk, are available through Black and Red, Box 9546, Detroit, MI 48202.

## INTRODUCTION:

*Those of us who cooperated on the publication of this pamphlet did so because the wildcat strike at the Chrysler Truck facility, June 11-14, 1974, struck a raw nerve in us. Two of us have had direct experience working at the plant and the others have heard stories for years from friends about the situation there. When a publication was suggested, we all responded enthusiastically.*

*We were excited by the collective decision of thousands of Chrysler employees to deny the authority of daily wage labor and, for even four days, to say no to the demands of the alarm clock, the production line, bosses, union bureaucrats, judges and cops. In a society where daily activity serves so much the interests of others and so little our own, the efforts of so many to reclaim even short-run control over their lives seemed worth writing about, giving the event consideration and drawing conclusions as we saw them.*

*We don't intend this publication to perpetuate the process wherein "authorities" or "experts" tell others what reality consists of. This is done daily in the media and works to keep us in the status of passive observers of our lives while the rich, the famous and pop-stars are projected as the "important" people and the real actors of history and the creators of events. This time it was different. Events were shaped and determined by those who usually are only spectators. The principal author of this pamphlet recorded and photographed events as they happened to him and others during those four days. The rest of us were interested in the wildcat and read several things about the role of unions, talked among ourselves a lot and finally produced what you are holding.*

*We are not a "political" group. We are not trying to "organize" anyone into a political party or "movement." We are not trying to exhort others to greater heights of activity. We, two auto workers, a printer, a student, a teamster, a secretary, and two unemployed, want to do the same thing in our lives as the Dodge Truck strikers did in theirs: free ourselves from the tyranny of the workplace; stop being forced to sell our labor to others; stop others from having control over our lives.*

*But four days is no good. It only whets the appetite for what is possible. What can be done for four days can be done permanently. We want to live our lives for ourselves.*

*We are Millard Berry, Ralph Franklin, Alan Franklin, Cathy Kaufflin, Marilyn Werbe, Richard Wieske, Peter Werbe.*

## THE BEGINNING:



Trucks began rolling off the line at dawn on Friday, June 14, as if it were a day of normal production at the Dodge Truck Plant in Warren. It was, however, quite an abnormal day. For the previous seven shifts no production had been the norm, had been natural and quite inevitable. Six thousand strong, the truck plant workers had imposed a work stoppage on their employer, beginning on Monday afternoon, that was only just now ending.

The gray dawn lit up a strange scene in front of the plant on that morning, remnants of the last-ended uprising: scattered groups of police in full riot gear, paddy wagons, and in the plant parking lot, a flatbed truck (Dodge) carrying several police and a black-robed judge.

Ten people were in jail, following the twenty who had been arrested the day before. The arrests culminated a united effort by the corporation, the courts, the police, and every level of the union hierarchy to break the wildcat strike. On Friday morning, they finally succeeded.

No one really expected the strike to happen until it was actually upon us, as if everyone were surprised to learn that everyone else was thinking the same thing. Sleepy day shift workers got stuck in a traffic jam on Mound Road in front of the plant on Tuesday morning and waited for traffic to clear. It soon became obvious though that no cars were going into the parking lot, and then whoops went down the stalled line: "Strike! we're on strike!"

Clustered at the gates were some two hundred picketers, marching in front of the entrance and running out into the slow-moving traffic to hand out copies of a sketchy leaflet.

"Last night," said the leaflet, "Chrysler fired four workers from the 9110 (metal shop) second shift including chief steward Steve Smith. We walked out and shut down the plant. Chrysler says we're risking our jobs. But there comes a time when we have to start fighting back."

"... Ten days ago on May 31st about 100 workers from 9110 decided it would be a mistake to go to work. Although we didn't shut down the plant, we cost Chrysler plenty of production."

This incident, a sick-in over working conditions, had drawn a threat of discipline from the company, a threat which, in turn, led to a brief shutdown of the metal shop when 50 workers piled into labor relations and successfully demanded the company back down. The same thing had happened on day shift, but Chrysler had reluctantly decided to hold off disciplining the walkout participants until the following Monday, when the local UAW officers would return from their Constitutional Convention in Los Angeles. Management was quite certain the union could dampen any anger that might arise then.

But their certainty was misplaced, for when four workers were fired that afternoon, the collective response was immediate and effectively unanimous: within the hour the plant was shut down by a spontaneous walkout. That evening, the rebellious workers assembled at the union hall and voted overwhelmingly for a plant-wide strike. It was a bold move, but it met with 100% support Tuesday morning when the day shift came in.

The three days following the initial walkout blurred together into a flurry of strike meetings, picketing, rage, and joy. People we'd bumped into everyday and never known suddenly became close friends, and we felt our own power and determination almost for the first time.

Previously dull eyes glowed, grumblings turned to laughter, and unwilling submission was transmuted into total resistance.

What a contrast to work! There the unstopping line grates all of us until we can hardly breathe ourselves, let alone others. Day shift and evening shift blame each other for everything, unless the old-timers can blame it on the irresponsible youngsters, or the young workers can blame it on the privileges of seniority. Blacks and whites exchange hostile glances, tension boiling just below the surface, just because there is nowhere else for it to go, and no way for it to go elsewhere.

And everyone who can't just turn it off stays as doped up, doped down, drunk, nodded out, and high as possible. Stumble in, stumble out is the work ethic at Dodge Truck ... until of course we decided to stop working.

And when we did, and the plant went down, suddenly all the human qualities that Chrysler had taken from us were ours again.. We cooperated in decisions, we moved together and were one body with one interest ... Shut it down! Racial tensions vanished, and all other antagonisms became as useless as the silent machinery in that hole of a factory.

Union efforts to divide us went from the insidious to the ridiculous. At one point, Art Harvey, Local 140 President, claimed that complaints over bad conditions, and the strike itself were just the work of communist agitators, that everything was alright and we should return to work. We booed and laughed him from the podium immediately, and afterward he claimed in a TV interview that we were ignorant and didn't know that "the union doesn't support the strike." We weren't ignorant, we were well aware of the union's position, and we knew *why* we had that position.

We got our super rushes when news went around that other plants were walking out with us. A shift change at the neighboring stamping plant sent electrifying rumors through a strike meeting on Wednesday that they had walked out. The Chrysler Sherwood Assembly plant actually went out on strike with us, both for their own demands and ours, realizing that if we were to do it all, we had to do it together. Workers from other Chrysler factories (Mound Rd. Engine, Dodge Main) appeared at strike meetings and on the picket lines to offer support and carry back news of what was happening to their own plants.

Almost as an afterthought, on the third day of the strike, someone suggested we should draw up a list of demands for the strike. Except for the demand for complete amnesty, the list eventually compiled had little direct focus. There were, of course, the specific grievances of working conditions, forced overtime, etc., but it was obvious from the conversations on the picket line what the strike was *really* all about: *everything*. Exchanges were peppered with "Watergate", "inflation," "those assholes in the union," attacks on the institution of "work" itself. It was, in fact, a total frustration with and rejection of all the things, inside and outside the plant, which exercise control over our lives. No matter what we might have won in short-term demands, if we had won, no one would have returned to work happily.

During the heat of the uprising, we found it impossible to imagine returning to work. We had come so far and become so much. But gradually, the 500 plus workers packing the strike meetings and marching in front of the plant saw the wildcat going nowhere. Chrysler had marshalled its forces and all had performed their assigned functions. The union had divided and confused workers by declaring the strike over when it was not, by declaring it work of a subversive minority of outside agitators, and even by parking their cars in the plant lot to give the impression workers were returning to work when they weren't. The police, some of whom were very polite, performed their "duty" regardless of their sympathies and arrested picketers at the direction of a judge who took it upon himself to appear at the plant personally to see that justice was done.

As one factory, we had less power and endurance than did our employer and we had to return to that down of all downs, the reproduction of daily life.

# THE PEOPLE:



PRODUCTION WORK INSIDE CHRYSLERS DODGE TRUCK PLANT.



Dodge Truck, officially known as the Warren Truck Assembly Plant, began production of pickups and panel trucks in the midst of the depression years of the thirties. During WWII, as was true throughout American industry in general, the labor shortage and demand for war production in the plant drew a large number of blacks, both men and women, up to Detroit from the south in search of work. Along with the local white workers employed there at the time, they now constitute the "first generation" population of the plant, many of whom are presently approaching their 30 yr. retirement dates.

For a decade between the mid fifties and sixties, the plant population remained relatively stable and hiring was limited primarily to replacements for departing workers. At the end of that period, gradual hiring began as Chrysler started, layed off, and then restarted a second shift of production. In spring of 1972 this shift became permanent and hiring was stepped up until the plant population eventually doubled.

The new hires on this shift were a significantly different group from the generation which preceded them; many were young men, 19 to 22, who had just returned from the war in Southeast Asia, and they looked and acted unlike any other group of vets before them. Longhaired, dope-smoking, contemptuous of authority, they poured in to the plant as Chrysler tried to respond to the then-current publicity about hiring the unemployed vet. Flashing discharge papers or merely a tatoo, they walked past lines of waiting applicants and were ushered into what was, for some, their first real job.

The war, for them, was not just a radicalizing experience, where they learned to deal with authority by fragging their officers; it was also a unifying and solidifying experience, which imparted to the whole group a strong sense of identity and collective power. Many firmly believed that their resistance to the war was one of the crucial factors in forcing the eventual withdrawal of US troops from combat, and by the time they arrived at Chrysler's any willingness to submit to authority and the arbitrary demands of production they might have had was gone.

Common to many of these young people, both black and white, was a strong desire to settle down and start a home. Disgusted and disillusioned by their war experiences, the vets were at first happy to enter civilian life, but they soon discovered that at Chrysler's it differed little from army regimen. Here, however, they did let you go home at night. (As one well-worn joke has it: "I tell my old lady, when we get married, all you've got to do is cook for me and wash my clothes, because I'm getting fucked by Chrysler.") Rebelliousness was quickly rekindled and militant activity (both "legitimate and prohibited) became increasingly more frequent.

Maybe fifteen percent of the Truck Plant workforce is composed of women, most of them black, most of them supporting families, alone. None, of course would work there unless they had to and many were actually forced to take production jobs and give up their ADC by the welfare bureaucracy.

In strictly numerical terms, the population of Detroit is currently split almost 50-50 black and white. Because of the racist nature of hiring patterns in this society, blacks make up most of the unemployed (10.9 "officially" for the state, higher in Detroit and higher among blacks), and those who have jobs are concentrated in the lower-paying, dirtier, less skilled occupations, i.e. the factories. And the biggest auto factory employer in the city is Chrysler.

As the weak sister of the big three, Chrysler is trapped here in Detroit, unable to generate the capital to move to the cheaper labor markets in the south and overseas, to which the other two are now forced to turn. Most of its production is concentrated in Detroit and immediate area, in facilities which are aging and dilapidated, and the workforce in most plants ranges from fifty to one hundred percent black.

Given these factors, there exists in Detroit an informal, loosely-knit "family" of people who share a common employer, working situation and stomping ground. Everyone has a brother, sister, uncle or father who works in an auto plant, thus news can travel quickly by word of mouth and connections are very direct. Naturally there are common attitudes shared widely in this community.

The white Chrysler "family" overlaps somewhat with that of the black community, and, although not as centralized in one corporation or one geographical community, also has a vast informal communication network between families and friends that extends into the other auto companies as well. (Most of the whites employed at Dodge Truck come from the Northeast suburbs of East Detroit, Roseville, Mt. Clemens, and Warren, as well as Detroit proper.)

The racial divisions that are inherent in American society extend into the plant. More noticeable in the geography of the Motor City and the various communities that make up the factory workforce, the antagonisms between black and white are actually less in the factory. Racism is perpetuated by ordinary folks upon themselves as much as it is imposed upon them by controlling forces in society. The rejection of these tensions is one of the most basic necessities of concerted action against Chrysler, and this became a reality in the uprising at Dodge Truck.

The history of Local 140 that follows, is to some extent the history of racial tensions working themselves out in various political mediums, and finally breaking down altogether in the wildcat of June.



## THE LOCAL:

Traditional union politics at local 140 began their decline in the spring of 1972 when management started the second shift of production. Then-incumbent president Norbert Mahaliek was a bland, stereotypical union bureaucrat whose base of support resided primarily in the older generation of high-seniority white workers, most of whom were in the skilled trades. Mahaliek's previously entrenched leadership (and its thinly-veiled white racist nature) was soon challenged by a new rising power which sprang from the "second generation" and took as its leader black, fast-talking Willie Stoval.

Politically skillful, Stoval capitalized upon black workers' antipathy for Mahaliek's group and quickly rose to the powerful position of chairman of the plant bargaining committee. When he pulled together a predominantly black slate to challenge Mahaliek in the May '73 elections, many black workers, despite their cynicism about unions in general, voted for the slate in the hope that a black leadership might at least be a little more "representative" of their interests. Stoval won, and with him, Art Harvey, previously the token black in Mahaliek's group, who now assumed the position of Local President. It was apparent from the start that Harvey lacked the ability to manipulate people necessary to his position, and when the '73 contract talks arrived the task of "resolving" them fell upon a leadership which was, by leadership definitions, inept.

Conditions in the plant had been going steadily down-hill and anger among Chrysler employees was growing nationwide. The day the Chrysler-UAW contract expired, Dodge Truck workers, in addition to a half dozen other Chrysler plants around the country walked out ahead of time. By Midnight that day, Leonard Woodcock, President of the UAW International, announced a company-wide strike, turning a one-day spontaneous walk-out into a week long, "official" strike.



Halfway through this "mini-strike" the UAW International settled with Chrysler and ratification of the contract took place a few days later. The terms of the settlement were disastrous and all the more so because they could have been obtained without a strike, but the UAW fostered and extended the initial strike to accomplish two explicit reasons. One, it gave the workers the illusion of having applied real pressure to the company, implying that valuable concessions had eventually been won, and two, it allowed a cooling-off period just long enough for workers to feel the pinch of not receiving their weekly paycheck.

The strike also served other incidental purposes. Before the contract was ratified, Local 140 officials escorted a crew of ironworkers across the picket lines to make sure that Chrysler would make good use of the down time by working on the plant facilities. The local union office even went so far as to call striking repairmen at home asking them to come to work. The union wasn't even required to pay a penny in strike benefits because the payments don't start until the second week of a strike.

At the ratification meeting for Local 140 some two thousand people lined up outside the union hall on a Sunday morning and voted one big NO on everything. No one had the slightest inkling what was in the local agreement, but it was still turned down along with the national agreement. It was a total vote of no-confidence against the union.

For a second ratification attempt the union held a meeting at a neighborhood high school auditorium and handed out copies of the local agreement. Learning the content of the agreement only angered the workers even more and the meeting quickly broke up to thundering chants of "Vote No!" while the contract was voted down again.

Approval of the contract finally came when President Harvey threatened to take the plant out on strike over the Christmas holidays, a move which would have cost everybody their vacation pay. Harvey was in fact threatening a union-called strike against the workers, while at-

▲ A STRIKER (RIGHT) WHO WAS LATER FIRED, ARGUES WITH LOCAL 140 PRESIDENT ART HARVEY, FOR ALL HIS ADEPTNESS IN DEALING WITH THE WILDCAT, MIGHT AS WELL HAVE HAD HIS BACK TURNED TO THE WHOLE THING.



▶ PAUL COOPER (LEFT), A UAW COMMITTEEMAN AND HIGH UNION OFFICIAL, ESCORTS A WORKER ACROSS THE PICKET LINES DURING THE STRIKE. NORMALLY COOPER TRIES TO PRESENT HIMSELF AS A VOCIFEROUS DEFENDER OF THE WORKERS, BUT DURING THE UPRISING HE CLEARLY CAME OUT ON THE SIDE OF THE COMPANY IN ATTEMPTING TO BREAK THE STRIKE.

tempting to lay the blame for the contract rejections on the "white-hippy-communists."

The truth is, the contract rejections signified an end to the free ride that the new black union leadership had been given among the black workers. People saw the union, even more clearly than before, as simply an arm of the company labor relations unit, and went to work each day a little more angry. At that point visible resistance went underground, surfacing when it did in sporadic walkouts. Absenteeism and sabotage increased and acts of violence against foremen continued on an individual basis. From November 1973 until June 1974 over 150 grievances were filed, and twelve to fifteen of them, at least, were strikeable issues over contract violations.

Willie Stoval had seen greener pastures for himself by that time and had taken an appointment as an International rep, only too glad to be out of the boiling unrest at Dodge Truck. Mahaliek, the ousted president, went back to work on the shop floor, but only for a short time. He was soon elected committeeman and teamed up with chairman of the shop committee, Chet Peterboro, in a mutual effort to further their own political careers.

Mahaliek and Peterboro sat on the piling number of grievances, refusing to act on them or pass them up to the level of the local president. They spread rumors and then agitated in meetings for a strike vote, knowing that any explosion that might come would blow up in Harvey's face discrediting him and the incumbent leadership, as the two of them (Mahaliek and Peterboro) slid quietly into the background.

The wildcat strike in June came and had exactly that effect; Harvey was made to look like a fool, and his value as an effective controller of the work force was eradicated, leaving the way clear for other aspiring controllers to step in.

After the uprising, the union held a strike vote so that workers who had the previous week voted with their feet, could now register their passive vote in a ballot box. The union urged a "yes" vote on the strike, the leftist organizers urged a "yes" vote to "legalize our wildcat", and even the company got into the act, urging "Be sure and vote today", on a billboard at the plant gate. The urging was so great in fact that some began to wonder exactly who this strike vote was really for.

As it happens of course, the strike vote was held to legitimize the union, to restore control to their hands, and to give the impression that they were actually acting on complaints. The likelihood of a "legal" strike occurring though is about as great here as it is at the Detroit Forge Plant, where a strike vote passed overwhelmingly last year is still awaiting ratification from the international. (The Dodge Truck vote here carried 2,000 plus to 377, and evokes visions of the old Laurel and Hardy comedy routine where a character opens a door to leave a house that has collapsed, leaving only that door standing.)

The first union meeting after the uprising, on July 16, marked the return (temporarily) to the underground for worker resistance at Dodge Truck. Even after much urging by radicals to show up and make themselves felt, less than a hundred people came and asked questions, getting only evasive answers. Two workers conspired to bring in a lunchbox full of eggs, hoping that things would become heated enough for them to lob their feelings about the union at the bureaucrats, but the situation remained too calm to warrant even that. The union is now in control of itself again and production goes on, one after the other.

The history of UAW Local 140 is not the history of a leadership with a constituency working together for a common end, and it never was. It is the history of a body of workers acting, individually and collectively, to resist the domination of their lives by a corporation, and of a reactionary organization of career "leaders" whose only activities have been directed entirely toward quelling that resistance, always after it arises, and always for the furtherance of their own ends.

Workers over the past two years have moved through several levels of tactics in attempts to fight company pressure, some of which have included attempts to use the union as a vehicle, attempts which have always had the same outcome. The election in May '73 was a once-only reform experiment to try a new, more "representative" leadership, and it failed, inevitably. Seeing this failure, workers moved on further and voted one big "NO" against the union itself on the issue of contracts. When this, too, failed, as it eventually had to, the wildcat was the next logical step, an attempt at collective direct action against the company which circumvented entirely the power of the union. But the union and company still have sufficient power to destroy such isolated efforts of resistance, and they have temporarily regained the upper hand.

The direction and intensity of workers' resistance, however, have already moved beyond any further faith in unions. It remains only for workers to find the expression of their resistance solely in a faith in themselves, a process which, as evidenced by the 4 days of solidarity in June, has already begun.



# THE ORGANIZERS:

On Wednesday, third day of the wildcat, the forces opposing the strike dealt what they hoped would be their most powerful blow against the unity of the strikers. The Detroit Free Press carried an article by reporter Billy Bowles giving the complete personal background of Steve Smith, fired chief steward from the metal shop, who they claimed was leading the strike. Detailing his membership in the Revolutionary Union (a Maoist group from California) and his activity in a strike in Pittsburgh, the story's clear implication was that Smith had hired in at Dodge Truck solely for the purpose of fomenting labor unrest.

At the time, the article was treated with no more seriousness than Art Harvey's charges of communist manipulation, since it seemed clear to everybody that the strike had taken Smith as much by surprise as it had the union and the management. As one young worker put it: "I just can't believe that some guy would hire into this shithole and work for four years just to lead a strike." Smith himself readily conceded the essential accuracy of the facts contained within the story, but denied strongly the implications. "Sure I'm a communist," he said, "I've been open about it from the beginning. But communism isn't the issue here. This strike is over working conditions in the plant."

But Smith's easy dismissal of his communism as "not the issue," far from clearing the air, seemed only to beg the issue. For many workers, demoralized by the strike's eventual failure, it gave even more substance to the fears barely stirred by the newspaper story, that what they thought to be their own spontaneous act of resistance might indeed be only the result of the manipulations of "outside" agitators.

In truth, Smith, and any number of other Marxist-Leninist political missionaries, have hired into "this shithole" with the expressed purpose, not of just leading a strike, but of leading the "masses of workers" in struggle against the capitalist bosses. It's also true, however, that, at best, the wildcat's start caught them by surprise, and their every effort thereafter was directed at catching up with, and regaining "leadership" over, the radical activity of the workers.

A full alphabet soup collection of communist organizers has come and gone at the Warren Truck Plant. Aspiring working class leaders have come from CL (Communist League), NCLC (Labor Committee), RU, DTRUM (a CL project), MCLL (Motor City Labor League), the Spark, and other obscure leftist sects.

These organizers share the basic view that the working class, in particular the industrial working class, is the only segment of capitalist society capable of overthrowing capitalism itself and constructing a socialist society in its place. They also believe, however, that workers cannot properly evolve their own critical analysis of capitalist society, nor any tactics or strategies to radically transform it, but must have them *injected* in from outside the class.

It is no coincidence that each of these groups sees itself as the only one capable of injecting the Marxist analysis and Leninist tactics necessary (competition is fierce); it's also no coincidence that each sees the necessity for a strong, centralized leadership to direct the workers' revolt, which they are more than willing (most are insistent) to provide, in the form of an authoritarian, hierarchical party. This party would also take on the task of administering the new society, after the overthrow of capitalism, *in the name of the workers*.

The Revolutionary Union conforms to this simplified model (its particular wrinkle being the application of the thoughts of Mao Tse Tung) and is probably the one which has related to the truck plant over the longest period of time. Of its active members, Smith has been most visible.

In the aftermath of the strike, many Truck Plant workers are asking themselves and others the question, "Just what is this communist conspiracy shit all about?" Some background information on the RU's activities in the plant should 1) dispel any illusions that the uprising was a contrived effort by communists, and 2) touch on some of the real doubts that people feel about political missionaries, doubts that cannot be dismissed by avoiding them.

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During the winter of 1971-1972 a number of young white workers came together in the plant to explore means of fighting the company. Some of them, including Smith (who was a spotter at the time and a member of the RU), saw themselves as communist organizers attempting to participate in, promote, and guide worker organization and rebellion against the company, and against capitalist society in general.

The upcoming delegate elections for the 1972 UAW Constitutional Convention provided the group with a vehicle for action, and when no one else was forthcoming as a volunteer, Smith ran for delegate on a radical platform, qualitatively different from the other union bureaucrats. His response surprised all, as he came in seventh and qualified as a full delegate to the convention.

Shocked by the support that a long-haired young radical had gotten in the delegate elections, especially from the greatly more militant "second generation" workers, the union pulled what proved to be, for them, a brilliant political move: they appointed Smith second shift chief steward in the metal shop. By isolating him as a union bureaucrat from the production workers on the shop floor, the union machine thought their cooptation move was successful, and to a large extent it was. Smith now admits that it was probably a mistake for him to accept the position two years ago.

Meanwhile, the group was continuing its other activities and began putting out a newsletter called *On The Line*. Smith and other members of the Revolutionary Union exercised very tight editorial control over the content, refusing any criticism of the union, any mention of sabotage, or anything that ultimately challenged industrial authority. They claimed to know best what the workers could read, write, and for that matter, think.

As nearly everybody lost interest and fell away from the newsletter, a debate broke out among those remaining who had been around since the beginning. One worker on the motor station demanded that a campaign be mounted to push for democracy in the union, since that seemed to him the issue causing most discontent with the union among workers. The RU people opposed this vehemently. They maintained a strict position against democracy, insisting that militant "leadership" was more important.

The argument, however, proved to be at best futile. Most workers continued to relate to the union for what it was: a labor relations arm of the company and not a "workers' organization."

The newsletter petered out from lack of participation, and the militants who had wanted to reform the union became isolated and fired one by one. (One was fired when caught walking back in after a heat walkout, another for refusing to pick up a washer he had dropped on the floor, and another for sabotaging trucks while three foremen looked on. Eventually Smith himself began to feel isolated in his bureaucratic role, even though some organizing was beginning to take place in the metal shop.)

Then came the strike, and the communists were caught entirely off balance, for they were unable, until the last moment, to impose their conception of the "necessary organization" on the workers' activity.

But it was not for want of trying. When it was suggested that a more representative leadership was needed for the strike, Smith appointed a steering committee in line with his position against democracy. On at least two occasions, Smith and other RU people tried to get the strikers to vote to exclude all literature except that which had been approved, i.e., their own. Smith maintained that somehow this other literature might "hurt our efforts".

The strikers overwhelmingly rejected the censorship efforts, maintaining that they were quite able to read and make decisions for themselves, a view not shared by their aspiring leaders.

It was only at the last meeting that the RU people actually began to make their presence felt to any extent. It was suggested at this meeting that the strikers make a strategic retreat and go back to work with a plan to continue rebellion *inside* the plant, since it was doubtful with such small numbers that they could prevent Chrysler from starting up production in the morning. This suggestion was vehemently opposed from two sides. Those workers who were fired opposed the suggestion for obvious reasons - it left them out, and by pushing for continuance of the strike effort, they had nothing to lose and their jobs to regain, at best.

Also at the meeting were about half a dozen members of the Revolutionary Union who didn't work at the plant but were arguing very strongly to continue the strike. As people drifted away from the meeting, discouraged and beaten, the RU people took a more insistent position, urging those remaining into what turned out to be a mistake. The next morning more people were arrested, Chrysler managed to start production and the strike effort was beaten in a rout.

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What happened at that meeting was a logical, but *not* inevitable outcome of the way all previous meetings had been conducted. From the start strikers had accepted the participation of outsiders in the struggle, and this was a major step forward from the isolation which had marked other wildcats in the past. But it had also left the door open for the professional organizers to abuse that privilege. Also the fired workers came forward as a leadership force in decision making, pushing for the most radical action long after it was against the interests of those who must eventually return to work.

The eventual domination these groups gained was one reason so many people drifted away from the strike effort at that point. They recognized that life would still go on and the rebellion no longer spoke realistically to the needs of those still with jobs.

Lest the emphasis on self-appointed leaders seem out of proportion, one thing should be emphasized: the Dodge Truck uprising was *begun, continued, and ended* by the workers, with only minor influence by organizers. The real leaders of the strike were the 100 to 500 people who hammered out strategies in the strike meetings or marched the picket lines to keep the plant down. During the strike we shed our passivity. Six-thousand people voted with their feet to carry on the strike, and when that effort appeared exhausted, they voted with their feet and returned to work, where they must continue the fight just to survive.

## THE UNIONS:

The American auto industry, in capitalist economic terms, is a dying industry. This is not an exaggeration or simplification, nor does it mean that, if capitalism persists, it will "disappear" at any time in the foreseeable future. But, having expanded to fill almost every crevice of its potential market in this country, auto production today is simply no longer a "growth" industry and cannot hope to be again. Despite enormous yearly sales figures, real profits on each car produced have fallen and returns on investments, where they aren't declining, are barely remaining the same.

To economic analysts this means that GM, Ford, Chrysler and American Motors can no longer generate or attract the investment capital necessary to update the technology of auto production. Instead they must continue to use outmoded facilities and production concepts while struggling vainly to increase productivity through intensive cost-cutting and speed-up. (This is true to varying degrees throughout large sections of American production industry today, where shortage of capital and large-scale shifts toward service industries have already begun to usher in their decline.)

Trapped by the huge amounts of capital they have tied up in assembly-line technology (and to some extent their own inability to conceive of production methods outside of that technology), the Henry Fords, Richard Gerstenbergs and Lynn Townsends of this country see themselves as having no choice in the situation but to press workers and facilities to their maximum productive limit. And, in *this situation*, they are right, for under capitalism productivity must continue to grow if an industry is to remain alive.

For workers in the plants the conclusions are unavoidable *if the present state of affairs is to be maintained*: 1) they must continue to work under physically oppressive conditions (decaying buildings, dangerous machines, stupefying noise levels, extremes of temperature, etc.) which must necessarily deteriorate more every day; and 2) they must continually work *harder and faster* under these conditions, at ever more mindless activity, with continually greater harassment from supervision.

Because of the critical necessity for continually increasing productivity, management now finds it more crucial than ever that plant facilities be made to produce their utmost at all times; thus lost-time caused by sabotage, absenteeism, wildcats and worker resistance to speed-ups must not only be avoided but actively and forcibly repressed.

This itself is nothing new in employer/employee relations: a system of rigid discipline has been indispensable to assembly-line production since its inception. But as workers become more dissatisfied with their boring and pointless activity, with their complete inability, through the officially proscribed means, to control any of the conditions which determine the consumption of their lives, their resistance turns to disruptive action and discipline becomes almost impossible to enforce. It is at this point that the *disciplinary function* of those organizations which traditionally purport to "represent the workers", the unions, becomes most crucial to the continuance of commodity production.

On the face of it, the role of UAW Local 140 as a conscious agent of the Chrysler Corporation in the last month's strike is so obvious as to hardly bear repeating. Any UAW member in the plant has painfully concluded that the union long ago gave up representing his interests and became instead a simple adjunct to the company, enforcing the work discipline that foremen and supervisors by themselves could never hope to impose. But what is important about this transformation, es-



pecially in its implications for other, supposedly more radical organizing groups bent on "leading the workers", is that in reality it was no transformation at all, but only the logical and inevitable result of contradictions inherent in the nature of any organization which claims to "represent" the interests of others. Unions are not now essentially "healthy" organizations which require only a cleaning-up of leadership to "begin once again serving workers' interests"; they have not been "betrayed" by corrupt fatcats, they are the betrayal themselves.

Unions first appeared as self-organizations of laborers for defense against the inhuman working conditions of the 19th century. Their goals were completely compatible with the capitalists wage system, but demanded reforms within it of shorter working day, pensions, decent working conditions, an end to employer arbitrariness, etc. Many of these early union demands were granted only after long and bloody struggles, but the fact is that these struggles only lasted as long as the capitalists' failure to see the potential for cooptation within the unions. Once capital accepted the inevitability of their existence and began looking for ways to assimilate them the unions' total bankruptcy was guaranteed.

The modern union movement has its origins in the depression, and many old timers and traditional radicals look back on those years as the "good old days" of unions, when sharp battles were fought and unions at last won recognition from the companies. But the militant history and the spirit of the rank and file often tend to obscure what the actual process of unionization was and what has become its ultimate product.

As the depression sharpened in the early thirties, so did working class struggles against wage cutbacks, plant closings and unemployment. In several cities, armed battles were fought by striking workers against police and national guardsmen called up to protect the interests of the corporations. In others, general strikes of the whole work force were called and a fever of genuine revolution began spreading.

Growing working class militancy severely heightened the concern of the major capitalists as economic conditions grew worse, and in 1935 the Roosevelt government's *National Recovery Administration* issued the Henderson Report, stating that "unless something is done soon, they (the workers) intend to take things into their own hands."

That "something" became the CIO, which, encouraged by Roosevelt and his friends in the labor movement, organized rebellious workers into the topdown bureaucratic organizations that exist today. With a new government approved status under its belt, the CIO-group of unions began a series of lightning organizing drives in the basic industries with the sole objective being recognition of the

union by the corporation. Swept aside were rank and file demands for control of production on the shop floor, with even union radicals discarding their previously intransigent demands for socialism. The goal, instead, became "the Contract".

From the day the first, historic contract was signed the union took on a role no one in the rank and file had anticipated, that of disciplinarian of the work force. By its very existence the union contract establishes the power of the union as the official and only representative of the workers and as such it is recognized by the company and the law. The contract's first concrete act is to remove from the hands of the workers the most important weapon they have, the strike, and turn it over, *by law*, solely to their representatives. Thus the union *alone* has the right to strike, not the workers. The trade-off in this agreement, of course, is that management will grant certain economic concessions in return for which the union pledges that it will prevent strikes or disruption of production during the term of the contract (in further return for which management makes the unwritten guarantee that it will do everything within its considerable power to "perpetuate and reinforce" the union leaders' privileged positions).

Since workers are continually in revolt against working conditions, speed-ups, health and safety hazards, the monotony of production (in fact all those things which drove them to *self-organization* in the first place), whereas the union's function and legal obligation is to insure that production continues at a normal rate regardless of worker grievances, the two groups find themselves holding interests which are not just incompatible but totally contradictory. Thus whenever workers begin a strike themselves, or any disruptive self-activity, they are faced with the combined efforts of the company, state *and* unions to smash it.

◀ GEORGE MERRELLI (RIGHT), UAW REGION I DIRECTOR, LISTENS TO THE WARREN POLICE CHIEF ORDER, IN THE NAME OF THE LAW, STRIKING WORKERS TO LEAVE THE UNION HALL THEY HAD OCCUPIED ALL DAY ON JUNE 12, SECOND DAY OF THE STRIKE. MERRELLI, KNOWN THROUGHOUT THE UAW FOR HIS GANGSTER-LIKE POLITICAL TACTICS IN UNION POLITICS, ALONG WITH THE LOCAL 140 EXECUTIVE BOARD, CALLED THE POLICE TO THROW THE UNION MEMBERS OUT OF THE BUILDING PAID FOR WITH THEIR DUES.

▼ SOME 60 PADDYWAGON EQUIPPED, RIOT DRESSED COPS WAIT OUTSIDE THE UNION HALL FOR THE ORDER TO MOVE IN AT 6PM. THE CLOCK SHOWS TEN MINUTES LEFT AS WORKERS HEATEDLY DISCUSS WHETHER OR NOT TO FIGHT THE POLICE. THE FINGERS TELL IT ALL. THEY LEFT WITH NO ARRESTS AND THREW THEMSELVES AGAINST CHRYSLER WITH RENEWED ANGER

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AFTER BEING SHOUTED DOWN SEVERAL TIMES, MERRELLI DEMANDED RESPECT AS A UNION OFFICIAL AND WAS PROMPTLY BOWLED OVER BY SALUTES AND SHOUTS OF "SIEG HEIL!"

When conventional methods of urging workers back to work (calls for "proper procedure", promises of later action, etc.) failed to end the wildcat at Dodge Truck, the corporation had recourse to the powers of the state to settle its grievance. Having already bought the workers' right to strike from their legally recognized representatives in the 1973 contract negotiations, Chrysler had only to invoke the contractual clauses which dealt with the unauthorized strikes to bring "the laws and all the machinery of state" down on the backs of Chrysler employees. Picketing workers were confronted with the astonishing sight of a black-robed judge, surrounded by police, dispensing injunctions and ordering arrests from the back of a company-owned pickup truck in the plant parking lot. It's difficult to conceive of a more honest demonstration of the law's true bias than this, for how many Chrysler employees can remember the last - or any - judge who appeared on the shop floor demanding an end to worker harassment by the company, hazardous conditions, forced overtime, etc.?

The union's activities were equally blatant; far from taking the workers' grievances before the law when the company failed to comply with its contractual obligations, the UAW called in the local police to eject striking workers from their own union hall when they attempted to keep it open for a strike meeting.

Today, the true role of the union has become so clear as to be transparent. Unions are not institutions established to bring benefits to their members through such instruments as the contract, they are institutions which serve the interests of a class of bureaucrats and "leaders" by performing a function indispensable to contemporary corporate capitalism: the regularization of the sale of labor power. Just as Chrysler is part of the auto monopoly, the UAW has a mon-

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opoly on the sale of labor in that market, on who is hired, under what conditions they will work, and under what circumstances they can be fired. (In terms of working conditions, their control is negative, since all they are really capable of "gaining" for workers is economic benefits.)

The larger the giant monopoly and conglomerate corporations loom in the economy, the more the unions come to identify with them and see their role as serving the greater "national interest". Thus they can't possibly demand the improvement of working conditions because such improvements must necessarily hinder the effort to squeeze ever greater productivity from workers and machines.

If any illusions remain, for instance, about the possibility of true "voluntary overtime" after the debacle of last year's contract negotiations, workers need only listen to the words of Henry Ford II, commenting recently on the future of "his" industry: "I think it is inevitable in this country that we are going to have a shorter work week, but we are not ready for it — not in three years, and not in six years." His reasoning? It would reduce productivity, and reduced productivity runs counter to the national interest.

The factory scene by its very nature as mass work situation, gives rise to collective expressions of resentment against the work process. Angry views are exchanged, ideas for resistance are spread, sabotage takes place, caucuses are formed, newsletters are distributed, radical literature mysteriously appears. The union's response is to act as swiftly against these activities as the company: they conspire with the company to fire militant or radical workers they cannot assimilate, literature is prohibited, workers who plan actions against the company are threatened, and finally, union goon squads armed with clubs force people to work and beat up radicals. In short, the unions function as semi-official agencies of the state; as auxiliary organs of the corporation. They cannot do otherwise if they are to survive and maintain their power.

Corporate awareness of this relationship is evident from the shop floor to the uppermost echelons, as was made clear by the situation during the 1970 GM strike, when the company made the Blue Cross payment for the near-bankrupt UAW. In May of that same year, just a few months before the disastrous GM walk-out, UAW president Walter Reuther was killed in an airplane crash. Upon hearing the news, Virgil Boyd, Chrysler vice-chairman, told the New York Times, "It's taken a strong man to keep the situation under control. I hope that whoever his successor is can exert strong internal discipline."

## THE LEFT:

The exertion of strong internal discipline is not exclusively the trademark of a smoothly-running union bureaucracy; there are other aspiring representatives and organizers dusting off their plans for the working class who are also espousing the benefits of discipline and the need for a centralized, hierarchical authority to "carry the workers' struggle forward."

These self-styled revolutionary communists (RU, CL, MCLL, NCLC, etc.) who assemble under the general heading *Marxist-Leninist* have taken upon themselves the task of organizing and leading the "workers' struggle" with their eventual goal being a revolutionary transformation of society and the establishment of their version of communism.

What these Marxist-Leninists all share, basically, is a model for the successful seizure of *state power* extracted from the life and writings of V. I. Lenin, in particular his *What is to be Done?* and *State and Revolution*. This model asserts that capitalism, by forming a working class of the majority, whose labor is exploited by the minority, creates the seeds of its own destruction; once capitalism begins to outlive its historical usefulness, the exploited must inevitably rise up and destroy all the conditions of its exploitation. What it further maintains, though, is that workers as a mass are incapable of developing a consciousness of their situation beyond the point of trade unionism and reformism.

According to these groups, it is necessary then for the unformed revolt of the workers to be given shape, to be organized, from outside the class, by the *vanguard party*, a tightly disciplined hierarchical organization of Marxist revolutionaries. Such an organization will direct the efforts of the "undisciplined workers" and, in the event of a successful revolution, will thereafter lead

in the construction of a temporary *workers' state*, which will take possession of all the means of production (factories, equipment, etc.) after their seizure from the capitalist owners. This, as their model for revolution holds, is the first step in transforming the private ownership of the productive means into social ownership.

What is supposed to follow is the first stage of communism, in which the necessity remains (temporarily) for the continuance of this state, administered by the *party*, to insure the survival of the dictatorship of the proletariat (working class) against the threats of counterrevolutionary forces. The party, as the official manifestation of the state, will then rule in the name of the working class. The state itself, as the need for its control and direction declines (as workers, through Marxism-Leninism, become fully able to direct their lives and social production themselves), will eventually *wither away* and disappear entirely when true communism is attained. At that point human beings will use their more-than-sufficient productive power solely to meet their needs, without the mediation of profit, exploitation or the arbitrary demands of commodity production and consumption.

The concept of a state "withering away" is absurd, and history has born out the absurdity of it every time a leninist state has been established. In every instance a hierarchically arranged bureaucratic elite has sprung up to replace the old capitalist owners, and far from relinquishing control of the state, their project has been to expand the bureaucracy until its centralized control enters into every aspect of daily life.

Under these so-called "communist states" the exploitation of workers remains essentially unchanged, except that now their productive labor is exploited not by individual capitalist owners but by the entire state. This state does not rule in the name of the workers, it cannot and it is ridiculous to maintain that it does. The state rules in its own name for its own interests; it is an institution of authority which, like the union, is completely external to the interests of the workers and is in fact the embodiment of all their lost self-powers. In its worst form, perfected by Joseph Stalin in the USSR during the thirties, it is little more than a total terror machine, capable of eradicating millions in the name of resisting counterrevolution.

To believe that an entrenched bureaucratic elite with power over this immense state-corporation is going to willingly surrender that power and privilege for the common good requires a monumental act of blind faith, because it flies in the face not only of simple common sense, but of all the history of the last 50 years.

The leninist organizations have found in their unsuccessful attempts to organize their base for a mass movement, that for some odd reason, no one is following them. Many of them around the country are presently emerging from a period of intensive "workerist" activities over the past few years in which their members attempted to go to the people in the plants and work with them in an effort to build the base for a mass workers' movement. During that time, some of them (RU included) flirted with attempts to reach workers through involvement in the unions, mostly by seeking positions and by calling for the ouster of the "corrupt fatcats." It's no coincidence that, while workers were discarding unions as completely opposed to their interests, the leninists still clung to them as somehow useful and seemed to have learned nothing about their essential nature in terms of whose interests they actually serve.

The attempts to organize workers into unions, transform unions, and assume leadership of these "mass organizations", as leninists refer to them, have failed miserably. What they fail (or refuse) to see about trade unions is exactly what they fail (refuse) to see about themselves; the corruption of leadership power is not due to its abuse by those who hold it; the leadership power is itself the abuse. The dominion of one man over another is inherently corrupt, because, in every instance, *leadership serves its own interests*.

What is their response to these failures? ... They have returned to intensive backroom study groups, emerged with manifestoes calling for the formation of the authoritarian political party, and announced that "workers will soon be seized with the spirit of party discipline." Then the workers are supposed to follow them *unquestioningly*.

But workers have already begun the process of reclaiming their lost self-powers, of reclaiming their very lives from the alienating forms of capitalism and they have no interest in regaining their lives simply to turn them over to another set of aspiring leaders who offer only a more centralized model for the perpetuation of capital's domination.

Revolution is essential if the oppressive conditions of capitalism are to be ended, but it can only be a revolution which realizes the fullest human potential for every individual, that cannot allow for subjugation to any form of authority, whether it masquerades as "revolutionary" or not.



## CONCLUSIONS:

The Dodge Truck wildcat must be viewed in the context of the wildcats and factory occupations that took place during the summer of 1973. The Jefferson takeover, the Mack Stamping and Detroit Forge wildcats were each watched closely by all Chrysler workers. By culling information through the media, but mostly by word of mouth through the informal Chrysler "family" workers were able to informally evaluate and learn from these battles. Many have and the result will show as battles break out again and people build on the good points and eliminate the mistakes. The suggestions that follow are an indication of how some workers are thinking.

The experience of the wildcats has proved one thing. . . a go home strike on the outside of the plant has many weaknesses. Many people didn't actively participate in the decision making or picking out of a fear and doubt about the true nature of the strike. Communication in this situation is dominated by the company, the union and the commercial media, especially the latter two, acting in the interest of the former. Collective decision making is difficult because of the natural confusion arising in such a situation.

During the Dodge Truck wildcat, many people decried the lack of organization and effective communication. As pointed out above, the confusion allowed a few people to dominate the meetings and the most important group, those who would eventually return to work, had only a minor role.

The simple fact is that a wildcat strike, by its very nature, is most likely doomed to failure. Just too many forces are arrayed against a single group of workers attempting to wield power by simply withholding their labor from their employer.

The wildcat strike of June was without a doubt the largest continuous and organized effort to



DURING THE UPRISING PEOPLE CHANGED SO MUCH FROM THEIR DEPRESSED Demeanor AT WORK THAT THEY WERE SCARCELY RECOGNIZABLE, EVEN TO THEMSELVES. THE ATMOSPHERE OF THE STRIKE MEETINGS WOULD QUICKLY CHANGE FROM INTENSE CONCENTRATION TO CHAOTIC, HAND-SLAPPING LAUGHTER, OR TO ANGER BRIMMING WITH VIOLENCE AS SHOWN IN THIS AND THE FOLLOWING PHOTO.

combat the corporation yet attempted at the Truck Plant. But even though it is the most visible, it is not the only battle in the permanent war between workers on one side, and work and its representatives, the company and the union, on the other side.

A simple walkout has become a relatively common occurrence at the plant, since the beginning of the second shift two years ago. Whether a departmental walkout over issues specific to that work-group, as has happened a number of times among repairmen, metal shop and paint shop workers, or a plantwide walkout of 3,000 workers, cooked in the summer heat to the texture of soft-boiled eggs, they have all been one-shift affairs.

The small walkouts and the large ones seldom accomplish more than an immediate relief of heat, or revenge against the company for arbitrary discipline. They are a protest against the company while at the same time a recognition that they still hold ultimate sway under that roof as people troop back in for work the next day.

By carrying on resistance-*inside the plant*, all of the disadvantages above can be overcome. At the point of production, workers are naturally organized by their collective participation in production. Communication and collective decision making can beat their highest level here.

On the shop floor, workers are in their most powerful position to slow, stop, or destroy production. Merely going home stops everything, but at the same time removes people from their source of power. Without those trucks there is no Chrysler. In addition, by holding the production process hostage, the natural organization and informal communication networks are still intact.

One of the most significant advantages to resistance inside the factory is that it leaves the workers on the *inside* and the company, union, or any others seeking to destroy or dominate the struggle for their own ends, on the *outside*, where they all belong. "Representatives" don't negotiate for the workers and then tell them when to return to work. Power is exercised on the shop floor and all must participate in it collectively.

When on each shift 50 metal shop workers left their jobs and confronted management over disciplinary action in June, they took a qualitatively different action than merely walking out. In the short run they got the discipline rescinded and the resulting discipline from these acts led to the wildcat. Although a less frequent occurrence than a go-home walkout, this organized confrontation with management has been much more successful.

**INCIDENT:** *If one were to imagine rising early, dressing warm and wandering into the Dodge Truck plant on a cold winter morning one would notice a scene appearing more like a Siberian work camp 40 years ago than like a modern factory. In one corner of the plant, broken windows, collapsing walls, and doors jammed open have little heat retaining capacity. When the few ceiling heater-blowers break down and the sub-zero cold blows in, production for people and some machines becomes impossible.*

*Eventually a few of the coldest workers will slush out of the slush washing over their boot soles, fold their frozen wet hands into their armpits and sit down under the one working heater. Quietly, others join them until the line stops. Supervisors at first threaten write-ups and firings, but soon they and the union rep give up and go off by themselves when everyone turns their backs and refuses to talk to them. While the hands and feet of the idle workers begin to warm up, scrambling maintenance men board up windows and fix heaters and doors. Finally the foreman approaches the workers and politely asks them to see if conditions meet their approval. People return to work, the line starts again and heat is provided, at least temporarily, with no discipline.*

**INCIDENT:** *The wildcat strike had come and gone and Chrysler was getting even with its employees for being so presumptuous as to call an end to production for four days. The work schedule (nine hours, six days) seemed especially outrageous in the face of our rebellion the previous week, given that we had only been doing 40 hours up until the strike.*

*On the first day of production, a brief movement to walkout at the end of eight hours failed. But later that week, the line ground to a halt at precisely 2:50 p.m. on the day shift, the normal quitting time for eight hours. Circuit breakers flashed open indicating something jammed in the line while short-haired, white shirted supervisors panicked and raced to correct a very damaging situation. The beginning section of the chassis line was standing idle while the rest of the light line moved on, opening a wider and wider gap where trucks should have been.*

*Idle workers laid back and laughed as maintenance men and supervisors tore open a gearbox for the line driving motor and dug out a power steering pump that belonged about 75 feet further down the line. When the same incident happened at the same time on Saturday, even management was convinced that it was not an accident, but there was little they could do but fix it and curse.*

*Most people call it sabotage and hold varied opinions about it. A typical executive would demand to know, "Why would these workers destroy the very means of their livelihood, it just shows what lazy, stupid, irresponsible people they are."*

*A union rep might say, "If something is wrong they should go through the proper channels of the grievance procedure, otherwise it destroys the authority of their elected representatives."*

*Sabotage is a way of life in any large industrial operation, especially in auto plants where the moving line dominates everything. The word itself comes from the French "sabot" meaning a wooden shoe to be thrown into the machinery. That dates back to the earliest mass production.*

*Sabotage is not always an individual act, nor is it random, nor is it really spontaneous. The methods are infinite and no corporation can protect itself from some angry employees who take it upon themselves to change the conditions of their jobs. A more appropriate term might be "direct action."*

*It is an act of enforcing the worker's demands on the company, not an act of petitioning a mediating authority to plead their cause. Authority resides in the power of controlling production—those who run it have it.*



What do all these varied means of resistance signify? An easier way to answer that question would be to discover what they *do not* signify. Workers were not searching for better representation from current authorities, management and/or the union, nor were they searching for new leaders to become new bosses. . . and still go to work.

They were not looking for slight improvements in working conditions, after all it would have been easier to go out and buy their own gloves, or even drop out and live a cheap hippy life style rather than take action with such potentially tremendous social consequence.

The demands of the strike were not even formulated until the third day and even the issue of the firing of the four metal shop workers and union rep, was admitted by all to be only the spark for the uprising.

"Everything," offered one young exuberant worker when asked what he wanted during the peak of the strike action.

"I just don't want to *work*," moaned another during the first few depressed days of the return to work after the strike.

Horrors! How do you formulate these demands into a political program. During the strike, many people railed on Watergate, the fuel crisis, inflation the UAW sell-outs, and the "system" in general as well as specific grievances about the factory. The rejection of that job's domination of our lives and the political content of the uprising were inseparable from the protest over working conditions. They did in fact comprise the core of the anger.

The Dodge Truck uprising and the day-to-day acts of resistance against the work process can have only one underlying cause: a generalized rebellion against forced wage labor. The implicit realization constantly confronts us that daily activity at the work place consists of bought and sold labor, activity controlled by the rich and powerful for their purposes and that much of the value created through wage labor is given to far-away stockholders rather than the producers.

Work under capitalism will continue to distort our lives and rob us of its potential until rebellion spreads throughout the entire class of those who must sell their labor each day. The destruction of capitalist social relationships would mean the opening of a new world where work, art, creativity and even hobbies would lose their status of separate categories and be merged into one, all at the command of each individual.

Capitalism doesn't work for us and each day is powerful testimony to that. The Dodge Truck strike gave us a glimmering of what can be done. Let's do it all.

## For Douglas Drawing

a love  
his form outlined  
in ice and snow  
Thanatos

we cry for possession  
equality no longer exists  
.the myth is unveiled.

delicately  
you freeze little parts  
of those men

in the distance  
the howling of the subway  
and the creaking of the stars

outside your door  
the desperate  
and the common  
merge into one  
.and another myth is unveiled.

as they nonchalantly  
stroll the park  
night  
inside ravaging  
the bushes madly  
a cock  
two voluptuous and willing  
lips  
(the creaking of the stars)

He who insists  
competition produces  
the most substantial  
Art

(thrusts his penis rigid instant explode)  
straightens his shirt  
and emerges from the dark

Echolalia  
noises from the monastery  
noises from the constitution  
noises from our fathers  
even the bushes utter these noises

so that purity exists  
only in that which cannot speak  
Thanatos

your vision  
of tranquility  
the integrity of a lover  
preserved in ice

like Sade searching  
for the absolute negation  
as the only truth  
(Eros always lies)  
with dispassion  
you try to side-step  
the lie.  
slow meticulous calculation  
places those bodies on paper

the house must be kept cold  
but on the doors  
the wings are struggling  
against their pinnings  
and another sort of creaking  
is heard

George Therese Dickenson

# The Makhnovist Movement

The great distrust between Communists and anarchists, which of course has clear roots in the struggles between Marx and Bakunin, has manifested itself in practice on many occasions. At times it has appeared as a series of isolated incidents (though part of an obvious pattern), such as the closing of anarchist publications by Communist authorities; in April 1918 Bolsheviks in Moscow raided more than two dozen anarchist centers, killing about 40 anarchists and imprisoning over 500 more.<sup>1</sup> The repression spread into other cities and provinces quickly. At other times the distrust and dissatisfaction with Communist rule has broken out into rebellion, as at Kronstadt in 1921.<sup>2</sup> However, at least twice -- in the Ukraine from 1918 to 1921 and in Spain during the mid-1930's -- there has been a well-developed anarchist movement with which the Communist authorities<sup>3</sup> have had to contend.

The story of Communist duplicity and even betrayal during the Spanish Civil War is fairly well known, to those who are willing to consider the fairly accessible material, which includes first-person accounts by non-anarchists such as George Orwell and Franz Borkenau.<sup>4</sup> The story of the Ukrainian "Makhnovist Movement" has been much less known, though the recent publication of Peter Arshinov's *History of the Makhnovist Movement* (a joint effort of Black and Red and Solidarity Bookshop, translation from the Russian by Lorraine and Fredy Perlman) in English should help rectify this situation. Furthermore, Free Life Editions of New York, in cooperation with Black and Red will shortly issue Voline's *The Unknown Revolution*.<sup>5</sup>

One gets the sad feeling in reading these works that a great historical opportunity has passed, not just in terms of active aid to the CNT/FAI or the Makhnovshchina (which is obviously impossible as soon as the movement has been crushed), but in terms of raising the issues beneath the anarchist/Communist conflict. Who is interested in really arguing seemingly obscure points about the southern Ukraine during the period of the Civil War in Russia? After all, the issue was settled long ago. It is to Chomsky's credit that he has done so much, in America at least, to revive the argument around Spain. When the issue manifests itself again in Spain in the 1930's, when it comes up again in Hungary in 1956<sup>6</sup> and in France in

1968<sup>7</sup> (to mention only the most dramatic incidents) it becomes of more current and even immediate concern.<sup>8</sup>

Arshinov's history is a very sympathetic study of the southern Ukrainian Makhnovist movement. Arshinov himself was a carpenter or metal worker (and former Bolshevik) who became an anarchist in 1906 and was involved in blowing up a police station and assassinating publicly the head of the railroad yard at Aleksandrovsk. After a sentence of death, escape, clandestine agitation, he was arrested again in 1910, and in 1911 met Nestor Makhno, likewise condemned to the Butyrki prison in Moscow. When the political prisoners were released early in 1917, Makhno went back to his home, Gulyai-Polye in the southern Ukraine and began organizing, soon becoming President of the Peasants' and Workers' Soviet of Gulyai-Polye. In August of 1917 he initiated an expropriation of the land of the wealthy landowners on the basis of equality. The constructive work of formation of free communes (as distinct from the "official" communes -- collectivization from above -- which the Bolsheviks tried to start, and dominate) was begun but was very difficult. Free development was nearly impossible, as the region was almost constantly at war. As a result of the Brest-Litovsk treaty between Lenin and Germany, which anarchists throughout Russia opposed, Austro-German troops easily moved into the Ukraine. Voline says, "Let us recall that the principal clause of the peace treaty gave the Germans free access to the Ukraine, from which the Bolsheviks retired."<sup>9</sup> There were many sort of free-lance insurgent bands scattered throughout the Ukraine; under the impetus of the occupation most of them drew together around Makhno. Resistance from both the Makhnovists and the Petliurists forced the German puppet regent Skoropadsky out and Petliura retook Kiev, only to lose it a month later to the Bolsheviks. The actual history itself is complicated but interesting. A constant factor was each force's having to fight simultaneously at least two other forces. For instance, the Makhnovists fought both the Petliurists and the Bolsheviks, once the Germans were thrown out; the other two forces fought each other as well. The constant warfare took its toll on the region in many ways. Aside from the obvious, it almost totally prevented free development of collective economic organs. It was only in the period from December 1918 to June 1919 that there was relative peace -- and no political power over the peasants in the Gulyai-Polye region. Otherwise, requirements of military struggle against the White generals exhausted the energies of the region. Villages were taken and retaken, with attendant reprisals and destruction. Three times the Makhnovists entered into temporary military alliance with the Bolshevik Red Army. Each time, as soon as the White threat was over, the Bolsheviks tried to eliminate the Makhnovists. Repeated treacheries and attempts to assass-



inate Makhno were uncovered; many of the other leaders of the "Insurgent Army of the Ukraine (Makhnovist)" were executed by their "allies". The pattern of betrayal is undeniable and the Bolshevik rationales for it unconvincing. At times the Red Army even attacked Makhno from the rear while he was engaged in action against Denikin's forces. This happened again while Makhno fought Wrangel. In each case it seems clear that the Makhnovists played the major role in fighting off the White threat; Makhno can be credited with saving Moscow itself against Denikin's advance.<sup>10</sup> Yet the reward was betrayal.

The Makhnovists themselves at first believed it might be possible to co-exist with the Bolsheviks, keeping the Ukraine free. They sent one hundred carloads of grain to Moscow and Petrograd at one point when grain was sorely needed there.<sup>11</sup> The Bolshevik press praised Makhno extensively -- when the Party had need of his services. Otherwise it castigated him, "Trotsky had openly expressed the idea that he would rather lose all of the Ukraine to Denikin than permit the further spread of the Makhnovshchina. He knew that the latter, having the support of the peasant masses, would eventually be harder to fight than the Whites who were hated by the entire population."<sup>12</sup> An announced workers and peasants congress to be held at Gulyai-Polye (there had been three prior congresses) was outlawed by Trotsky; his order is reprinted in Arshinov's book.<sup>13</sup> Trotsky's antipathy was not new. On previous occasions he had cut off munitions supplies to the Insurgent Army, this at a time at which it was still technically a part of the Red Army by agreement. In both the Spanish and Ukrainian situations, the Communists denied the anarchist forces essential supplies, precipitated their defeat, and then blamed them for not holding fast. Anarchists have always held that in both situations this reflected a calculated policy to destroy a mass-based movement whose very existence challenged the legitimacy of Communist authoritarianism.<sup>14</sup> Voline and Arshinov both cite several instances in which Bolshevik leaders indicate fear of the true popular nature of the *Makhnovshchina*.

It should be pointed out that the *Makhnovshchina* were not strictly anarchist. Makhno himself and many around him characterized themselves as anarchists, but the movement itself -- though strongly libertarian -- was not consciously anarchist. In some respects, it could more correctly be described as almost purely autonomist, though not a nationalistic autonomy.<sup>15</sup> Arshinov describes it simply as "primarily a movement of the poorest sectors of the Ukrainian

peasantry." while Voline says that the "Makhnovist movement was far from being the only revolutionary movement of the masses,"<sup>16</sup> That the movement was not purely isolationist is indicated by V. Miroshchinsky (as reported by Footman) who at Ekaterinoslav noted that "the men were determined to liquidate Denikin, then to liquidate the Moscow commissars, and then march westwards against the European bourgeois."<sup>17</sup> The movement is also said to have sent propagandists into Siberia, where anti-Bolshevik revolts occurred.

### Shortcomings of the movement.

Voline's critique of the shortcomings of the movement is more developed than Arshinov's. The "personal shortcomings" of the inner circle are mentioned in the above footnote. One aspect of this which Voline stresses is the development of the clique itself and within it a "warrior sentiment", as the small group around Makhno actually became further and further detached from the people. The moral deterioration was by all accounts progressive over time, so much so that one wonders if this deterioration was not facilitated by the constant military emergency, and the resultant permanency and developing professionalism of the army over time. Needless to say, it cannot be justified on these grounds any more than Lenin's development of internal repression can be justified. Actually the deterioration only serves to validate libertarian convictions about the corrupting nature of authority. The constant betrayal by the Bolsheviks must itself have been one of the major contributions towards this moral weakening, as the strong solidarity towards all revolutionary forces displayed by the Makhnovists early in their development -- an affirmation of their revolutionary optimism -- met with the cynical responses of the Bolsheviks. There never seems to have been a total collapse; Peters says Makhno would erratically teetotal, and strictly enforce abstinence at such times.<sup>18</sup>

Voline also discusses the inadequacy of "intellectual forces in the service of the movement" and the inadequate theoretical and historical knowledge of the people and leaders of the movement. Likewise he comments on the lack of a "vigorous and organized workers' movement to support the insurrection."

It is important, though, to remember that the faults and even crimes of a given

leader or set of leaders does not automatically discredit an entire movement. Makhno himself was not the entire movement, though he seems to have been disturbingly important (from a strictly anarchist viewpoint) and often apparently crucial. His military genius was remarkable; his audacity often stunning. At one point he wiped out one noble family and took some police officer uniforms belonging to them, distributing them among his men, and thus "gained access to a ball of the local aristocratic gentry". They ate well, then revealed themselves and killed off the participants.<sup>19</sup> His military maneuvers another time enabled him and thirty others to defeat one thousand armed regular troops. He usually showed up where and when least expected and could almost be counted upon to do the most unorthodox thing in any given situation -- and win. When capturing enemy forces, which he often did in the thousands, he usually executed the officers but almost invariably let all the common soldiers go, telling them to go home, unless they wished to join his army. The Red Army developed special commissions to round up all these released soldiers and impress them back into service against Makhno.<sup>20</sup> Here he appears to have held principle above military expediency. This policy never changed; there are other examples which indicate this tendency as well.

There was much else that was exciting about the Makhnovist movement. The first act of the insurgents in arriving in a town or village was usually to destroy the police station and prisons. Looting was punished severely. A brigade commander and a regimental commander were both shot for looting. The continuing statements prohibiting looting (and drunkenness), though, reflect the fact that problems remained.<sup>21</sup> Free speech and freedom of the press was guaranteed. Arshinov reports, "During the few weeks that the Makhnovists spent at Ekaterinoslav, five or six newspapers of various political orientations appeared: the right Socialist-Revolutionary paper, *Narodovlastie* (The People's Power), the Left S-R paper *Znamya Vosstanya* (The Standard of Revolt), the Bolshevik *Zvezda* (Star), and others."<sup>22</sup> The Bolshevik attitude toward the free press and competing political or ideological groups is well-known and documented elsewhere (a particularly grisly compilation is Maksimoff's *The Guillotine At Work*.) Arshinov says that over 200,000 workers and peasants were shot or imprisoned by the Bolsheviks in the Ukraine at this time, that is to say, under Lenin not under Stalin.<sup>23</sup> It got worse later.

Within the army there was free election of officers, voluntary enlistment, and self-discipline.<sup>24</sup> Mentioned above is the practice of treating the common soldiers of the Red Army as comrades and freeing them, rather than holding prisoners, or worse. (The Bolsheviks invariably shot every Makhnovist they could get their hands on.) The Insurrectionary Army helped publicize and protect congresses of workers and peasants but did not dominate them, it seems. Their reluctance to govern is indicated by the following statement issued by the cultural-educational section of the army at one point:

The cultural-educational section of the Makhnovist army constantly receives questions from school teachers asking about the language in which instruction should be given in the schools, now that Denikin's troops have been expelled. The revolutionary insurgents, holding to the principles of true socialism, cannot in any field or by any measure do violence to the natural desires and needs of the Ukrainian people. This is why the question of the language to be taught cannot be solved by our army, but can only be decided by the people themselves, by parents, teachers, and students.<sup>25</sup>

Probably the most important insights into the spirit of the movement are lost to us now. Arshinov's papers, including minutes of the Congresses, were lost on four separate occasions, in the confusion of battle. There remain only hints of what might have been. Arshinov himself describes the congress at Aleksandrovsk as resembling in its final days "a beautiful poem". In his book, Voline devotes 20 pages to his first person account of the congress. Many of the delegates arrived suspicious that they were to be used by one political faction or another, "a mistrust which nearly all the delegates seemed to manifest.... The meeting was frozen, and it took some time to thaw it."<sup>26</sup> Voline elaborates at length, and one begins to get some notion of how the congress proceeded in the hearts of the people.

### Critique of Bolshevism.

Arshinov, writing in 1923, has already developed a clear critique of Bolshevism, which can of course be found in its essence in much of Bakunin's objections to Marx and the authoritarian socialists, but which bursts upon people even today as a startling revelation.

Although the main force of all great revolutions consisted of workers and peasants, who made innumerable sacrifices for their success, the leaders, ideologists and org-

anizers of the forms and goals of the revolution were invariably neither workers nor peasants, generally intermediaries who hesitated between the ruling class of the dying epoch and the proletariat of the cities and fields.

This element was always born and grew out of the soil of the disintegrating old regime, the old State system, and was nourished by the existence of a movement for freedom among the enslaved masses. Because of their class characteristics and their aspiration to State power, they take a revolutionary position in relation to the dying political regime, and readily become leaders of enslaved workers, leaders of mass revolutionary movements. But, while organizing the revolution and leading it under the banner of the vital interests of workers and peasants, this element always pursues its own group or caste interest, and aspires to make use of the revolution with the aim of establishing its own dominant position in the country....

The doctrine of the State itself, the idea of managing the masses by force, was always an attribute of individuals who lacked the sentiment of equality and in whom the instinct of egoism was dominant; individuals for whom the human masses are a raw material lacking will, initiative and intelligence, incapable of directing themselves.

This idea was always held by dominant privileged groups who stood outside the working population -- the aristocracy, military castes, nobility, clergy, industrial and commercial bourgeoisie, etc.

It is not by chance that contemporary socialism shows itself to be the zealous servant of this idea: it is the ideology of the new ruling caste. If we attentively observe the carriers and apostles of state socialism, we will see that every one of them is full of centralist urges, that every one sees himself, above all, as a directing and commanding center around which the masses gravitate. 27

As so many others have tried to point out, the degeneration of the Russian revolution was not due to a neanderthal like Stalin (Maksimoff makes a case for Lenin as a reactionary), not primarily due to the failings of individuals nor to the exigencies of the Civil War and the threat of capitalist or monarchist intervention, but rather was implicit in Bolshevism itself, implicit in authoritarianism.

We have to assume that authoritarianism has not irrevocably carried the day -- or the century -- and that all forms of struggle, resistance, education, and constructive achievement are not foredoomed to futility. Historical studies of the betrayal of free development and organization by its "friends" and by "revolutionaries" can help warn of the vigilance necessary and the need to maintain a critical attitude toward temporary allies. Self-proclaimed "marxists" or "marxist-leninists" may take the same attitude toward private capitalism as do left-wing anarchists, but the tragic results of authoritarian pre-emption of revolutionary situations ought by now to be all too clear. The question of pre-emption is an extensive one, which must be dealt with at greater length;

there is the question of rhetoric and nomenclature (Lenin taking over the more radical slogans of the revolutionary movement in Russia in order for the Bolshevik Party to appear as its leadership, an astonishingly effective maneuver). Regarding nomenclature, it ought to be clear that not everyone that calls themselves a revolutionary is a revolutionary. Nor are all "socialists" socialist. American political and economic leadership have shown a tremendous capacity for both pre-emption of slogans and nomenclature and for an associated phenomenon -- cooptation. The Arshinov book offers us a chance to begin again the study of past movements, to sharpen our perceptions of attempts to sidetrack revolution, and warn us of the need to retain at all times a critical perspective. The desire to be in the thick of the struggle, to maintain a strong sense of solidarity with others involved in struggle is important and cannot be cynically abandoned when the movement gains an element of strength, as it always has been abandoned by authoritarian socialists who fight that their tendency might be dominant. The pressure to always take sides ( "if you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem" ) has an element of truth to it, and a temptingly strong emotive attractiveness. But if principle is to remain above mere struggle for political dominance, one must approach all this with a great deal of care. It is hoped that the publication of Arshinov and the Voline book will help revive anarchism as a tendency self-conscious of its differences with forms of authoritarian socialism, and thus able to differentiate that which it has to offer the future.

## Notes.

1. Paul Avrich, The Russian Anarchists, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1967, p. 184.
2. Paul Avrich, Kronstadt 1921, Princeton, 1970. Also, Ida Mett, The Kronstadt Uprising, Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1971 (\$1.45 from Solidairty Bookshop, 713 Armitage, Chicago, Ill. 60614. All prices quoted in footnotes indicate current prices at which books or pamphlets can be obtained from Solidarity Bookshop.)
3. In both instances, the Communists were essentially at the center and had greater access to supplies and war materiel (of course, the active assistance of the Soviet Union was of importance in the Spanish example); both instances were characterized by active warfare with a third force, the Fascists or Whites.
4. Franz Borkenau, The Spanish Cockpit, Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1963. George Orwell, Homage to Catalonia, NY: Harvest Books, 1952. Noam Chomsky, American Power and the New Mandarins, NY: Vintage Books, 1969. Probably the best

full work on Spain to date is Pierre Broue & Emile Temime, The Revolution and the Civil War in Spain, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1973. See also Sam Dolgoff, The Spanish Collectives, NY: Free Life Editions, 1974.

5. Both available through Solidarity Bookshop, prices not available at this time.
6. Andy Anderson, Hungary '56, London Solidarity, \$1.50 from Solidarity, Chicago.
7. Daniel & Gabriel Cohn-Bendit, Obsolete Communism: The Left-Wing Alternative, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1968.
8. Cathy Levine's article in BLACK ROSE Number 1 strikes at embryonic attempts of the authoritarian impulse to subvert another essentially libertarian movement, the women's liberation movement.
9. Voline, The Unknown Revolution, London: Freedom Press, 1955, p. 80. The Bolsheviks had taken Kiev in late January 1918. Their principal opponents were the liberal bourgeois Ukrainian nationalists around Simon Petliura, who had in December proclaimed Ukrainian independence. The Bolshevik extension of power into the Ukraine ended when they agreed to abandon the Ukraine at Brest-Litovsk.
10. Voline, p. 155. Avrich, The Russian Anarchists: "a major factor in halting his drive towards the Bolshevik capital." (p. 218).
11. Arshinov, p. 94.
12. Nomad, Max, Apostles of Revolution, Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1939, p. 319.
13. Arshinov, p. 120, 121.
14. Voline, p. 130; Nomad, p. 319; David Footman, The Civil War in Russia, London: Faber & Faber, 1961, also reports that as late as 1921, after the Bolsheviks had introduced N.E.P. measures and reformed some of the most unpopular features of Bolshevik-style collectivization, "Red Army reports...still complain of the support afforded to Makhno by the villagers." (p. 300).
15. Voline and others go to great length to show the refreshing internationalism and lack of national prejudice in the Makhnovshchina. Makhno took the severest measures, including execution, against those guilty of displaying such prejudices, including such as anti-Semitism which were fairly common in Russia and the Ukraine at that time and, as can easily be noted, still today. See Roy Medvedev, Let History Judge, NY: Vintage, for an extensive discussion of Stalin's anti-Semitism by a Leninist!
16. Voline, p. 220; Arshinov, p. 257. Voline's book is almost totally a re-hash of Arshinov's. (This only applies to the Freedom Press Edition. The Black & Red/Free Life Editions version is the complete Voline and will present a great deal of material for the first time in English.) He borrows extensively from Arshinov with lengthy quotations, sometimes up to 5 or 6 pages long! Much of the rest of Voline is paraphrasing, even in several instances using identical phraseology. Basically, Arshinov has done the fundamental work. Voline adds more in the way of first person accounts, which are quite valuable and offer the most exciting insights into the movement itself (though

Arshinov was with the movement longer. Voline kept getting jailed by the Bolsheviks.) Voline also does not romanticize the movement, or Makhno himself, as much as Arshinov does throughout, and also has a much clearer critique of the movement's weaknesses, among which are personal weaknesses of Makhno and his associates. Voline says there are two major ones--his alcoholic addiction and his "behavior toward women".

Victor Peters' book, Nestor Makhno: The Life Of An Anarchist, 1970, available from Echo Books, 234 Oak Street, Winnipeg, Canada for \$3.50) presents a great number of personal reminiscences of Makhno from Russian emigrants, almost all critical but non-Bolshevik. In many respects, Peters' book provides a needed balance to the obviously more sympathetic accounts of Arshinov and Voline. Peters at times presents a pretty dismal picture of drunkenness, rape, and wild and erratic behavior on the part of men in the movement, right up and including Tchus and Makhno, which certainly did not set well with much of the population. On the other hand, this kind of behavior would not seem to have been too extensive, as strong and continuing peasant support was evidently a necessary basis for the movement.

17. Footman, p. 285. To some extent, this can be discounted as being little more than perhaps a rousing speech of one of the movement's ideologues; all the evidence indicates that the movement would have had a hard time retaining volunteers if it ventured too far beyond the soil of the Ukraine, on which it was so firmly based.
18. Peters, p. 103. Peters also discusses elements of Makhno's vanity, the fear that some of his own men had of him, and his odd decision to get married and, no less, to do this in a church! Voline stresses that the "misconduct" of Makhno was sporadic, and that he was often called to order by others in the movement, at which times he "usually paid attention and tried to improve himself." (p. 227) By no means does this "moral deterioration" seem to begin to approach the excesses of the Whites. Red Army behavior was unclear in the accounts I read, though the degree of peasant resistance to the Bolsheviks, and support of the Makhnovshchina, seems to provide more than a clue.
19. Nomad, p. 306; Avrich, p. 212.
20. Arshinov also states, "In order to avoid fraternization between the soldiers of the Red Army and the Makhnovists, the Bolshevik commander sent against the Makhnovists a division of Lettish sharpshooters and some Chinese detachments, that is to say, units whose members had not the slightest idea of the true meaning of the Russian revolution and who blindly obeyed the orders of the authorities." (p. 164). In the military agreement between the Makhnovist Insurrectionary Army and the Red Army, there is a provision that the Makhnovists will not accept desertions, by individuals or detachments, from the Red Army but apparently no one felt the need to consider the idea that any Makhnovist would want to desert to join the Red Army. (p. 178) Footman also reports at one point Makhno himself "saved some twenty Austrians from lynching [by angry peasants], tied up their wounds, fed them and sent them off to tell the story to their companions." (Footman, p. 261).
21. Footman, p. 285, 286.
22. Arshinov, p. 153, 154.
23. Arshinov, p. 165.
24. Arshinov, p. 96. There are indications that, from time to time, these principles were com-

promised, but all in all it certainly represents an improvement over the Bolshevik ideal, which went beyond the army to the "militarization of labor". (See Maurice Brinton's The Bolsheviks and Workers' Control: The State and Counter-Revolution, London Solidarity, (\$1.50 from Chicago), for a compilation of Leninist attitudes towards free labor. Brinton also comments on the abolition of internal democracy in the Red Army under Trotsky's reorganization. On this point, see also Robert V. Daniels, The Conscience of the Revolution, NY: Clarion Books, 1969, pp. 121-125.

25. Arshinov, p. 210.

26. Voline, p. 166.

27. Arshinov, pp. 31-35.

**WOMEN, RESISTANCE, AND REVOLUTION: A  
History of Women and Revolution in the Modern World.**  
By Sheila Rowbotham

Reviewed by Marian Leighton

**WOMEN, RESISTANCE, AND REVOLUTION** is a tremendously important book, one which many of us have been anxiously anticipating a long time. Essentially, this is the only well-researched, narrative history of feminism's development in relation to the socialist revolutionary tradition. We've seen a flood of recent books on the suffrage era and on some of the more prominent women in the social and welfare movements, but heretofore nothing on the obvious subject of the socialist women's movement.

Having known years of scrounging around in various libraries to acquire scanty knowledge of socialist women's history, their activities and programs, I was excited by sitting down with a book that contains all-of-a-piece so much of this good and difficult-to-retrieve history. Generally, each chapter covers a broad time period and/or revolutionary situation: early modern reformers, French Revolution, utopian socialism of 1848, the Commune of 1871, late Victorian cultural radicalism, classical Marxist theory on women, early twentieth century working class women's organizations, women in the Russ-

ian Revolution, women in the Chinese Revolution, and the development of socialist women's movements in the third world.

Whew! Unfortunately, sometimes the very breadth of the subject is so vast that it is difficult for the author to give us much beyond a galloping factual narrative lacking in both depth and interpretive syntheses. This was my feeling particularly in the early chapters on the French Revolution, 1848, and 1871 periods, with which I am most familiar. However, even here I cannot be harsh; it's too inspiring to see even a few paragraphs on Flora Tristan's "L'Union Ouvrière" and to read of Claire Lacombe's stirring oratory. Sheila Rowbotham is one of the first of the contemporary writers on feminism (in English) to give women in the French revolutionary tradition any of the attention they deserve.

Unreservedly, I think Rowbotham's chapter on the Russian Revolution, entitled "If You Like Tobogganing," is superb and gives evidence of the best work to date done by a feminist. This chapter (along with Berkman, Goldman, Kollantai, Balabanoff, Reich's chapter in the *Sexual Revolution*, and more recent anarchist and libertarian socialist criticisms of the Bolshevik handling of Kronstadt and of the Bolshevik bureaucracy in general), gives important perspective on the arbitrariness and lack of consciousness by the Bolsheviks in any attempts to transform psycho-socio-sexual values. The latter chapters on China and the third world are definitive contributions in their areas.

The major potential flaw in this book is, I think, conceptual. In spite of the justly-deserved criticism given to male socialists' limitations in regard to the "Woman Question" historically, the author has basically undertaken a very traditional Marxist approach to socialist feminism's development and emergence. As such, it tends to imply that all women's liberation attempts before the twentieth century are doomed to tragedy and isolation, since only in the twentieth century do the necessary economic/material conditions exist for a mass movement's growth.

In short, one is aware of a fairly traditional Marxist historical progression, - somewhat too linear - in discounting the contributions of

isolated nineteenth century women except as "forerunners" and in over-emphasizing the present-day potential for revolution in the creation of mass-based parties of the most oppressed groups. There is, of course, cause to be wary of such an approach since it has often been used "vulgarly" to over-determine and to trivialize the historical subject under discussion.

However, in using this Marxist conceptual progression, Rowbotham's book itself comes to embody the uneasy juncture of feminism and socialism, the book as an embodiment of the problem which it attempts to investigate. This is intentional and justifiable, as the author indicates,

*This is a book in which feminism and Marxism come home to roost. They cohabit in the same space somewhat uneasily. Each sits snorting at the other and using words which are strange and foreign to the other. Each is huffy and jealous of its own autonomy. They are at once incompatible and in real need of one another. As a feminist and a Marxist I carry their contradictions within me and it is tempting to opt for one or the other in an effort to produce a tidy resolution of the commotion generated by the antagonism between them. But to do that would mean evading the social reality which gives rise to the antagonism.*

In spite of the many "botches" which have resulted from application of a "vulgarized" Marxist methodology in writing history, this book ultimately succeeds in transcending these potential limitations by the demonstration of real sympathy/empathy for the pain experienced by earlier, more isolated feminists and by its avoidance of heaping total, unquestioning praise upon twentieth century third world movements. Instead, the author honestly points out the conservative treatment of sexual and moral values, that has often deterred the most far-reaching social change among third world revolutionary organizations.

By utilizing a Marxist historical approach, while maintaining a respectful and critical stance in relation to her subject, Sheilah Rowbotham's

book stands as an encouraging representation of the creative possibilities of utilization of a Marxist analytical method in aiding the development of feminist theory. I am enthusiastically grateful that this book now exists. Do read it for yourself. Sheilah Rowbotham has also prepared the best bibliography to date of women's liberation and revolution. This booklet is available for seventy cents from Falling Wall Press Ltd., 79 Richmond Road, Montpelier, Bristol, BS6 5EP England (enclose stamps for postage). The book and bibliographical pamphlet are a fine combination and a good beginning for further essential research and writing.

#### NEW BOOKS OF INTEREST

Ursula LeGuin, author of **THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS**, has a new "future possibilities" book out, **THE DISPOSSESSED**. Her writings go a long way toward forcing the recognition of science fiction, or more appropriately, "speculative fiction" as serious literature. Much of the best writing today falls into this category, but is often ignored by readers still burdened with stereotypes of the "hardware and gadgetry" sci-fi typical of the 1950's. Within contemporary science fiction there is beginning to appear a really exciting genre of anarchist utopian fiction, presenting imaginative and realistic visions of life-as-it-could-be, welcome reminders to those living today. **THE DISPOSSESSED** weaves this vital utopian element throughout this thoroughly enjoyable tale of exiled anarchist colonies and inter-planetary intrigue.

...Andrea Dworkin's **WOMAN HATING** has already stirred up a good deal of controversy. She proposes the re-definition of sexuality and human community in terms of an anarchistic, androgynous multi-sexuality. The analysis includes perceptive interpretations of current mythological rationales, from fairy tales to pornography, with a directness of style unique in theoretical discussion - a style which has already provoked the censor in several guardians of traditional leftist jargon. An important contribution to the on-going discussion of the questions of a free sexuality in a free society.

D.R.

