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THE KUWASI BALAGOON

**LIBERATION
SCHOOL**

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Anarchism

Anarchy Can't Fight Alone

Kuwasi Balagoon

Of all ideologies, anarchy is the one that addresses liberty and equalitarian relations in a realistic and ultimate fashion. It is consistent with each individual having an opportunity to live a complete and total life. With anarchy, the society as a whole not only maintains itself at an equal expense to all, but progresses in a creative process unhindered by any class, caste or party. This is because the goals of anarchy don't include replacing one ruling class with another, neither in the guise of a fairer boss or as a party. This is key because this is what separates anarchist revolutionaries from Maoist, socialist and nationalist revolutionaries who from the onset do not embrace complete revolution. They cannot envision a truly free and equalitarian society and must to some extent embrace the socialization process that makes exploitation and oppression possible and prevalent in the first place.

When I first became a revolutionary and accepted the doctrine of nationalism as a response to genocide practiced by the United States government, I knew as I do now that the only way to end the evil practices of the US was to crush the government and the ruling class that shielded itself through that government was through protracted guerrilla warfare.

Armed with that knowledge, I set out the initial organizing of the Black Panther Party until the state's escalation of the war against the Black people that was begun with the invasion of Africa to capture slaves made it clear to me that to survive and contribute I would have to go underground and literally fight.

Once captured for armed robbery, I had the opportunity to see the weakness of the movement and put the state's offensive in perspective. First, the state rounded up all the organizers pointed out to it by agents who had infiltrated the party as soon as it had begun organizing in N.Y. It charged these people with conspiracy and demanded bails so high that the party turned away from its purposes of liberation of the black colony to fund raising. At that point, leadership was imported rather than developed locally and the situation deteriorated quickly and sharply. Those who were bailed out were those chosen by the leadership, regardless of the wishes of the rank and file or fellow prisoners of war, or regardless of the relatively low bail of at least one proven comrade.

Under their leadership, "political consequences" (attacks) against occupation forces ceased altogether. Only a Fraction of the money collected for the Purpose of bail went towards bail. The leaders began to live high off the hog while the rank and file sold papers, were filtered out leaving behind so many robots who wouldn't challenge policy until those in jail publicly denounced the leadership.

How could a few jerks divert so much purpose and energy for so long? How could they neutralize the courage and intellect of the cadre? The answers to these questions are that the cadre accepted

their leadership and accepted their command regardless of what their intellect had or had not made clear to them. The true democratic process which they were willing to die for, for the sake of their children, they would not claim for themselves.

These are the same reasons that the people's Republic of China supported UNITA and the reactionary South African government in Angola; that the war continued in Southeast Asia after the Americans had done the deed; why the Soviet Union, the product of the first Socialist revolution is not providing the argument that it should and could through being a model

This is not to say that the people of the Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China, Zimbabwe or Cuba aren't better off because of the struggles they endured. It is to say that the only way to make a dictatorship of the proletariat is to elevate everyone to being proletariat and deflate all the advantages of power that translate into the wills of a few dictating to the majority the possibility must be prevented of any individual or group of individuals being able to enforce their wills over any other individual's private life or to extract social consequences for behavior preferences or ideas.

Only an anarchist revolution has on its agenda to deal with these goals. This would seem to galvanize the working class, déclassé intellectuals, colonized third world nations and some members of the petty bourgeois and alright bourgeoisie. But this is not the case.

That China, North Korea, Vietnam, and Mozambique would build round a Marxist ideology to drive out invaders and rebuild feudal economies in the midst of western imperialism's designs and efforts to invade and recolonize is a point that can be argued in the light of the international situation it is one thing that they don't back the will of the people as much as they chose allies in the East-West wars fought on the ground of the non-white colonies. It is another thing that Anarchy ceases to inflame or take the lead in combating fascism and imperialism here in North America with the history of the Wobblies, the western federation of minors and other groups who have made their mark on history. It is a denial of our historic task, the betrayal of Anarchists who died resisting tyranny in the past, malingering in the face of horrible conditions. It is the theft of an option to the next generation and forfeiture of our own lives through faint hearts.

We permit people of other ideologies to define Anarchy rather than bring our views to the masses and provide models to show the contrary. We permit corporations to not only lay off workers and to threaten the balance of workers while cutting their salaries, but to poison the air and water to boot. We permit the police, Klan and Nazis to terrorize whatever sector of the population they wish without repaying them back in any kind. In short, by not engaging in mass organizing and delivering war to the oppressors we become Anarchists in name only.

Because Marxists and nationalists ain't doing this to a large extent doesn't make it any less a shame. Our inactivity creates a void that this police state with its reactionary press and definite goals are filling. The parts of people's lives supposedly touched by mass organizing and revolutionary inspiration that sheds a light that encourages them to unveil a new day, instead are being manipulated by conditions of which apathy is no less a part than poisonous uncontested reactionary propaganda. To those who believe in a centralized party with a program for the masses this might mean whatever their subjective analysis permits. But to us who truly believe in the masses and believe that they should have their lives in their hands and know that freedom is a habit, this can only mean that we have far to go.

In the aftermath of the Overtown rebellion, the Cuban community conceded as lost souls by Castro came out clearly in support of the Black colony. And predictably the Ku Klux Klan, through an Honorary FBI agent Bill Wilkenson, made no bones about supporting the rights of businesses and the business of imperialism. Third World colonies throughout the United States face genocide and it is

time for anarchists to join the oppressed combat against the oppressors. We must support in words and actions, self-determination, and self-defense for third world peoples.

It is beside the point whether Black, Puerto Rican, Native American and Chicano- Mexicano people endorse nationalism as a vehicle for self-determination or agree with anarchism as being the only road to self-determination. As revolutionaries we must support the will of the masses. It is not only racism but compliance with the enemy to stand outside of the social arena and permit America to continue to practice genocide against the third world captive colonies because although they resist, they don't agree with us. If we truly know that Anarchy is the best way of life for all people, we must promote it, defend it and know that the people who are as smart as we are will accept it. To expect people-to accept this, while they are being wiped out as a nation without allies ready to put out on the line what they already have on the line is crazy.

Where we live and work, we must Not only escalate discussion and study Groups, we must also organize on the ground level. The landlords must be contested through rent strikes and rather than develop strategies to pay the rent, we should develop strategies to take the buildings. We must not only recognize the squatters movement for what it is, but support and embrace it. Set up communes in abandoned buildings, sell scrap cars and aluminum cans. Turn vacant lots into gardens. When our children grow out of clothes, we should have places where we can take them, clearly marked anarchist clothing exchanges and have no bones about looking for clothing there first. And of course we should relearn how to preserve food; we must learn construction and ways to take back our lives, help each other move and stay in shape.

Let's keep the American and Canadian flags flying at half mast... I refuse to believe that Direct Action has been captured.

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Kuwasi Balagoon
Anarchy Can't Fight Alone

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The Anarchist Revolution

Errico Malatesta

The revolution is the creation of new living institutions, new groupings, new social relationships; it is the destruction of privileges and monopolies; it is the new spirit of justice, of brotherhood, of freedom which must renew the whole of social life, raise the moral level and the material conditions of the masses by calling on them to provide, through their direct and conscientious action, for their own futures. Revolution is the organization of all public services by those who work in them in their own interest as well as the public's; Revolution is the destruction of all coercive ties; it is the autonomy of groups, of communes, of regions; Revolution is the free federation brought about by desire for brotherhood, by individual and collective interests, by the needs of production and defense; Revolution is the constitution of innumerable free groupings based on ideas, wishes, and tastes of all kinds that exist among the people; Revolution is the forming and disbanding of thousands of representative, district, communal, regional, national bodies which, without having any legislative power, serve to make known and to coordinate the desires and interests of people near and far and which act through information, advice and example. Revolution is freedom proved in the crucible of facts — and lasts so long as freedom lasts, that is until others, taking advantage of the weariness that overtakes the masses, of the inevitable disappointments that follow exaggerated hopes, of the probable errors and human faults, succeed in constituting a power, which supported by an army of conscripts or mercenaries, lays down the law, arrests the movement at the point it has reached, and then begins the reaction.

The great majority of anarchists, if I am not mistaken, hold the view that human perfectibility and anarchy would not be achieved even in a few thousand years, if first one did not create by the revolution, made by a conscious majority, the necessary environment for freedom and well being. For this reason we want to make the revolution as soon as possible, and to do so we need to take advantage of all positive forces and every favorable situation which arises.

The task of the conscious minority is to profit from every situation to change the environment in a way that will make possible the education of the whole people.

And since the environment today, which obliges most people to live in misery, is maintained by violence, we advocate and prepare for violence. That is why we are revolutionaries, and not because we are desperate men thirsting for revenge and filled with hate.

We are revolutionaries because we believe that only the revolution, the violent revolution, can solve the ills we face. We believe further-more that the revolution is an act of will — the will of individuals and of the masses; that it needs for its success certain objective conditions, but that does not happen of necessity, inevitably, through the single action of economic and political forces.

Our task is to be revolutionary not only in the philosophical meaning of the word but also in the popular and insurrectionalist sense; and I can say this to clearly distinguish between my views and those of others who call themselves revolutionaries, but who interpret the world so as not to have to bring in the face of violence, the insurrection which must open the way to revolutionary achievements.

Anarchy cannot be achieved until after the revolution which will sweep away the first material obstacles. It is clear then that our efforts must in the first instance be directed to making the revolution and in such a way that it is in the direction of anarchy. We have to provoke the revolution with all the means at our disposal and act in it as anarchists, by opposing the constitution of any authoritarian regime and putting into operation as much as we can of our program. Anarchists will have to take advantage of the increased freedom that we would have won. We will have to be morally and technically prepared to realize within the limits of our numbers, those forms of social life and cooperation which they consider best and most suitable for paving the way for the future.

We do not want to wait for the masses to become anarchist before making the revolution, since we are convinced that they will never become anarchist if the institutions which keep them enslaved are not first destroyed. And since we need the support of the masses to build up a force of sufficient strength and to achieve our specific task of radical change of society by the direct action of the masses, we must get closer to them, accept them as they are, and from within their ranks seek to push them forward as much as possible. That is of course, if we really intend to work for the practical achievement of our ideals, and are not content with preaching in the desert for the simple satisfaction of our intellectual pride.

We don't take revolution as synonymous with progress, with an historic view of life. In that sense all kinds of people are revolutionary. When one introduced the centuries into the argument, everyone will agree with everything he says. But when we speak of revolution, when the masses speak of revolution, as when one refers to it in history, one simply means the insurrection triumphant. Insurrections will be necessary as long as there are power groups which use their material force to exact obedience from the masses. And it is only too clear that there will be many more insurrections before the people win that minimum of indispensable conditions for free and peaceful development, when humanity will be able to advance towards its noblest objectives without cruel struggles and useless suffering.

By revolution we do not mean just the insurrection, but we must avoid replacing one state of coercion by another. We must clearly distinguish between the revolutionary act which destroys as much as it can of the old regime and puts in its place new institutions, and government which comes afterwards to halt the revolution and suppress as many of the revolutionary conquests as it can.

History teaches us that all advances that are the result of revolutions were secured in the period of popular enthusiasm, when either a recognized government did not exist or was too weak to make a stand against the revolution. But once the government was formed, so reaction started which served the interest of the old and the new privileged classes and took back from the people all that it could.

Our task then is to make, and to help others make, the revolution by taking advantage of every opportunity and all available forces: advancing the revolution as much as possible in its constructive as well as destructive role, and always remaining opposed to the formation of any government, either ignoring it or combating it to the limits of our capacities.

We will no more recognize as republican constitution than we would a parliamentary monarchy. We cannot stop it if the people want it; we might even occasionally be with them in fighting attempts to bring about a restoration of a monarchy; but we will want and will demand complete freedom for

those who think as we do and who wish to live outside the tutelage and oppression of the government; to propagate their ideas by word and deed. Revolutionaries yes, but above all anarchists.

1. Destruction of all concentrations of political power is the first duty of oppressed people.
2. Any organization of an allegedly provisional revolutionary political power to achieve this destruction cannot be other than one trick more, and would be as dangerous to the people as are all present governments.
3. In refusing every compromise for the achievement of the revolution, workers of the world must establish solidarity in revolutionary action outside the framework of bourgeois politicians.

These anarchist principles which were formulated under the inspiration of Bakunin at the Congress of St. Imier, 1872, continue to point a good direction for us today. Those who have tried to act in contradiction to them have disappeared, because however defined, government, dictatorship and parliament can only lead the people back to slavery. All experience so far bears this out. Needless to say, for the delegates of St. Imier as for us and all anarchists, the abolition of political power is not possible without the simultaneous destruction of economic privilege.

There is a need for a revolution to eliminate the material forces which exist to defend privilege and to prevent every real social progress. This conviction has led many to believe that the only important thing is the insurrection, and to overlook what has to be done to prevent an insurrection from remaining a sterile act of violence against which an act of reactionary violence would be the eventual reply. For those who believe this, all the practical questions of organization, of how to make provisions for the distribution of food, are idle questions: for them these are matters which will solve themselves, or will be solved by those who come after us. Yet the conclusion we come to is this: Social reorganization is something we must all think about right now, and as the old is destroyed we shall have a more human and just society as well as one more receptive to future advances. The alternative is that "the leaders" will think about these problems, and we shall have a new government, which will do exactly as all previous governments have done, in making the people pay for the scant and poor services they render, by taking away their freedom and allowing them to be oppressed by every kind of parasite and exploiter.

In order to abolish the police and all the harmful social institutions we must know what to put in their place, not in a more or less distant future but immediately, the very day we start demolishing. One only destroys, effectively and permanently, that which one replaces by something else; and to put off to a later date the solution of problems which present themselves with the urgency of necessity, would be to give time to the institutions one is intending to abolish to recover from the shock and reassert themselves, perhaps under other names, but certainly with the same structure.

Our solutions may be accepted by a sufficiently large section of the population and we shall have achieved anarchy, or taken a step towards anarchy; or they may not be understood or accepted and then our efforts will serve as propaganda and place before the public at large the program for a not distant future. But in any case we must have our solutions provisional, subject to correction and revision in the light of practice, but we must have our solutions if we do not wish to submit passively to those solutions imposed by others, and limit ourselves to the unprofitable role of useless and impotent grumblers.

I believe that we anarchists, convinced of the validity of our program, must make special efforts to acquire a predominating influence in order to be able to swing the movement towards the realization

of our ideals; but we must acquire this influence by being more active and more effective than the others. Only in this way will it be worth acquiring. Today we must examine thoroughly, develop and propagate our ideas and coordinate our efforts for common action. We must act inside the popular movements to prevent them from limiting themselves to, and being corrupted by, the exclusive demand for the small improvements possible under the capitalist system, and seek to make it serve for the preparation of the complete and radical change of our society. We must work among the mass of unorganized, and possibly unorganizable, people to awaken in them the spirit of revolt and the desire and hope for a free and happy existence. We must initiate and support every possible kind of movement which tends to weaken the power of the government and of the capitalists and to raise the moral level and material conditions of the people. We must get ready and prepare, morally and materially, for the revolutionary act which has to open the way to the future.

And tomorrow, in the revolution, we must play an active part in the necessary physical struggle, seeking to make it as radical as possible, in order to destroy all the repressive forces of the government and to induce the people to take possession of the land, homes, transport, factories, mines, and of all existing goods, and organize themselves so that there is a just distribution immediately of food products. At the same time we must arrange for the exchange of goods between communities and regions and continue to intensify production and all those services which are of use to the people.

We must, in every way possible, and in accord with local conditions and possibilities, encourage action by associations, cooperatives, groups of volunteers — in order to prevent the emergence of new authoritarian groups, new governments, combating them with violence if necessary, but above all by rendering them useless.

And if there were not sufficient support among the people to prevent the reconstitution of government, its authoritarian institutions and its organs of repression, we should refuse to cooperate or recognize it, and rebel against its demands, claiming full autonomy for ourselves and for all dissident minorities. We should remain in a state of open rebellion if possible, and prepare the way to convert present defeat into a future success.

I do not think that what matters is the triumph of our plans, our projects and our utopias, which in any case will need the confirmation of practice and experiment, and may as a result have to be modified, developed or adapted to the true moral and material conditions of time and place. What matters most of all is that the people, all people, should lose their sheep-like instincts and habits with which their minds have been inculcated by an age-long slavery, and that they should learn to think and act freely. It is to this task of liberation that anarchists must devote their attention.

Once the government has been overthrown, or at least neutralized, it will be the task of the people, and especially of those among them who have initiative and organizing ability, to provide for the satisfaction of immediate needs and to prepare for the future by destroying privileges and harmful institutions and in the meantime seeing to it that those useful institutions which today serve the ruling class either exclusively or primarily, shall operate in favor of all equally.

Anarchists have the job of being the militant custodians of liberty against all aspirants to power and against the possible tyranny of the majority.

We are agreed in thinking that apart from the problem of assuring victory against the material forces of the adversary there is also the problem of giving life to the revolution after victory.

We are in agreement that a revolution which were to result in chaos would not be a vital revolution.

But one must not exaggerate, it should not be thought that we must, and can find a perfect solution for every possible problem. One should not want to foresee and determine too much, because instead of preparing for anarchy we might find ourselves indulging in unattainable dreams or ever becoming

authoritarians, and consciously or otherwise, proposing to act like a government which in the name of freedom and the popular will subject people to its domination. The fact is that one cannot educate the people if they are not in a position, or obliged by necessity, to act for themselves, and that the revolutionary organization the people, useful and necessary as it is, cannot be stretched indefinitely: at a certain point if it does not erupt in revolutionary action, either the government strangles it or the organization itself degenerates and breaks up — and one has to start all over again from the beginning.

I would be unable to accept the view that all past revolutions though they were not anarchist revolutions were useless, nor that future ones which will still not be anarchist revolutions will be useless. I believe that the complete triumph of anarchy will come by evolution, gradually, rather than by violent revolution: when an earlier or several earlier revolutions will have destroyed the major military and economic obstacles which are opposed to the spiritual and material development of the people, and which are opposed to increasing production to the level of needs and desires.

In any case, if we take into account our sparse numbers and the prevalent attitude among most people, and if we do not wish to confuse our wishes with reality, we must expect that the next revolution will not be anarchist one, and therefore what is more pressing, is to think of what we can and must do in a revolution in which we will be a relatively small and badly armed minority. But we must beware of ourselves becoming less anarchist merely because the people are not ready for anarchy. If they want a government, it is unlikely that we will be able to prevent a new government being formed, but this is no reason for our not trying to persuade the people that government is useless and harmful or of preventing the government from also imposing on us and others like us who don't want it. We will have to exert ourselves to ensure that social life and especially economic standards improve without the intervention of government, and thus we must be as ready as possible to deal with the practical problems of production and distribution, remembering that those most suited to organize work are those who now do it. If we are unable to prevent the constitution of a new government, if we are unable to destroy it immediately, we should in either case refuse to support it in any shape or form. We should reject military conscription and refuse to pay taxes. Disobedience on principle, resistance to the bitter end against every imposition by the authorities, and an absolute refusal to accept any position of command.

If we are unable to overthrow capitalism, we shall have to demand for ourselves and for all who want it, the right of free access to the necessary means of production to maintain an independent existence.

Advise when we have suggestions to offer; teach if we know more than others; set the example for a life based on free agreement between men; defend even with force if necessary and possible, our autonomy against any government provocation... but command, govern or rule — *never!*

In this way we shall not achieve anarchy, which cannot be imposed against the will of the people, but at least we shall be preparing the way for it. We do not have to wait indefinitely for the state to wither away or for our rulers to become part of the people and to give up their power over us if we can talk them out of their position.

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Errico Malatesta
The Anarchist Revolution

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Armed Joy

Alfredo M. Bonanno

1977

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Introduction

This book was written in 1977 in the momentum of the revolutionary struggles that were taking place in Italy at the time, and that situation, now profoundly different, should be borne in mind when reading it today.

The revolutionary movement, including the anarchist one, was in a developing phase and anything seemed possible, even a generalisation of the armed clash.

But it was necessary to protect oneself from the danger of specialisation and militarisation that a restricted minority of militants intended to impose on the tens of thousands of comrades who were struggling with every possible means against repression and against the State's attempt—rather weak to tell the truth—to reorganise the management of capital.

That was the situation in Italy, but something similar was also happening in Germany, France, Great Britain and elsewhere.

In Italy it seemed essential to prevent the many actions carried out against the men and structures of power by comrades every day from being drawn into the planned logic of an armed party such as the Red Brigades.

That is the spirit of this book. To show how a practice of liberation and destruction can come forth from a joyful logic of struggle, not a mortifying, schematic rigidity within the pre-established canons of a directing group.

Some of these problems no longer exist. They have been solved by the hard lessons of history. The collapse of real socialism suddenly redimensioned the directing ambitions of the Marxists of every tendency for good. On the other hand, it has not extinguished, but possibly inflamed, the desire for freedom and anarchist communism that is spreading everywhere, especially among the young generations, often without having recourse to the traditional symbols of anarchism—its slogans and theories also being seen with an understandable, but not shareable, gut refusal to be infected with ideology.

This book has become topical again, but in a different way. Not as a critique of a heavy monopolising structure that no longer exists, but because it can point out the potent capabilities of the individual on his or her road, with joy, to the destruction of all that oppresses and regulates them.

Before ending I should mention that this book was ordered to be destroyed in Italy. The Italian Supreme Court ordered it to be burned. All the libraries that had a copy received a circular from the Home Ministry ordering its incineration. More than one librarian refused to burn the book, considering such a practice to be worthy of the Nazis or the Inquisition, but by law the volume cannot be consulted. For the same reason the book cannot be distributed legally in Italy and many comrades had copies confiscated during the vast wave of raids carried out for that purpose.

I was sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment for writing this book.

Alfredo M. Bonanno
Catania, 14 July 1993

I

In Paris, 1848, the revolution was a holiday without a beginning or an end.

Bakunin

Why on earth did these dear children shoot Montanelli in the legs? Wouldn't it have been better to have shot him in the mouth?

Of course it would. But it would also have been heavier. More vindictive and sombre. To lame a beast like that can have a deeper, more meaningful side to it that goes beyond revenge, beyond punishing him for his responsibility—fascist journalist and bosses' lackey that he is.

To lame him forces him to limp, makes him remember. Moreover, laming is a more agreeable pastime than shooting in the mouth with pieces of brain squirting out through the eyes.

The comrade who sets off in the fog every morning and walks into the stifling atmosphere of the factory, or the office, only to see the same faces: the foreman, the timekeeper, the spy of the moment, the Stakhanovite-with-seven-children-to-support, feels the need for revolution, the struggle and the physical clash, even a mortal one. But he also wants to bring himself some joy now, right away. And he nurtures this joy in his fantasies as he walks along head down in the fog, spends hours on trains or trams, suffocates in the pointless goings on of the office or amidst the useless bolts that serve to hold the useless mechanisms of capital together.

Remunerated joy, weekends off or annual holidays paid by the boss is like paying to make love. It seems the same but there is something lacking.

Hundreds of theories pile up in books, pamphlets and revolutionary papers. We must do this, do that, see things the way this one said or that one said, because they are the true interpreters of the this or that ones of the past, those in capital letters who fill up the stifling volumes of the classics.

Even the need to keep them close at hand is all part of the liturgy. Not to have them would be a bad sign, it would be suspect. It is useful to keep them handy in any case. Being heavy they could always be thrown in the face of some nuisance. Not a new, but nevertheless a healthy confirmation of the validity of the revolutionary texts of the past (and present).

There is never anything about joy in these tomes. The austerity of the cloister has nothing to envy of the atmosphere one breathes in their pages. Their authors, priests of the revolution of revenge and punishment, pass their time weighing up blame and retribution.

Moreover, these vestals in jeans have taken a vow of chastity, so they also expect and impose it. They want to be rewarded for their sacrifice. First they abandoned the comfortable surroundings of their class of origin, then they put their abilities at the disposal of the disinherited. They have grown accustomed to using words that are not their own and to putting up with dirty tablecloths and unmade beds. So, one might listen to them at least.

They dream of orderly revolutions, neatly drawn up principles, anarchy without turbulence. If things take a different turn they start screaming provocation, yelling loud enough for the police to hear them.

Revolutionaries are pious folk. The revolution is not a pious event.

II

I call a cat a cat.

Boileau

We are all concerned with the revolutionary problem of how and what to produce, but nobody points out that producing is a revolutionary problem. If production is at the root of capitalist exploitation, to change the mode of production would merely change the mode of exploitation.

A cat, even if you paint it red, is still a cat.

The producer is sacred. Hands off! Sanctify his sacrifice in the name of the revolution, and *les jeux sont faits*.

‘And what will we eat?’ concerned people will ask. ‘Bread and string,’ say the realists, with one eye on the pot and the other on their gun. ‘Ideas,’ the muddling idealists state, with one eye on the book of dreams and the other on the human species.

Anyone who touches productivity has had it.

Capitalism and those fighting it sit alongside each other on the producer’s corpse, but production must go on.

The critique of political economy is a rationalisation of the mode of production with the least effort (by those who enjoy the benefits of it all). Everyone else, those who suffer exploitation, must take care to see that nothing is lacking. Otherwise, how would we live?

The son of darkness sees nothing when he comes out into the light, just like when he was groping around in the dark. Joy blinds him. It kills him. So he says it is a hallucination and condemns it.

The flabby fat bourgeois bask in opulent idleness. So, enjoyment is sinful. That would mean sharing the same sensations as the bourgeoisie and betraying those of the producing proletariat.

Not so. The bourgeois goes to great lengths to keep the process of exploitation going. He is stressed too and never finds time for joy. His cruises are occasions for new investments, his lovers fifth columns for getting information on competitors.

The productivity god also kills its most faithful disciples. Wrench their heads off, nothing but a deluge of rubbish will pour out.

The hungry wretch harbours feelings of revenge when he sees the rich surrounded by their fawning entourage. The enemy must be destroyed before anything else. But save the booty. Wealth must not be destroyed, it must be used. It doesn’t matter what it is, what form it takes or what prospects of employment it allows. What counts is grabbing it from whoever is holding on to it at the time so that everyone has access to it.

Everyone? Of course, everyone.

And how will that happen?

With revolutionary violence.

Good answer. But really, what will we do after we have cut off so many heads we are bored with it? What will we do when there are no more landlords to be found even if we go looking for them with lanterns?

Then it will be the reign of the revolution. To each according to their needs, from each according to their possibilities.

Pay attention, comrade. There is a smell of bookkeeping here. We are talking of consumption and production. Everything is still in the dimension of productivity. Arithmetic makes you feel safe. Two and two make four. Who would dispute this 'truth'? Numbers rule the world. If they have done till now, why shouldn't they continue to?

We all need something solid and durable. Stones to build a wall to stem the impulses that start choking us. We all need objectivity. The boss swears by his wallet, the peasant by his spade, the revolutionary by his gun. Let in a glimmer of criticism and the whole scaffolding will collapse.

In its heavy objectivity, the everyday world conditions and reproduces us. We are all children of daily banality. Even when we talk of 'serious things' like revolution, our eyes are still glued to the calendar. The boss fears the revolution because it would deprive him of his wealth, the peasant will make it to get a piece of land, the revolutionary to put his theory to the test.

If the problem is seen in these terms, there is no difference between the wallet, land and revolutionary theory. These objects are all quite imaginary, mere mirrors of human illusion.

Only the struggle is real.

It distinguishes boss from peasant and establishes the link between the latter and the revolutionary.

The forms of organisation production takes are ideological vehicles to conceal illusory individual identity. This identity is projected into the illusory economic concept of value. A code establishes its interpretation. The bosses control part of this code, as we see in consumerism. The technology of psychological warfare and total repression also gives its contribution to strengthening the idea that one is human on condition that one produces.

Other parts of the code can be modified. They cannot undergo revolutionary change but are simply adjusted from time to time. Think, for example, of the mass consumerism that has taken the place of the luxury consumerism of years gone by.

Then there are more refined forms such as the selfmanaged control of production. Another component of the code of exploitation.

And so on. Anyone who decides to organise my life for me can never be my comrade. If they try to justify this with the excuse that someone must 'produce' otherwise we will all lose our identity as human beings and be overcome by 'wild, savage nature', we reply that the man-nature relationship is a product of the enlightened Marxist bourgeoisie. Why did they want to turn a sword into a pitchfork? Why must man continually strive to distinguish himself from nature?

III

Men, if they cannot attain what is necessary, tire themselves with that which is useless.

Goethe

Man needs many things.

This statement is usually taken to mean that man has needs which he is obliged to satisfy.

In this way people are transformed from historically determined units into a duality (means and end simultaneously). They realise themselves through the satisfaction of their needs (i.e. through work) so become the instrument of their own realisation.

Anyone can see how much mythology is concealed in statements such as this. If man distinguishes himself from nature through work, how can he fulfil himself in the satisfaction of his needs? To do this he would already have become 'man', so have fulfilled his needs, which means he would not have to work.

Commodities have a profoundly symbolic content. They become a point of reference, a unit of measure, an exchange value. The spectacle begins. Roles are cast and reproduce themselves to infinity. The actors continue to play their parts without any particular modifications.

The satisfaction of needs becomes no more than a reflex, marginal effect. What matters is the transformation of people into 'things' and everything else along with them. Nature becomes a 'thing'. Used, it is corrupted, and man's vital instincts along with it. An abyss gapes open between nature and man. It must be filled, and the expansion of the commodity market is seeing to it. The spectacle is expanding to the point of devouring itself along with its contradictions. Stage and audience enter the same dimension, proposing themselves for a higher, more far-reaching level of the same spectacle, and so on to infinity.

Anyone who escapes the commodity code does not become objectified and falls 'outside' the area of the spectacle. They are pointed at. They are surrounded by barbed wire. If they refuse englobement or an alternative form of codification, they are criminalized. They are clearly mad! It is forbidden to refuse the illusory in a world that has based reality on illusion, concreteness on the unreal.

Capital manages the spectacle according to the laws of accumulation. But nothing can be accumulated to infinity. Not even capital. A quantitative process in absolute is an illusion, a quantitative illusion to be precise. The bosses understand this perfectly. Exploitation adopts different forms and ideological models precisely to ensure this accumulation in qualitatively different ways, as it cannot continue in the quantitative aspect indefinitely.

The fact that the whole process becomes paradoxical and illusory does not matter much to capital, because it is precisely that which holds the reins and makes the rules. If it has to sell illusion for reality and that makes money, then let's just carry on without asking too many questions. It is the exploited who foot the bill. So it is up to them to see the trick and worry about recognising reality. For capital things are fine as they are, even though they are based on the greatest conjuring trick in the world.

The exploited almost feel nostalgia for this swindle. They have grown accustomed to their chains and become attached to them. Now and then they have fantasies about fascinating uprisings and blood baths, then they let themselves be taken in by the speeches of the new political leaders. The revolutionary party extends capital's illusory perspective to horizons it could never reach on its own. The quantitative illusion spreads.

The exploited enlist, count themselves, draw their conclusions. Fierce slogans make bourgeois hearts miss a beat. The greater the number, the more the leaders prance around arrogantly and the more demanding they become. They draw up great programmes for the conquest of power. This new power is preparing to spread on the remains of the old. Bonaparte's soul smiles in satisfaction.

Of course, deep changes are being programmed in the code of illusions. But everything must be submitted to the symbol of quantitative accumulation. The demands of the revolution increase as militant forces grow. In the same way, the rate of the social profit that is taking the place of private profit must also grow. So capital enters a new, illusory, spectacular, phase. Old needs press on insistently under new labels. The productivity god continues to rule, unrivalled.

How good it is to count ourselves. It makes us feel strong. The unions count themselves. The parties count themselves. The bosses count themselves. So do we. Ring a ring o' roses.

And when we stop counting we try to ensure that things stay as they are. If change cannot be avoided, we will bring it about without disturbing anyone. Ghosts are easily penetrated.

Every now and then politics come to the fore. Capital often invents ingenious solutions. Then social peace hits us. The silence of the graveyard. The illusion spreads to such an extent that the spectacle absorbs nearly all the available forces. Not a sound. Then the defects and monotony of the *mis-en-scene*. The curtain rises on unforeseen situations. The capitalist machinery begins to falter. Revolutionary involvement is rediscovered. It happened in '68. Everybody's eyes nearly fell out of their sockets. Everyone extremely ferocious. Leaflets everywhere. Mountains of leaflets and pamphlets and papers and books. Old ideological differences lined up like tin soldiers. Even the anarchists rediscovered themselves. And they did so historically, according to the needs of the moment. Everyone was quite dull-witted. The anarchists too. Some people woke up from their spectacular slumber and, looking around for space and air to breathe, seeing anarchists said to themselves, At last! Here's who I want to be with. They soon realised their mistake. Things did not go as they should have done in that direction either. There too, stupidity and spectacle. And so they ran away. They closed up in themselves. They fell apart. Accepted capital's game. And if they didn't accept it they were banished, also by the anarchists.

The machinery of '68 produced the best civil servants of the new techno-bureaucratic State. But it also produced its antibodies. The process of the quantitative illusion became evident. On the one hand it received fresh lymph to build a new view of the commodity spectacle, on the other there was a flaw.

It has become blatantly obvious that confrontation at the level of production is ineffective. Take over the factories, the fields, the schools and the neighbourhoods and selfmanage them, the old revolutionary anarchists proclaimed. We will destroy power in all its forms, they added. But without getting to the roots of the problem. Although conscious of its gravity and extent, they preferred to ignore it, putting their hopes in the creative spontaneity of the revolution. But in the meantime they wanted to hold on to control of production. Whatever happens, whatever creative forms the revolution might express, we must take over the means of production they insisted. Otherwise the enemy will defeat us at that level. So they began to accept all kinds of compromise. They ended up creating another, even more macabre, spectacle.

And spectacular illusion has its own rules. Anyone who wants to direct it must abide by them. They must know and apply them, swear by them. The first is that production affects everything. If you do not produce you are not a man, the revolution is not for you. Why should we tolerate parasites? Should we go to work in place of them perhaps? Should we see to their livelihood as well as our own? Besides, wouldn't all these people with vague ideas, claiming to doing as they please, not turn out to be 'objectively' useful to the counterrevolution? Well, in that case better attack them right away. We know who our allies are, who we want to side with. If we want to scare, then let's do it all together, organised and in perfect order, and may no one put their feet on the table or let their trousers down.

Let's organise our specific organisations. Train militants who know the techniques of struggle at the place of production. The producers will make the revolution, we will just be there to make sure they don't do anything silly.

No, that's all wrong. How will we be able to stop them from making mistakes? At the spectacular level of organisation there are some who are capable of making far more noise than we are. And they have breath to spare. Struggle at the workplace. Struggle for the defence of jobs. Struggle for production.

When will we break out of the circle? When will we stop biting our tails?

IV

The deformed man always finds mirrors that make him handsome.

de Sade

What madness the love of work is!

With great scenic skill capital has succeeded in making the exploited love exploitation, the hanged man the rope and the slave his chains.

This idealisation of work has been the death of the revolution until now. The movement of the exploited has been corrupted by the bourgeois morality of production, which is not only foreign to it, but is also contrary to it. It is no accident that the trade unions were the first sector to be corrupted, precisely because of their closer proximity to the management of the spectacle of production.

It is time to oppose the non-work aesthetic to the work ethic.

We must counter the satisfaction of spectacular needs imposed by consumer society with the satisfaction of man's natural needs seen in the light of that primary, essential need: the need for communism.

In this way the quantitative evaluation of needs is overturned. The need for communism transforms all other needs and their pressures on man.

Man's poverty, the consequence of exploitation, has been seen as the foundation of future redemption. Christianity and revolutionary movements have walked hand in hand throughout history. We must suffer in order to conquer paradise or to acquire the class consciousness that will take us to the revolution. Without the work ethic the Marxist notion of 'proletariat' would not make sense. But the work ethic is a product of the same bourgeois rationalism that allowed the bourgeoisie to conquer power.

Corporatism resurfaces through the mesh of proletarian internationalism. Everyone struggles within their own sector. At most they contact similar ones in other countries, through the unions. The monolithic multinationals are opposed by monolithic international unions. Let's make the revolution but save the machinery, the working tool, that mythical object that reproduces the historical virtue of the bourgeoisie, now in the hands of the proletariat.

The heir to the revolution is destined to become the consumer and main actor of the capitalist spectacle of tomorrow. Idealised at the level of the clash as the beneficiary of its outcome, the revolutionary class disappears in the idealisation of production. When the exploited come to be enclosed within a class, all the elements of the spectacular already exist, just as they do for the class of exploiters.

The only way for the exploited to escape the globalising project of capital is through the refusal of work, production and political economy.

But refusal of work must not be confused with 'lack of work' in a society which is based on the latter. The marginalised look for work. They do not find it. They are pushed into ghettos. They are criminalised. Then that all becomes part of the management of the productive spectacle as a whole. Producers and unemployed are equally indispensable to capital. But the balance is a delicate one.

Contradictions explode and produce various kinds of crisis, and it is in this context that revolutionary intervention takes place.

So, the refusal of work, the destruction of work, is an affirmation of the need for non-work. The affirmation that man can reproduce and objectify himself in non-work through the various solicitations that this stimulates in him. The idea of destroying work is absurd if it is seen from the point of view of the work ethic. But how? So many people are looking for work, so many unemployed, and you talk about destroying work? The Luddite ghost appears and puts all the revolutionaries-who-have-read-all-the-classics to fright. The rigid model of the frontal attack on capitalist forces must not be touched. All the failures and suffering of the past are irrelevant; so is the shame and betrayal. Ahead comrades, better days will come, onwards again!

It would suffice to show what the concept of 'free time', a temporary suspension of work, is bogged down in today to scare proletarians back into the stagnant atmosphere of the class organisations (parties, unions and hangers-on). The spectacle offered by the bureaucratic leisure organisations is deliberately designed to depress even the most fertile imagination. But this is no more than an ideological cover, one of the many instruments of the total war that make up the spectacle as a whole.

The need for communism transforms everything. Through the need for communism the need for non-work moves from the negative aspect (opposition to work) to the positive one: the individual's complete availability to themselves, the possibility to express themselves absolutely freely, breaking away from all models, even those considered to be fundamental and indispensable such as those of production.

But revolutionaries are dutiful people and are afraid to break with all models, not least that of revolution, which constitutes an obstacle to the full realisation of what the concept means. They are afraid they might find themselves without a role in life. Have you ever met a revolutionary without a revolutionary project? A project that is well defined and presented clearly to the masses? Whatever kind of revolutionary would be one who claimed to destroy the model, the wrapping, the very foundations of the revolution? By attacking concepts such as quantification, class, project, model, historical task and other such old stuff, one would run the risk of having nothing to do, of being obliged to act in reality, modestly, like everyone else. Like millions of others who are building the revolution day by day without waiting for signs of a fatal deadline. And to do this you need courage.

With rigid models and little quantitative games you remain within the realm of the unreal, the illusory project of the revolution, an amplification of the spectacle of capital.

By abolishing the ethic of production you enter revolutionary reality directly.

It is difficult even to talk about such things because it does not make sense to mention them in the pages of a treatise. To reduce these problems to a complete and final analysis would be to miss the point. The best thing would be an informal discussion capable of bringing about the subtle magic of wordplay.

It is a real contradiction to talk of joy seriously.

V

Summer nights are heavy. One sleeps badly in tiny rooms. It is the Eve of the Guillotine.

Zo d'Axa

The exploited also find time to play. But their play is not joy. It is a macabre ritual. An awaiting death. A suspension of work in order to lighten the pressure of the violence accumulated during the activity of production. In the illusory world of commodities, play is also an illusion. We imagine we are playing, while all we are really doing is monotonously repeating the roles assigned to us by capital.

When we become conscious of the process of exploitation the first thing we feel is a sense of revenge, the last is joy. Liberation is seen as setting right a balance that has been upset by the wickedness of capitalism, not as the coming of a world of play to take the place of the world of work.

This is the first phase of the attack on the bosses. The phase of immediate awareness. What strikes us are the chains, the whip, the prison walls, sexual and racial barriers. Everything must come down. So we arm ourselves and strike the adversary to make them pay for their responsibility.

During the night of the guillotine the foundations for a new spectacle are laid. Capital regains strength: first the bosses' heads fall, then those of the revolutionaries.

It is impossible to make the revolution with the guillotine alone. Revenge is the antechamber of power. Anyone who wants to avenge themselves requires a leader. A leader to take them to victory and restore wounded justice. And whoever cries for vengeance wants to come into possession of what has been taken away from them. Right to the supreme abstraction, the appropriation of surplus value.

The world of the future must be one where everybody works. Fine! So we will have imposed slavery on everyone with the exception of those who make it function and who, precisely for that reason, become the new bosses.

No matter what, the bosses must 'pay' for their wrongs. Very well! We will carry the Christian ethic of sin, judgement and reparation into the revolution. As well as the concepts of 'debt' and 'payment', clearly of mercantile origins.

That is all part of the spectacle. Even when it is not managed by power directly it can easily be taken over. Role reversal is one of the techniques of drama.

It might be necessary to attack using the arms of revenge and punishment at a certain moment in the class struggle. The movement might not possess any others. So it will be the moment for the guillotine. But revolutionaries must be aware of the limitations of such arms. They should not deceive themselves or others.

Within the paranoid framework of a rationalising machine such as capitalism the concept of the revolution of revenge can even become part of the spectacle as it continually adapts itself. The movement of production seems to come about thanks to the blessing of economic science, but in reality it is based on the illusory anthropology of the separation of tasks.

There is no joy in work, even if it is selfmanaged. The revolution cannot be reduced to a simple reorganisation of work. Not that alone. There is no joy in sacrifice, death and revenge. Just as there is no joy in counting oneself. Arithmetic is the negation of joy.

Anyone who desires to live does not produce death. A transitory acceptance of the guillotine leads to its institutionalisation. But at the same time, anyone who loves life does not embrace their exploiter. To do so would signify that they are against life in favour of sacrifice, self-punishment, work and death.

In the graveyard of work centuries of exploitation have accumulated a huge mountain of revenge. The leaders of the revolution sit upon this mountain, impassively. They study the best way to draw profit from it. So the spur of revenge must be addressed against the interests of the new caste in power. Symbols and flags. Slogans and complicated analyses. The ideological apparatus does everything that is necessary.

It is the work ethic that makes this possible. Anyone who delights in work and wants to take over the means of production does not want things to go ahead blindly. They know by experience that the bosses have had a strong organisation on their side in order to make exploitation work. They think that just as strong and perfect an organisation will make liberation possible. Do everything in your power, productivity must be saved at all costs.

What a swindle! The work ethic is the Christian ethic of sacrifice, the bosses' ethic thanks to which the massacres of history have followed each other with worrying regularity.

These people cannot comprehend that it would be possible to not produce any surplus value, and that one could also refuse to do so. That it is possible to assert one's will to not produce, so struggle against both the bosses' economic structures and the ideological ones that permeate the whole of Western thought.

It is essential to understand that the work ethic is the foundation of the quantitative revolutionary project. Arguments against work would be senseless if they were made by revolutionary organisations with their logic of quantitative growth.

The substitution of the work ethic with the aesthetic of joy would not mean an end to life as so many worried comrades would have it. To the question: 'What will we eat?' one could quite simply reply: 'What we produce.' Only production would no longer be the dimension in which man determines himself, as that would come about in the sphere of play and joy. One could produce as something separate from nature, then join with it as something that is nature itself. So it would be possible to stop producing at any moment, when there is enough. Only joy will be uncontrollable. A force unknown to the civilised larvae that populate our era. A force that will multiply the creative impulse of the revolution a thousandfold.

The social wealth of the communist world is not measured in an accumulation of surplus value, even if it turns out to be managed by a minority that calls itself the party of the proletariat. This situation reproduces power and denies the very essence of anarchy. Communist social wealth comes from the potential for life that comes after the revolution.

Qualitative, not quantitative, accumulation must substitute capitalist accumulation. The revolution of life takes the place of the merely economic revolution, productive potential takes the place of crystallised production, joy takes the place of the spectacle.

The refusal of the spectacular market of capitalist illusions will create another kind of exchange. From fictitious quantitative change to a real qualitative one. Circulation of goods will not base itself on objects and their illusionist reification, but on the meaning that the objects have for life. And this must be a life meaning, not a death one. So these objects will be limited to the precise moment in which they are exchanged, and their significance will vary according to the situations in which this takes place.

The same object could have profoundly different 'values'. It will be personified. Nothing to do with production as we know it now in the dimension of capital. Exchange itself will have a different meaning when seen through the refusal of unlimited production.

There is no such thing as freed labour. There is no such thing as integrated labour (manual-intellectual). What does exist is the division of labour and the sale of the workforce, i.e. the capitalist world of production. The revolution is the negation of labour and the affirmation of joy. Any attempt to impose the idea of work, 'fair work', work without exploitation, 'self-managed' work where the exploited are to re-appropriate themselves of the whole of the productive process without exploitation, is a mystification.

The concept of the selfmanagement of production is valid only as a form of struggle against capitalism, in fact it cannot be separated from the idea of the selfmanagement of the struggle. If the struggle is extinguished, selfmanagement becomes nothing other than selfmanagement of one's exploitation. If the struggle is victorious the selfmanagement of production becomes superfluous, because after the revolution the organisation of production is superfluous and counter-revolutionary.

VI

So long as you make the throw yourself everything is skill and easy winning; only if you suddenly become the one catching the ball that the eternal playmate throws at you, at your centre, with all her strength, in one of those arcs of great divine bridge builders: only then is being able to catch strength, not yours but of a world.

Rilke

We all believe we have experienced joy. Each single one of us believes we have been happy at least once in our lives.

Only this experience of joy has always been passive. We happen to enjoy ourselves. We cannot 'desire' joy just as we cannot oblige joy to present itself when we want it to.

All this separation between ourselves and joy depends on our being 'separate' from ourselves, divided in two by the process of exploitation.

We work all the year round to have the 'joy' of holidays. When these come round we feel 'obliged' to 'enjoy' the fact that we are on holiday. A form of torture like any other. The same goes for Sundays. A dreadful day. The rarefaction of the illusion of free time shows us the emptiness of the mercantile spectacle we are living in.

The same empty gaze alights on the half empty glass, the TV screen, the football match, the heroin dose, the cinema screen, traffic jams, neon lights, prefabricated homes that have completed the killing of the landscape.

To seek 'joy' in the depths of any of the various 'recitals' of the capitalist spectacle would be pure madness. But that is exactly what capital wants. The experience of free time programmed by our exploiters is lethal. It makes you want to go to work. To apparent life one ends up preferring certain death.

No real joy can reach us from the rational mechanism of capitalist exploitation. Joy does not have fixed rules to catalogue it. Even so, we must be able to desire joy. Otherwise we would be lost.

The search for joy is therefore an act of will, a firm refusal of the fixed conditions of capital and its values. The first of these refusals is that of work as a value. The search for joy can only come about through the search for play.

So, play means something different to what we are used to considering it to be in the dimension of capital. Like serene idleness, the play that opposes itself to the responsibilities of life is an artificial, distorted image of what it really is. At the present stage of the clash and the relative constrictions in the struggle against capital, play is not a 'pastime' but a weapon.

By a strange twist of irony the roles are reversed. If life is something serious death is an illusion, in the sense that so long as we are alive death does not exist. Now, the reign of death, i.e. the reign of capital, which denies our very existence as human beings and reduces us to 'things', seems very serious, methodical and disciplined. But its possessive paroxysm, its ethical rigour, its obsession with 'doing' all hide a great illusion: the total emptiness of the commodity spectacle, the uselessness of

indefinite accumulation and the absurdity of exploitation. So the great seriousness of the world of work and productivity hides a total lack of seriousness.

On the contrary, the refusal of this stupid world, the pursuit of joy, dreams, utopia in its declared 'lack of seriousness', hides the most serious thing in life: the refusal of death.

In the physical confrontation with capital play can take different forms, even on this side of the fence. Many things can be done 'playfully' yet most of the things we do, we do very 'seriously' wearing the death mask we have borrowed from capital.

Play is characterised by a vital impulse that is always new, always in movement. By acting as though we are playing, we charge our action with this impulse. We free ourselves from death. Play makes us feel alive. It gives us the excitement of life. In the other model of acting we do everything as though it were a duty, as though we 'had' to do it.

It is in the ever new excitement of play, quite the opposite to the alienation and madness of capital, that we are able to identify joy.

Here lies the possibility to break with the old world and identify with new aims and other values and needs. Even if joy cannot be considered man's aim, it is undoubtedly the privileged dimension that makes the clash with capital different when it is pursued deliberately.

VII

*Life is so boring there is nothing to do except spend all our wages on the latest skirt or shirt.
Brothers and Sisters, what are your real desires? Sit in the drugstore, look distant, empty,
bored, drinking some tasteless coffee? Or perhaps BLOW IT UP OR BURN IT DOWN.*

The Angry Brigade

The great spectacle of capital has swallowed us all up to our necks. Actors and spectators in turn. We alternate the roles, either staring open-mouthed at others or making others stare at us. We have alighted the glass coach, even though we know it is only a pumpkin. The fairy godmother's spell has beguiled our critical awareness. Now we must play the game. Until midnight, at least.

Poverty and hunger are still the driving forces of the revolution. But capital is widening the spectacle. It wants new actors on stage. The greatest spectacle in the world will continue to surprise us. Always more complicated, better and better organised. New clowns are getting ready to mount the rostrum. New species of wild beasts will be tamed.

The supporters of quantity, lovers of arithmetic, will be first on and will be blinded by the limelight, dragging the masses of necessity and the ideologies of redemption along behind them.

But one thing they will not be able to get rid of is their seriousness. The greatest danger they face will be a laugh. In the spectacle of capital, joy is deadly. Everything is gloomy and funereal, everything is serious and orderly, everything is rational and programmed, precisely because it is all false and illusory.

Beyond the crises, beyond other problems of underdevelopment, beyond poverty and hunger, the last fight that capital will have to put up, the decisive one, is the fight against boredom.

The revolutionary movement will also have to fight its battles. Not just the traditional ones against capital but new ones, against itself. Boredom is attacking it from within, is causing it to deteriorate, making it asphyxiating, uninhabitable.

Let us leave those who like the spectacle of capitalism alone. Those who are quite happy to play their parts to the end. These people think that reforms really can change things. But this is more an ideological cover than anything else. They know only too well that changing bits is one of the rules of the system. It is useful to capital to have things fixed a little at a time.

Then there is the revolutionary movement where there is no lack of those who attack the power of capital verbally. These people cause a great deal of confusion. They come out with grand statements but no longer impress anyone, least of all capital which cunningly uses them for the most delicate part of its spectacle. When it needs a soloist it puts one of these performers on stage. The result is pitiful.

The truth is that the spectacular mechanism of commodities must be broken by entering the domain of capital, its coordinating centres, right to the very nucleus of production. Think what a marvellous explosion of joy, what a great creative leap forward, what an extraordinarily aimless aim.

Only it is difficult to enter the mechanisms of capital joyfully, with the symbols of life. Armed struggle is often a symbol of death. Not because it gives death to the bosses and their servants, but

because it wants to impose the structures of the dominion of death itself. Conceived differently it really would be joy in action, capable of breaking the structural conditions imposed by the commodity spectacle such as the military party, the conquest of power, the vanguard.

This is the other enemy of the revolutionary movement. Incomprehension. Refusal to see the new conditions of the conflict. The insistence on imposing models of the past that have now become part of the commodity spectacle.

Ignorance of the new revolutionary reality is leading to a lack of theoretical and strategic awareness of the revolutionary capacity of the movement itself. And it is not enough to say that there are enemies so close at hand as to make it indispensable to intervene right away without looking at questions of a theoretical nature. All this hides the incapacity to face the new reality of the movement and avoid the mistakes of the past that have serious consequences in the present. And this refusal nourishes all kinds of rationalist political illusions.

Categories such as revenge, leaders, parties, the vanguard, quantitative growth, only mean something in the dimension of this society, and such a meaning favours the perpetuation of power. When you look at things from a revolutionary point of view, i.e. the complete definitive elimination of all power, these categories become meaningless.

By moving into the nowhere of utopia, upsetting the work ethic, turning it into the here and now of joy in realisation, we find ourselves within a structure that is far from the historical forms of organisation.

This structure changes continually, so escapes crystallisation. It is characterised by the self-organisation of producers at the workplace, and the self-organisation of the struggle against work. Not the taking over of the means of production, but the refusal of production through organisational forms that are constantly changing.

The same is happening with the unemployed and the casual labourers. Stimulated by boredom and alienation, structures are emerging on the basis of self-organisation. The introduction of aims programmed and imposed by an outside organisation would kill the movement and consign it to the commodity spectacle.

Most of us are tied to this idea of revolutionary organisation. Even anarchists, who refuse authoritarian organisation, do not disdain it. On this basis we all accept the idea that the contradictory reality of capital can be attacked with similar means. We do so because we are convinced that these means are legitimate, emerging as they do from the same field of struggle as capital. We refuse to admit that not everyone might see things the way we do. Our theory is identical to the practice and strategy of our organisations.

The differences between the authoritarians and ourselves are many, but they all collapse before a common faith in the historical organisation. Anarchy will be reached through the work of these organisations (substantial differences only appear in methods of approach). But this faith indicates something very important: the claim of our whole rationalist culture to explain reality in progressive terms. This culture bases itself on the idea that history is irreversible, along with that of the analytical capacity of science. All this makes us see the present as the point where all the efforts of the past meet the culminating point of the struggle against the powers of darkness (capitalist exploitation). Consequently, we are convinced that we are more advanced than our predecessors, capable of elaborating and putting into practice theories and organisational strategies that are the sum of all the experiences of the past.

All those who reject this interpretation automatically find themselves beyond reality, which is by definition history, progress and science. Whoever refuses such a reality is anti-historical anti-progressive and anti-scientific. Sentenced without appeal.

Strengthened by this ideological armour we go out into the streets. Here we run into the reality of a struggle that is structured quite differently from stimuli that do not enter the framework of our analyses. One fine morning during a peaceful demonstration the police start shooting. The structure reacts, comrades shoot too, policemen fall. Anathema! It was a peaceful demonstration. For it to have degenerated into individual guerrilla actions there must have been a provocation. Nothing can go beyond the perfect framework of our ideological organisation as it is not just a 'part' of reality, but is 'all' reality. Anything beyond it is madness and provocation. Supermarkets are destroyed, shops and food and arms depots are looted, luxury cars are burned. It is an attack on the commodity spectacle in its most conspicuous forms. The new structures are moving in that direction. They take form suddenly, with only the minimum strategic orientation necessary. No frills, no long analytical premises, no complex supporting theories. They attack. Comrades identify with these structures. They reject the organisations that give power, equilibrium, waiting, death. Their action is a critique of the wait-and-see suicidal positions of these organisations. Anathema! There must have been a provocation.

There is a break away from traditional political models which is becoming a critique of the movement itself. Irony becomes a weapon. Not closed within a writer's study, but en masse, in the streets. Not only the bosses' servants but also revolutionary leaders from a far off and recent past are finding themselves in difficulty as a result. The mentality of the small-time boss and leading group is also put in crisis. Anathema! The only legitimate critique is that against the bosses, and it must comply with the rules laid down by the historical tradition of the class struggle. Anyone who strays from the seminary is a provocateur.

People are tired of meetings, the classics, pointless marches, theoretical discussions that split hairs in four, endless distinctions, the monotony and poverty of certain political analyses. They prefer to make love, smoke, listen to music, go for walks, sleep, laugh, play, kill policemen, lame journalists, kill judges, blow up barracks. Anathema! The struggle is only legitimate when it is comprehensible to the leaders of the revolution. Otherwise, there being a risk that the situation might go beyond their control, there must have been a provocation.

Hurry comrade, shoot the policeman, the judge, the boss. Now, before a new police prevent you.

Hurry to say No, before the new repression convinces you that saying no is pointless, mad, and that you should accept the hospitality of the mental asylum.

Hurry to attack capital before a new ideology makes it sacred to you.

Hurry to refuse work before some new sophist tells you yet again that 'work makes you free'.

Hurry to play. Hurry to arm yourself

VIII

There will be no revolution until the Cossacks descend.

Coeurderoy

Play is also enigmatic and contradictory in the logic of capital, which uses it as part of the commodity spectacle. It acquires an ambiguity that it does not in itself possess. This ambiguity comes from the illusory structure of capitalist production. In this way the game simply becomes a suspension of production, a parenthesis of 'peace' in everyday life. So play comes to be programmed and used scenically.

When it is outside the dominion of capital, play is harmoniously structured by its own creative impulse. It is not linked to this or that performance required by the forces of the world of production but develops autonomously. It is only in this reality that play is cheerful, that it gives joy. It does not 'suspend' the unhappiness of the laceration caused by exploitation but realises it to the full, making it become a participant in the reality of life. In this way it opposes itself to the tricks put into act by the reality of death—even through play—to make the gloominess less gloomy.

The destroyers of the death reality are struggling against the mythical reign of capitalist illusion, a reign which, although it aspires to eternity, rolls in the dust of the contingent. Joy emerges from the play of destructive action, from the recognition of the profound tragedy that this implies and an awareness of the strength of enthusiasm that is capable of slaying the cobwebs of death. It is not a question of opposing horror with horror, tragedy with tragedy, death with death. It is a confrontation between joy and horror, joy and tragedy, joy and death.

To kill a policeman it is not necessary to don the judge's robes hastily cleansed of the blood of previous sentences. Courts and sentences are always part of the spectacle of capital, even when it is revolutionaries who act them out. When a policeman is killed his responsibility is not weighed on the scales, the clash does not become a question of arithmetic. One is not programming a vision of the relationship between revolutionary movement and exploiters. One is responding at the immediate level to a need that has come to be structured within the revolutionary movement, a need that all the analyses and justifications of this world would never have succeeded in imposing on their own.

This need is the attack on the enemy, the exploiters and their servants. It matures slowly within the structures of the movement. Only when it comes out into the open does the movement pass from the defensive phase to attack. Analysis and moral justification are upstream at the source, not downstream at the feet of those who come out into the streets, poised to make them stumble. They exist in the centuries of systematic violence that capital has exercised over the exploited. But they do not necessarily come to light in a form that is complete and ready for use. That would be a further rationalisation of intentions, our dream of imposing a model on reality that does not belong to it.

Let's have these Cossacks come down. We do not support the role of reaction, that is not for us. We refuse to accept capital's ambiguous invitation. Rather than shoot our comrades or each other it is always better to shoot policemen.

There are times in history when science exists in the consciousness of those who are struggling. At such times there is no need for interpreters of truth. It emerges from things as they are. It is the reality of the struggle that produces theory.

The birth of the commodity market marked the formation of capital, the passage from feudal forms of production to the capitalist one. With the entrance of production into its spectacular phase the commodity form has extended to everything that exists: love, science, feelings, consciousness, etc. The spectacle has widened. The second phase does not, as the marxists maintain, constitute a corruption of the first. It is a different phase altogether. Capital devours everything, even the revolution. If the latter does not break from the model of production, if it merely claims to impose alternative forms, capitalism will swallow it up within the commodity spectacle.

Only the struggle cannot be swallowed up. Some of its forms, crystallising in precise organisational entities, can end up being drawn into the spectacle. But when they break away from the deep significance that capital gives to production this becomes extremely difficult.

In the second phase questions of arithmetic and revenge do not make sense. If they are mentioned, they take on a metaphorical significance.

The illusory game of capital (the commodity spectacle) must be substituted with the real game of the armed attack against it, for the destruction of the unreal and the spectacle.

IX

Do it yourself.

'Bricoleur' Manual

It's easy. You can do it yourself. Alone or with a few trusted comrades. Complicated means are not necessary. Not even great technical knowledge.

Capital is vulnerable. All you need is to be decided.

A load of talk has made us obtuse. It is not a question of fear. We aren't afraid, just stupidly full of prefabricated ideas we cannot break free from.

Anyone who is determined to carry out his or her deed is not a courageous person. They are simply a person who has clarified their ideas, who has realised that it is pointless to make such an effort to play the part assigned to them by capital in the performance. Fully aware, they attack with cool determination. And in doing so they realise themselves as human beings. They realise themselves in joy. The reign of death disappears before their eyes. Even if they create destruction and terror for the bosses, in their hearts and in the hearts of the exploited there is joy and calm.

Revolutionary organisations have difficulty in understanding this. They impose a model that reproduces the reality of production. The quantitative destiny of the latter prevents them from having any qualitative move to the level of the aesthetic dimension of joy. These organisations also see armed attack in a purely quantitative light. Objectives are decided in terms of a frontal clash.

In that way capital is able to control any emergency. It can even allow itself the luxury of accepting the contradictions, point out spectacular objectives, exploit the negative effects on producers in order to widen the spectacle. Capital accepts the clash in the quantitative field, because that is where it knows all the answers. It has a monopoly of the rules and produces the solutions itself.

On the contrary, the joy of the revolutionary act is contagious. It spreads like a spot of oil. Play becomes meaningful when it acts on reality. But this meaning is not crystallised in a model that governs it from above. It breaks up into a thousand meanings, all productive and unstable. The internal connections of play work themselves out in the action of attack. But the overall sense survives, the meaning that play has for those who are excluded and want to appropriate themselves of it. Those who decide to play first and those who 'observe' the liberatory consequences of the game, are essential to the game itself.

The community of joy is structured in this way. It is a spontaneous way of coming into contact, fundamental for the realisation of the most profound meaning of play. Play is a communitarian act. It rarely presents itself as one isolated fact. If it does, it often contains the negative elements of psychological repression, it is not a positive acceptance of play as a creative moment of struggle.

It is the communitarian sense of play that prevents arbitrariness in choice of the significance given to the game itself. In the absence of a communitarian relationship the individual could impose their own rules and meanings that would be incomprehensible to anyone else, simply making play become a temporary suspension of the negative consequences of their individual problems (the problems of work, alienation, exploitation).

In the communitarian agreement, play is enriched by a flux of reciprocal actions. Creativity is greater when it comes from reciprocally verified liberated imaginations. Each new invention, each new possibility can be lived collectively without pre-constituted models and have a vital influence even*** by simply being a creative moment, even if it encounters a thousand difficulties during realisation. A traditional revolutionary organisation ends up imposing its technicians. It tends unavoidably towards technocracy. The great importance attached to the mechanical aspect of action condemns it along this road.

A revolutionary structure that seeks the moment of joy in action aimed at destroying power considers the tools used to bring about this destruction just that, means. Those who use these tools must not become slaves to them. Just as those who do not know how to use them must not become slaves to those who do.

The dictatorship of tools is the worst kind of dictatorship.

Revolutionaries' most important weapons are their determination, their conscience, their decision to act, their individuality. Arms themselves are merely tools, and as such should continually be submitted to critical evaluation. It is necessary to develop a critique of arms. Too often we have seen the sanctification of the sub machine-gun and military efficiency.

Armed struggle does not concern weapons alone. These alone cannot represent the revolutionary dimension. It is dangerous to reduce complex reality to one single thing. In fact, play involves this risk. It could make the living experience become no more than a toy, turning it into something magical and absolute. It is not by chance that the machine-gun appears in the symbolism of many revolutionary combatant organisations.

We must go beyond this in order to understand joy as the profound significance of the revolutionary struggle, escaping the illusions and traps of part of the commodity spectacle through mythical and mythicized objects.

Capital makes its final effort when faced with armed struggle. It engages itself on its last frontier. It needs the support of public opinion in order to act in a field where it is not too sure of itself. So it unleashes a psychological war using the most refined weapons of modern propaganda.

Basically, the way capital is physically organised at the present time makes it vulnerable to any revolutionary structure capable of deciding its own timing and means of attack. It is quite aware of this weakness and is taking measures to compensate for it. The police are not enough. Not even the army. It requires constant vigilance by the people themselves. Even the most humble part of the proletariat. So, to do this it must divide the class front. It must spread the myth of the danger of armed organisations among the poor, along with that of the sanctity of the State, morality, the law and so on.

It indirectly pushes these organisations and their militants into assuming precise roles. Once in this 'role', play no longer has any meaning. Everything becomes 'serious', so illusory; it enters the domain of the spectacular and becomes a commodity. Joy becomes 'mask.' The individual becomes anonymous, lives out their role, no longer able to distinguish between appearance and reality.

In order to break out of the magic circle of the theatricals of commodities we must refuse all roles, including that of the 'professional' revolutionary.

Armed struggle must not let itself become something professional, precisely that division of tasks that the external aspect of capitalist production wants to impose upon it.

'Do it yourself.' Don't break up the global aspect of play by reducing it to roles. Defend your right to enjoy life. Obstruct capital's death project. The latter can only enter the world of creativity and

play by transforming who is playing into a 'player' the living creator into a dead person who cheats themselves into believing they are alive.

There would be no sense in talking about play any longer if the 'world of play' were to become centralised. We must foresee this possibility of capital taking up the revolutionary proposal again when we put forward our argument of 'armed joy'. And one way this could come about is through the management of the world of play from the outside. By establishing the roles of the players and the mythology of the toy.

In breaking the bonds of centralisation (the military party) one obtains the result of confusing capital's ideas, tuned as they are into the code of the spectacular productivity of the quantitative market. Action coordinated by joy is an enigma to capital. It is nothing. Something with no precise aim, devoid of reality. And this is so because the essence, the aims and reality of capital are illusory, while the essence, aims and reality of revolution are concrete.

The code of the need for communism takes the place of the code of the need to produce. In the light of this need in the community of play, the decisions of the individual become meaningful. The unreal illusory character of the death models of the past is discovered.

The destruction of the bosses means the destruction of commodities, and the destruction of commodities means the destruction of the bosses.

X

The owl takes flight.

Athenian proverb

‘The owl takes flight’. May actions that start off badly come to a good end. May the revolution, put off by revolutionaries for so long, be realised in spite of the latter’s residual desire for social peace.

Capital will give the last word to the white coats. Prisons will not last for long. Fortresses of a past that survives only in the fantasies of some exalted old reactionary, they will disappear along with the ideology based on social orthopaedics. There will no longer be convicts. The criminalisation capital creates will be rationalised, it will be processed through asylums.

When the whole of reality is spectacular, to refuse the spectacle means to be outside reality. Anyone who refuses the code of commodities is mad. Refusal to bow down before the commodity god will result in one’s being committed to a mental asylum.

There the treatment will be radical. No more inquisitorial-style torture or blood on the walls, such things upset public opinion. They cause the self-righteous to intervene, give rise to justification and making amends, and disturb the harmony of the spectacle. The total annihilation of the personality, considered to be the only radical cure for sick minds, does not upset anyone. As long as the man in the street feels he is surrounded by the imperturbable atmosphere of the capitalist spectacle he will feel safe from the asylum doors ever slamming shut on him. The world of madness will seem to him to be elsewhere, even though there is always an asylum available next to every factory, opposite every school, behind every patch of land, in the middle of every housing estate.

In our critical obtuseness we must take care not to pave the way to the civil servants in white coats.

Capital is programming a code of interpretation to be circulated at mass level. On the basis of this code public opinion will get used to seeing those who attack the bosses’ order of things, that is to say revolutionaries, as practically mad. Hence the need to have them put away in mental asylums. Prisons are also rationalising along the German model. First they will transform themselves into special prisons for revolutionaries, then into model prisons, then into real concentration camps for brain manipulation, and finally, mental asylums.

Capital’s behaviour is not dictated by the need to defend itself from the struggles of the exploited alone. It is dictated by the logic of the code of commodity production.

For capital the asylum is a place where the globality of spectacular functioning is interrupted. Prison desperately tries to do this but does not succeed, blocked as it is by its basic ideology of social orthopaedics.

On the contrary, the ‘place’ of the asylum does not have a beginning or an end, it has no history, does not have the mutability of the spectacle. It is the place of silence.

The other ‘place’ of silence, the graveyard, has the faculty to speak aloud. Dead men talk. And our dead talk loudly. They can be heavy, very heavy. That is why capital will try to have fewer and fewer of them. And the number of ‘guests’ in asylums will increase correspondingly. The ‘homeland of socialism’ has much to impart in this field.

The asylum is the perfect therapeutic rationalisation of free time, the suspension of work without trauma to the commodity structure. Lack of productivity without denial of it. The madman does not have to work and in not doing so he confirms that work is wisdom, the opposite of madness.

When we say the time is not ripe for an armed attack on the State we are pushing open the doors of the mental asylum for the comrades who are carrying out such attacks; when we say it is not the time for revolution we are tightening the cords of the straightjacket; when we say these actions are objectively a provocation we don the white coats of the torturers.

When the number of opponents was inconsiderable, grape-shot was effective. A dozen dead can be tolerated. Thirty thousand, a hundred thousand, two hundred thousand would mark a turning point in history, a revolutionary point of reference of such blinding luminosity as to disrupt the peaceful harmony of the commodity spectacle. Besides, capital is more cunning. Drugs have a neutrality that bullets do not possess. They have the alibi of being therapeutic.

May capital's statute of madness be thrown in its face. Society is one immense mental asylum. May the terms of the counter-positions be overturned.

The neutralisation of the individual is a constant practice in capital's reified totality. The flattening of opinions is a therapeutic process, a death machine. Production cannot take place without this flattening in the spectacular form of capitalism. And if the refusal of all that, the choice of joy in the face of death, is a sign of madness it is time everyone began to understand the trap that lurks beneath it all.

The whole apparatus of the western cultural tradition is a death machine, the negation of reality, a reign of the fictitious that has accumulated every kind of infamy and injustice, exploitation and genocide. If the refusal of this logic is condemned as madness, then we must distinguish between madness and madness.

Joy is arming itself. Its attack is overcoming the commodity hallucination, machinery, vengeance, the leader, the party, quantity. Its struggle is breaking down the logic of profit, the architecture of the market, the programming of life, the last document in the last archive. Its violent explosion is overturning the order of dependency, the nomenclature of positive and negative, the code of the commodity illusion.

But all this must be able to communicate itself. The passage from the world of joy to the world of death is not easy. The codes are out of phase and end up wiping each other out. What is considered illusion in the world of joy is reality in the world of death and vice versa. Physical death, so much a preoccupation in the death world, is less mortifying than what is peddled as life.

Hence capital's capacity to mystify messages of joy. Even revolutionaries of the quantitative logic are incapable of understanding experiences of joy in depth. Sometimes they hesitantly make insignificant approaches. At other times they let themselves go with condemnation that is not very different to that of capital.

In the commodity spectacle it is goods that count. The active element of this accumulated mass is work. Nothing can be positive and negative at the same time within the framework of production. It is possible to assert non-work, not the negation of work but its temporary suspension. In the same way it is possible to assert the non-commodity, the personalised object, but only in the context of 'free time', i.e. something that is produced as a hobby, in the time lapses conceded by the productive cycle. In this sense it is clear that these concepts, non-work and the non-commodity, are functional to the general model of production.

Only by clarifying the meaning of joy and the corresponding meaning of death as components of two opposing worlds struggling against each other is it possible to communicate elements of the

actions of joy. Without illuding ourselves that we can communicate all of them. Anyone who begins to experience joy even in a perspective not directly linked to the attack on capital is more willing to grasp the significance of the attack, at least more than those who remain tied to an outdated vision of the clash based on the illusion of quantity.

So the owl could still take wing and fly.

XI

Forward everyone! And with arms and heart, word and pen, dagger and gun, irony and curse, theft, poisoning and arson, let's make... war on society!...

Dejaque

Let's be done with waiting, doubts, dreams of social peace, little compromises and naivety. All metaphorical rubbish supplied to us in the shops of capitalism. Let's put aside the great analyses that explain everything down to the most minute detail. Huge volumes filled with common sense and fear. Let's put aside democratic and bourgeois illusions of discussion and dialogue, debate and assembly and the enlightened capabilities of the Mafiosi bosses. Let's put aside the wisdom that the bourgeois work ethic has dug into our hearts. Let's put aside the centuries of Christianity that have educated us to sacrifice and obedience. Let's put aside priests, bosses, revolutionary leaders, less revolutionary ones and those who aren't revolutionary at all. Let's put aside numbers, illusions of quantity, the laws of the market. Let us sit for a moment on the ruins of the history of the persecuted, and reflect.

The world does not belong to us. If it has a master who is stupid enough to want it the way it is, let him have it. Let him count the ruins in the place of buildings, the graveyards in the place of cities, the mud in the place of rivers and the putrid sludge in the place of seas.

The greatest conjuring trick in the world no longer enchants us.

We are certain that communities of joy will emerge from our struggle here and now.

And for the first time life will triumph over death.

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Revolution, Violence, Anti-authoritarianism — A few notes

Alfredo M. Bonanno

1974–1984

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Introduction

The rationalisation of exploitation at global level and the illumination among all those with a glimmer of dignity and passion that reformism is not the way to fight it, is leading to explosions of rebellion in many parts of the world. Anarchists are close to these moments, at least in spirit, but do we have anything to give this reality beyond causing immediate damage or attacking police lines? Must we continue to leave everything to chance, believing that organisational clarity will spring forth out of the blue? If we do, the great potential for new qualitative relations risks becoming reabsorbed into extremely pragmatic and convincing reformist programmes which apparently appear from nowhere. Some are not sleeping. The organisers of tomorrow's misery lie constantly in wait for such opportunities to ride the tiger in order to harness and redomesticate it, possibly under slogans of freedom and selfmanagement.

If we want to go beyond *critique* (even violent) of social and economic reality and enter the realm of *transformation* (including the necessary destruction) we must immediately move on to quite a different terrain. The protagonists of the struggle must have our active complicity in putting together the elements necessary to intensify the attack on the enemy and extend the struggle informally, horizontally. Action must encompass the aims that are to be achieved, i.e. always be in the logic of the destruction of power of all colours, in both its formal and relational manifestations. In such a reality what is required are minimal structures that turn the organisational question upside down. It is only from such elementary organisms born within the struggle itself that the latter will be able to go forward and develop its latent self-organising capacity. These forms could be referred to as base nuclei which are 'not a gymnasium of the revolution... perhaps not even an adequate instrument of struggle...but could become the grain of sand that jams the machinery of capital'.(p.23)

One of the great problematics of any liberatory moment is that the protagonists of the struggle grasp the reality of the situation in order to make ethical choices without hesitation when required. The single elements of the eternal triangle rebellion, repression, reform, are not always easily distinguishable the one from the other, the boundaries between them never being absolutely clear and distinct.

The texts we are presenting here have been uprooted from the context of struggle in Italy in the seventies and eighties, a time where these realities were all present. Capitalist restructuring had led to widespread social discomfort, and the movement which ensued had a wide 'mass' composition along with the presence of highly politicised, predominantly Leninist extraparlimentary organisations. Various insurrectional situations developed where there was a conscious presence of anarchists. Their aim was not to convince the exploited to become anarchists like them, but to contribute insurrectional anarchist methods to intermediate struggles. At times, however, it was necessary to give people a brief outline of what anarchists want, hence the origins of the final sketch 'What are anarchists?', given out by Catania anarchist group Rivolta e Liberta in a specific situation. In those days revolution sometimes seemed just around the corner...

However, we are still here, proposing a different reading of these texts. The old structures have disappeared into oblivion, the new ones are less easily distinguishable, but not for that mean less

danger for the spirit of freedom. The question is not to turn to the past but to reflect on age-old problems with a new, revolutionary imagination and creativity projected into the future, which in many ways is far more complex than those far off days only a few decades ago. J.W.

The Revolutionary Struggle

To study methods of revolutionary struggle without first having a clear idea of what we mean by revolution can be extremely dangerous and could lead to quite disconcerting consequences.

Unfortunately this mistake has often been made. The Leninists in particular have repeatedly come out with concepts that are applicable to war in general, often influenced by reading Clausewitz, or a Lenin who read Napoleon, Clausewitz, Moltke, von der Goltz, Frederick the Great, etc. Hence all the conclusions relative to a dialectic of war and peace, which in the best of cases is very far-fetched. What is even more serious, this leads to an eminently authoritarian concept of revolution, seen as the coming out of a particularly gifted personality or an elite of particularly gifted people with a strategic plan similar to that of traditional warfare, which they carry through to victory. Those who have ended up on this road are men such as Caesar, Napoleon, Trotsky, Mao-TseTung, all fabricators of victories which came to nothing in their need for results at any cost.

In this way the revolution becomes a theoretical problem, and the revolutionary struggle a question of strategy. In a recent book Cesare Milanese saw Lenin and Trotsky studying the origins of the 'revolutionary ideas of Bolshevism' together at the British museum in the years between 1900–1903 as though they were somehow sowing the seeds of future victories.

It is clear, at least for us, that with such prospects a methodology of revolutionary struggle becomes no more than a military manual whereas, if anything, it should be a manual for militants. There is a considerable difference between the two. The military man in the traditional sense of the term is merely an object who must obey orders and die, the militant in revolutionary terms is a subject who must think and, if necessary, also die. It is therefore impossible to suggest or impose on the latter precepts which would be acceptable only to the first.

Now the fundamental error is lack of faith in the constructive capacity of the masses, hence the revolutionary individual believes in having to work, albeit in the depths of the British museum, not in the latter's interests but in place of them, independently of any consideration of their presence. They don't realise that revolution is not just a warlike event, it is also, and principally, a human and social one. All this inevitably leads to new and more terrifying authoritarian structures.

It is quite true that an active minority can carry out preventive clarification. But to go from this to considering their action as something separate from the social context, from the effective situation of the masses — as in the case of a science of revolutionary war that is valid in absolute — seems quite absurd to me.

It is not at all true that methods of revolutionary struggle can grow from an abstract conception of the latter. To think in this way is misleading concerning the real significance of revolutionary methodology. That is why, before examining methods, it is necessary to clarify a few points: the concept of revolution, the alternative (only apparent) between violence and nonviolence, and the (concrete) alternative between authority and freedom.

The concept of revolution

Never has any term been more controversial. Even fascists have spoken of revolution. The climb to power by the Bolsheviks in Russia is considered revolution, and the French revolution is considered to be that of the Rights of Man. Different and contrasting situations, different periods, different problems but persistence in the use of the same word with all the consequences that this entails.

The revolution is a change of values, not a banal modification of norms. With the revolution new situations, new institutions are born and past conditions and privileges are destroyed as a climate of justice and equality comes to take the place of the preceding one of tyranny and social division. But this schema corresponds little to an effective analysis of the elements necessary to determine a modification in the situation of privilege following the revolutionary event.

Here a disturbing component appears on the scene making a linear application of the revolutionary principle, which everyone agrees is of a libertarian nature, impossible. A look at this component reveals two defective situations, one that is typical of the active minority, the other that is typical of the masses. The first is determined by the fact that the active minority, who should be the first to have clear ideas, do not have them at all and often get tangled up in immediate prospects, easy solutions and come to agreements with elements that are only revolutionary in appearance and in fact are fundamentally counter-revolutionary. The second is determined by the fact that the masses have submitted to the constrictions of authority for too long so are not able to accept the new anti-authoritarian structure like a bolt from the blue. If we add to this the forces of the residual reaction and the inability to foresee the construction of a truly revolutionary organisation with essentially functional and not structural or pyramidal concepts, we should have some idea of the problems involved.

That is why the task of the active minority must be to transform the atmosphere and prepare it for the struggle against authoritarian ideologies. In other words, to prepare for revolution. In order to do this it is necessary to fight a violent system with means that are violent. There is no alternative. Our fighting must not be a blind writhing of exasperation, but a rational blow with a cold precise look at our enemy. Without hesitation but without hatred, which would not only cause more damage than good, but undermine the whole revolutionary process on a moral level.

The alternative between violence and nonviolence

As we have said, these alternatives are illusory as the doctrine of nonviolence does not exist in reality. The latter is merely a degeneration of the principle of defensive violence or a simple play of words as there is merely recourse to violence with a banal sophism. When the Indian disciples of the great theoretician of nonviolence surrounded a reactionary who wanted to force them to accept his demands, let us say following a strike, and enclosed him in a circle leaving him bareheaded in the midday sun, they were using one of the techniques of nonviolence. So we are sure that there is no alternative whatsoever to the theory of revolutionary violence intended as defensive violence for anyone who wants to fight and destroy a system of infamy and shame.

We are convinced that only a violent revolution will be able to solve the social problem at the stage in which countries in various parts of the world today have been determined or at least influenced by the acute phase of bourgeois or State capitalism.

But there is no need to believe that revolutionary violence, simply because we define it 'defensive' must necessarily be used after the forces of reaction have unleashed their offensive, have attacked the

revolutionary forces or, even worse, put a preventive counter-revolution in to effect. It would be pure suicide to think this.

Revolutionary violence is preventive organisation and preventive attack on the bourgeois forces. It is the struggle against State institutions, it is the specific search for confrontation, aimed at the surrender of the State superstructure. Revolutionary violence is initiative, the preparation of guerrilla organisations, the formation of the forces of resistance, and the thinking out of new programmes of attack. Nevertheless revolutionary violence is still defensive violence. In fact the institutions, the State, the bourgeois structure, the military repressive forces, the police and every other expedient put into effect by the shrewd pillage organised by the bosses, is in itself a provocation, an attack, a sentence, a systematic blow. Even when all these repressive forms take on the loose aspect of dialogue and tolerance, even when we feel a familiar hand on the shoulder, precisely then is the moment to strike harder, more deeply.

The generating strength of revolutionary violence must be considered at the base of every attempt to liberate the oppressed, it being unthinkable for the authentic mechanisms of economic and political factors to determine the maturity of the revolutionary situation on their own. It needs the will of men, their predetermined conscious actions, their violent actions directed against institutions.

The alternative between authority and freedom

But the breaking up of values caused by the revolution can go in two directions. The first is the authoritarian one, favoured by the fact that the revolutionary moment is more chaotic than anything, giving little time for reflection. It is a moment in which situations strengthened by men's will intersect with situations created by the power of things and the economic and political structures. The presence of the old authoritarian ideological structure, most often the fruit of the bourgeois organisational and productive structures, cannot be eliminated easily. If to this situation is added the presence of people who are unprepared for anti-authoritarian solutions, people with little faith in the possibility of the self-determination of the masses, one can understand why the possibilities of an authoritarian development of the revolution are many,

There remains the other direction, the anti-authoritarian one. A more conscious, difficult direction. Not so much because the objective situations determined by prevalently economic factors are in contrast with this kind of solution as because the active minority may not have the necessary faith in the masses that this solution requires, making them feel entitled, for the superior aims of the revolution, to put themselves in their place. It is here that the great incomprehension that we took up at the beginning of these pages lies. The superior aims of the revolution no longer exist when it is betrayed by the authoritarians, when the initial anti-authoritarian vision becomes compromise with governmental structures under the vestiges, let us say, of a dictatorship of the proletariat.

Unfortunately today in the present state of anti-bourgeois libertarian development with its flourishing of doctrines and pseudo-revolutionary tendencies, expectations of an immediate anti-authoritarian revolution do not appear favourable. In any case the conscious participation of forces within the liberation movement, their constant and documented actions in favour of an education to freedom, and their increasing opening towards the elimination of sectarianism, are all elements which will open the way to a libertarian presence and action within future anti-authoritarian revolutionary solutions. The post-revolutionary struggle of tomorrow will be even harder than that of today, but

that must not scare us. The road to the real revolution could also pass through the authoritarian or pseudo-revolutionary one.

Violence and Non-violence

The question of the difference between 'violence' and 'nonviolence' is usually posed wrongly because of the class interests and emotive reactions it triggers off.

State violence and the terrorism of the bosses knows no limits or moral obstacle. Revolutionaries, and anarchists in particular, are quite justified in responding to this violence with revolutionary violence.

Complications arise when we examine the positions of those who support nonviolence. In appearance only do they choose peaceful methods, which when seen in isolation are not violent, i.e. do not physically attack the adversary. When seen within the general framework of the struggle, their interventions (apart from those of organisations who use nonviolence as an alibi to leave things as they are) turn out to be just as violent as those carried out by the supporters of 'violence'.

A march of 'pacifist' demonstrators is itself a violent event which upsets the order of exploitation. It is a demonstration of strength, a show of force. It does not differ from the 'violent' demonstration, at least in the choice of objective. From the strategic and revolutionary point of view, the idea of a violent demonstration capable of winning and holding a military victory is unthinkable today. In so saying, we do not mean that we should refuse revolutionary violence. We only mean we must be clear so as to avoid sanctifying the machine gun on the one hand or becoming the policeman of the situation on the other.

A purely verbal distinction between violence and nonviolence is a false one. A well-fed bourgeois can easily 'theorise' the most unchained violence against the boss class but only with difficulty will he put it into effect in conditions requiring total dedication to the revolutionary task. Most often his violence is purely verbal. In practice he prefers things to remain as they are because, among other things, that allows him to continue to exercise his fiery rhetoric.

Another equally well-fed bourgeois might feel himself transported to an exaltation of nonviolence, but still as something theoretical, something condemning the negative 'instincts' of struggle and violence and sanctifying the positive 'instincts' of peace and brotherhood. Only with difficulty however will this bourgeois put his nonviolent 'principles' into practice in a total daily involvement in the social struggle. He will prefer the comfort of the situation as it is, where he can carry on with his reflections on peace and brotherhood.

Before speaking of violence and nonviolence a distinction should be made as to whether the question is being applied to a real situation, or whether it is simply an abstract theory and there is no intention of actually applying it. Only in the case of the former is it possible to discuss the strategic and military conditions that render nonviolent methods less effective and more easily overcome by power. But this discussion is one which comes afterwards, it is a question of method and never an abstract one.

We are not interested in philosophical discussions on violence that lead to theories of the hereditary biological violence of the species, etc., which stink of theology. What is important is to approach the struggle in its reality. The rest is a question of choice of means and the best way to put them into effect.

If we are personally convinced that nonviolent methods are unsuitable in the social struggle today, not for this are we against the comrades who see their own dimension of struggle in nonviolent methods. What is important is that the struggle be engaged in seriously, that it not be limited to speaking of 'nonviolent struggle' as an alibi so that the police will leave us alone.

Abstract discussions on violence (nearly always fiery and bloody) and just as abstract discussions on nonviolence (nearly always idiotic and paradisiacal) are equally disgusting. We can only respond effectively to the historic crime of exploitation, terrorism, and institutionalised violence with struggle, using any means we choose. The violence (or nonviolence) of words and speeches will change nothing.

Autonomous Base Nuclei

Analysis of instruments of struggle cannot leave out of consideration an evaluation of the conditions under which the struggle is taking place. To prepare an instrument that is capable of attacking and defeating the project of the bosses therefore requires an analytical effort that goes beyond what the mere technicalities of the instrument might lead one to suppose.

Autonomous base nuclei are minimal instruments of intervention in the reality of the struggle. They are the smallest organisational form, which allow one to reconstruct — at the level of the revolutionary — individual tissue which always runs the risk of tearing on contact with daily solicitations. An old or a new instrument of struggle? The answer is not simple. The long history of exploitation sees the stubborn reappearance of forms which often come to be rejected at certain phases in the struggle, only to re-emerge then be rejected once again. Only an outsider would see these 'returns' as mere revarnished trophies of the past. In substance, an instrument of struggle takes on a meaning (not just a 'new' meaning) when it establishes a meaningful relationship with the level of the clash in course. In the case of the contrary not only will it not be a 'new instrument', it will not be an instrument at all, merely a conditioned reflux of power itself.

The spectacular phase of capitalist dominion is tending to recede today. The element of representation which allowed for the transferral of life to within preestablished limits of the rhythms of exchange, transforming man and his things into symbolic abstractions, has taken the form of repetitiveness. Relations of exchange in which a presumed harmony was reached have now become repetition, changing not only the relationship of man and his things within the process of production, but also that of man and time. With the coming about of the dominion of repetitiveness time is stored, packaged.

Let us take two borderline cases. The organisation of production was aimed at the 'make believe' of a world where violence entered the spectacle of the elimination of violence within the harmony of production. The factory was a miniature model of the harmonious society where social conflicts were resolved in the approximate (but always satisfactory) resolution of the bosses' technical problems. Production took on fideistic aspects. Commercial exchange came to be lived through the rationalisation of scientific knowledge. The spectacle of production became the spectacle of harmony. Not only did it serve to create the conditions of established order, it became possible to 'believe' in the existence of the latter, and its universal value. The typical worker complied with these conditions of existence perfectly and, in exchange for a part of the social product, accepted the defence of his own state of servitude. Those who were excluded by the process of differentiation which capital renders indispensable, summed up their rage in terms of 'lack of acceptance', leading to violent destructive explosions and progressive englobing to within the area of wage earning.

Another minority proclaimed itself within this spectacle: the seekers of fire, forefathers of the present day negators of any condition of exchange. Reference to the drug addict is obligatory. The seeker of fire, as well as belonging to a restricted minority, constituted the most coherent response to the formal dominion of capital and its representative spectacular order (dominion). Like the factory, the consumption of drugs required a very closed framework, an obligatory place where wealth was produced or destroyed (which is the same thing). To drug oneself openly would have been un-

thinkable, just as production 'islands' or working days organised as one wanted was. Money was the maximum form of the meaningful, either in the abstract form of actual wealth or as an instrument of spectacular exchange.

The factory and the opium den both required the spectacle of the exorcizing of violence. The mythical sacrifice was consumed (and in many ways is still consumed in more backward conditions of capital) to prevent real explosions of violence.

Let us look at the second borderline case. Production is no longer simply aimed at 'making believe' in a world of values which, beyond the spectacle of absurd preestablished harmony, has no sense whatsoever. A more immediate, measurable aim is being programmed, that of repetitiveness. No longer the reassembling of qualitative contrasts in a fictitious global harmony, but a summing up of uniformities. If once one was pushed to buy a TV, now one is pushed to buy whole TV programmes, the stock of sports, cultural, culinary, musical, etc., programmes. The model of value is precisely this accumulation. The equivalent of consumerism will be drowned in this generalised need for unity of product. Clothes will all be the same, cars all the same, films all the same, sexual acts all the same, gestures, words all the same. The very capacity to grasp differences will weaken to the point of disappearing. Comic strips educated us a long time ago concerning the magic of reiteration. We do not enjoy a strip of Charlie Brown for its novelty but for the way its novelty dialogues within an absolute, mortifying repetitiveness. The same goes for Diabolik. Special prisons apply this technique to the full: they are no longer places where blood spatters the walls, but where the obsessional repetition of gestures has almost completely taken the place of the blood-curdling representation of the torture of the past. Repetition is an incredible factor in the scale of integration between production and consumption. Once separate moments from within the representative cycle of exchange, today the latter unite to the point of confusing themselves the one with the other. In this way power normalises the different, centralises the specific, homogenises the dissociated.

The majority of them (again the drug addict cannot be left out) are no longer seekers of fire. The will to penetrate the unknown is spent. There is no longer a search to open up levels of experimentation: repetitiveness has taken the place of representation. Capital no longer needs to 'make believe', now it can simply keep quiet, pushing people to produce/consume to be 'like the others' and not in order 'to distinguish themselves from others'. By consuming the consumer reproduces himself as such, belonging to a social group of consumerism/production, no longer isolated individual/consumer/producer. Identity only renders intelligible the differences between social groups, not those within the group itself. There is no longer any shame attached to wearing, in thousands, the same pair of jeans. On the contrary, acceptance of this uniformity — which has been programmed by capital — is sought after and considered with a kind of fascination which the search for the different never had in the past.

Now let us face the second part of this text, that aimed at looking into the operative conditions of the instrument of struggle we have referred to as autonomous base nuclei. The spirit of revolutionary syndicalism always present somewhere in these autonomous organisational forms seems, in the face the changing conditions of capital, destined to disappear. A struggle at the level of claims takes for granted a dialogue with the bosses on the basis of a possible readjustment of wage contrasts. The mistake made in the past was to consider engagement in that direction positive, because a positive outcome gave a wider field of action to the producers themselves. This has now been channelled by capital first towards the sacrificial representation of the negation of violence, then towards the homogenisation of the behaviour of consumer/producer.

That does not mean denying the validity of permanent conflict. The class clash marks the drastic limit beyond which lies the bloody mist of reactionary interclass collaboration. It is just that our

enemy has mined the road with traps and it is important not to fall into them. One of these traps is the nullification of the increase in real wages. It is not true that it is possible to buy more with a wage increase, the same things are simply bought at a higher price. But the trap is that one buys the 'same things'. Moreover, the greatest trap is that we are happy and content to buy the same things that others buy.

The unification of the equation production/consumption allows for the realisation of a struggle front as never before. Today the figure of the 'privileged producer', the worker who saw himself as different to the disinherited or lumpenproletarian no longer exists. At the technical level of production such distinctions are still operative but they are disappearing. Hammering on the need for repetition, power has obtained the great result of detaching privileged producers from consumer goods which were 'luxuries' compared to the increasingly large minorities, resulting in outbreaks of social conflict that are increasingly difficult to control. It has also had to pay the price of opening the road to a recomposition of the class front. The decomposition of production (and therefore of consumerism), the so-called crises, should have far more serious effects now than in the phase of formal dominion where the process of representation was able to keep productive strata separate from those excluded from wage earning. A sudden break up of uniformity could produce phenomena of mass rebellion compared to the little hysterical crises which came about in the opium dens of the past.

Claims for real wage increases are coming to be made in a different way however, obliging the institutions of class dominion to give in on the question of nominal increases. From individual appropriation to collective expropriation, from bad work to techniques of absenteeism, from collective reduction to collective destruction, from sabotage to public denunciation, from counter-information to the search for one's capacity to self-organise: everything must be used in an anti-boss dimension. But the vital element of transformation must be in the attempt to destroy the grandiose apparatus of repetitiveness, the homogenisation of the individual. In breaking up this repressive apparatus one endangers the very relationship consumption/production and the minimal conditions for attack are realised, allowing one to safeguard the creativity of the struggle.

The mythology of the past: the logo, the slogans, the 'analyses that explained everything', sacred monsters of a time which seemed close to the revolution, must be substituted with inventiveness, simplicity, modesty, awareness of one's limitations and one's possibilities. A nucleus is not a gymnasium of the revolution, it is not the point of reference which will overcome the order of capitalism, perhaps it is not even an adequate instrument of struggle, but it could become all this and far far more: it could become the small grain of sand that jams the machinery of capital.

Looking Forward to Self-management

1. The problem of self-management is not just the technical problem of how to ensure the functioning of production before, during and after the revolution. It is a more complex problem that involves the very dynamic of the revolutionary process. To study possible models of self-management without putting them in a revolutionary context means nothing at all as far as liberation is concerned.

To ask the meaning of self-management is to ask how a society entrusted into the hands of the producers would function. But at the same time it means asking if it is possible to self-manage the struggle at the present time, in the face of exploitation and genocide.

Self-management of the struggle comes first, followed by self-management of work and society.

If self-management is to serve State production, then we are against it. If it is to serve as an instrument for deceiving the workers yet again, we are against it. If it is to serve as an alibi for some party to come to power on the backs of the masses, we are also against it.

2. The exploited will bring about the revolution because they are trapped and suffer the progressive loss of every positive aspect of social life. The mass movement is developing on the deterioration of the economic, social and cultural conditions which rendered the preceding State administration possible. The work of stimulus and clarification which the revolutionary minority is carrying out is part of this contradictory structure, soliciting the autonomous strength that exists within the masses, pushing them to construct the rudiments of self-managed organisation which, starting off from the struggle, can extend to the formation of generalised self-management through the self-managed revolutionary event.
3. In the waning phase of consumerism world economic power tried to use the Yugoslavian type model of self-management on a large scale. Such a solution would have been of very great danger to the workers' movement. If they had fallen into the trap they would have accepted the management of the places of production (only those most easily controllable, never the fundamental ones such as the banks, finance companies, railways or shipping lines), controlled by a bureaucratic political centre or in the hands of party leaders — technocrats in the service of a capitalism that has been rendered absolutely anonymous — or under some new kind of charismatic leader.

There would have been self-management in name alone. The workers, under the imperatives of a programming centre, would merely be self-managing their own exploitation. Strikes, for example, would be unthinkable when not specifically forbidden. This self-management would be equivalent to the militarisation of production.

4. In order to give themselves a perspective of self-management workers must first oppose themselves to the present structure of collaboration between the various elements involved in their exploitation. These are: a) the political parties, including those who define themselves 'left-wing' and consider themselves the carriers of the revolutionary tradition; b.) the unions, including those who refer to revolutionary syndicalist doctrines and to anarcho-syndicalism.

The presence of this triple alliance, bosses, parties and unions, is pushing workers to build the bases of their own autonomy and conquer the essential elements necessary for taking the first steps towards self-management. This does not so much mean an advance in the level of the struggle as a qualitative leap which is attempting to attack the anti-worker alliance brought about by the forces of reaction and their collaborators. It is the class situation in its complexity which is being put in question and examined in a new light. Workers' autonomy is the first step towards self-management.

5. Another essential phase in the perspective of self-management is workers' reappropriation of their creative capacity. The capitalist system, basing itself on the private ownership of the means of production, does not allow for the creative employment of those means by the worker. The activity of production is distorted and produces the phenomenon of alienation: production escapes the worker. His work is well and truly forced labour.

But the creative capacity of the working man or woman can only be recovered through the availability of the product, that is through a revolutionary process of reappropriation when a reactionary process of exploitation is in force. Revolution of work is therefore the self-managed organisation of these first elements of the future society, base production nuclei which grow from the autonomy of the struggle.

6. Information is a key element in the model of future exploitation. Moments of crisis in imperialist consumerism can be overcome by allowing co-management carried out while maintaining absolute control over information. Any form of counter-information, any deviation from the data supplied by the central direction would be carefully excluded. What is known as 'preventive censure' is a means of globalizing the process and of causing the fragmentation of the working class, thereby eliminating the nonproductive strata (controls, timekeepers, etc.), and reducing the importance of some of the intermediate strata (civil servants, etc.).

In this reactionary situation the element of struggle which fits in perfectly within the perspective of workers' self-management is the conquest of information. The workers organise information themselves, from the base, taking over its elaboration and interpretation, refusing the participation of any intermediary whatsoever to act as a filter — in the first place, of course, the unions.

7. The project of self-management begins to take form through the essential points we have listed: a) workers' autonomy, b.) recovery of the creative capacity, c) the conquest of information. It remains to be seen how this will come about, i.e. if by spontaneous germination within the workers' movement due to the effect of certain structural changes, or by an intervention prepared by a precise minority.

In our opinion the action of an anarchist minority within the mass fits in very well with the perspective of self-management. This does mean the hypothesis of a 'guide' who, in any case would end up repeating social democracy's programme. It means action within the workers' movement itself, seeking to coordinate autonomous organisations in accordance with the interests of the workers, and aimed at safeguarding individual autonomy in the dimension of class autonomy.

8. The presence of an anarchist minority within the mass considers the problem of the choice of instruments in the struggle. We attack the interclassist and reformist parties, but not for this do we fall into a stale supporting of spontaneity. The points of reference are the workers' interests which

they must recognise as such. A change in structure, when based entirely on economic factors, does not necessarily mean an 'automatic recognition' of the latter. For example, a struggle for an increase in wages led by the unions is not always in the interests of the workers. It may be in their 'apparent' interests. On the contrary it may be in the 'effective' interests of their exploiters. Understanding this is the necessary foundation for the self-management of the struggle and therefore for the firm establishment of the prospect of self-management.

The choice of means for the struggle, for example direct action, sabotage, the destruction of work, carries a need for clarification and an identification of the 'real interests' of the working class. The need for this work cannot be denied by an unfounded voluntaristic view of the phenomenon.

Recognition of one's own interests is the most important condition for the realisation of the social revolution.

9. Past forms of struggle such as cooperatives, factory councils, rank and file committees, sectorial committees, etc., that have been tried out in different historical situations and under other types production relations, must undergo severe analysis.

In substance, the limitations of these forms are demonstrated in the fact that capitalist society still exists. The workers must analyse with precision the negative effect which this alienating situation has on instruments which in themselves contain valid elements of cooperation and self-management. For example, cooperatives can only produce — as they are organised today — an autarchic and corporative spirit, a spirit which denies the class struggle and every sentiment of solidarity. Whoever thinks differently, and believes that from cooperatives can grow the seeds of a future society, mutual aid for the benefit of all, is illuding themselves in that they are attributing to capitalism not only a utilizable technological component, but also a psychological component of self-management which, in our opinion, does not exist.

10. The passage from the pre-revolutionary period to the revolution, and therefore to the construction of a new society, cannot come about in a sudden brusque way, unless care has been taken to construct the essential elements of a self-managed structure of the struggle. Self-management precedes the revolution, it is not a consequence of it.

If self-management were to be considered in its productive aspect alone, there would be a temptation to bring it about separately from the self-management of the struggle, resulting in the delegation of the struggle to a specific body (armed wing of the proletariat), to a specific party (workers' party), or to a precise minority in government (democracy in general). Capitalism is extremely interested in this choice being made by the workers' movement and it is exactly in this direction that it has been pushing it with all the means at its disposal, in particular by a massive use of the media. We must not fall into the trap.

By placing the organisation of the struggle alongside the organisation of production in the perspective of self-management, reactionary and capitalist forces are automatically expelled from the field of action of the workers' movement. In fact, capital could never manage a struggle led by the workers autonomously, the instruments usually employed (parties and unions) would become useless in such a situation.

11. The revolutionary project is based on the existing relationship between producer and product. In this relationship other elements exist which affirm and modify it at the same time without transforming it radically. Clearly this relationship must be egalitarian, that is each according to his needs

and from each according to his possibilities. It must be organised from the base, otherwise it will not be egalitarian. And it must be simple and elementary, that is it must spread to the abolition of the market mechanism which deforms needs as well as the economic aspect of production.

With self-management of the struggle organised from the base in small nuclei of workers at the level of production attacking the centres of exploitation, a movement of cohesion for a development of the conflict through the conquest of information could reach the definitive expropriation of capital, i.e. the revolution.

The self-management and independence of organisms of struggle means at the same time independence of the organisation of production. It is impossible to make a difference between the two.

12. The prospect of self-management must be built carefully today, avoiding all the errors inherent in a separation between self-management of the struggle and self-management of production. The first to be interested in this separation are precisely the capitalists. If self-management of the struggle is separated from its logical consequences (self-management of production) the conscious minority of the proletariat become tired and disheartened. It leaves them in a confrontation with no outlet and drives them to remain in the 'comfortable' perspective suggested by the parties and unions. Separating self-management of production from its logical premise (self-management of the struggle), another important result is obtained for capital — emptying self-management of its revolutionary meaning, increasing production and profits, safeguarding institutions, and having the working class once again in the hands of the parties and unions.

Unity of the workers in the autonomy of the struggle, unity in the perspective of self-management, unity in the process of revolution and production. These are, in our opinion, the essential points of a correct analysis of self-management.

What are anarchists

Who do anarchists struggle against

- Against the State seen as the centralised organisation of power in all spheres (administrative, financial, political, military, etc.)
- Against government which is the political executive organ of the State and makes all decisions concerning repression, exploitation, control, etc.
- Against Capitalism which can be considered both as the flux of productive relations in course and individual capitalists, their activity, their projects and their complicity in this form
- Against the individual parts that the State and capital are divided into. In other words the police, judiciary, the army, school, newspapers, television, trade unions, the large multinational firms, etc.
- Against the family, which forms the essential nucleus upon which the State structure is based
- Against the world of politics, therefore against political parties (all of them), Parliament which is the expression of bourgeois democracy, and the political ideology which serves to mask real social problems
- Against fascists and all the other instruments of repression used by the State and Capital
- Against religion and the Church which constitute a potent ally to repression
- Against the army which is an armed force that is used against the people
- Against prisons which institutionalise the repression of the poorest of the exploited classes
- Against asylums which repress the different

What false ideas do anarchists struggle against

- Against reformism which wants to set social problems right by using laws, political parties, parliaments, referendums, votes, etc.
- Against efficientism which wants to reduce man to an automat always capable of working and obeying
- Against humanitarianism which calls for peace and safety of an abstract idea of man but does not act concretely to attack class enemies

- Against nonviolence which blocks the just violence of the exploited which is their only arm of liberation
- Against patriotism which feeds the absurd idea of the homeland in preference to other nations, whereas the exploited have no homeland but are brothers of the exploited of the whole world
- Against militarism which justifies the function of armies with the swindle that their role is the defence of the homeland
- Against racism which defines a part of the human race as inferior
- Against male chauvinism which reduces women to sex objects
- Against feminism which closes itself within an asphyxiating inverted male chauvinism
- Against the delegate which separates the exploited from direct action
- Against hierarchy which educates towards social stratification
- Against obedience which represses all individuality
- Against authority which prevents the autonomous development of the individual
- Against progressivism, a modern version of evolutionism which is the ideological covering of reformism
- Against economism which puts the economics at the centre of the history of class exploitation
- Against trade unionism which is the direct product of economism and which means to limit the class struggle to claiming at the level of the workplace. Anarcho-syndicalism, with all its revolutionary declarations does not escape this reformist limitation

What anarchists want

- Abolition of the State, Government, Capitalism, the family, religion, the army, prisons, asylums and every form of power which uses the law to force others to do something. Therefore refusal also of any kind of workers' or socialist State and of any form of dictatorship of the proletariat
- Elimination of the private property of land, the tools of labour, materials, machines, factories, the land and anything else required for the production of what is necessary in order to live
- Abolition of salaried work and reduction of work to a minimum organised by individual groups federated on the basis of their own aptitudes and sympathies as well as on the basis of their own needs
- Substitution of the traditional family with life in common based on love and reciprocal affinity and on the basis of real sexual equality

- Organisation of life, such as that of production, based on free associations differing according to the problems to be faced, interests to be defended and affinities to be developed. The whole of these organisations federated on a local basis, by groups of communes, then widening the relations to a larger federation until it reaches the maximum possible of the liberated areas of the revolution
- Education free and aimed at an awakening of individual aptitude which in a liberated society will be meaningful only in the limits in which this liberation is realised
- The spreading of atheism and anti-religious propaganda, always necessary because on these problems even the liberation that has come about cannot exercise more than a limited clarification
- Completion of the social revolution until all domination of man over man be abolished.

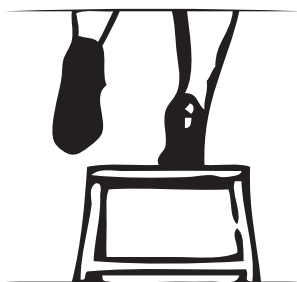
The means anarchists want to use

- The specific anarchist organisation which is an active minority of conscious individuals who share personal and political affinity and give themselves the aim of calling on the exploited to organise themselves with a view to revolution.
- A federation of different anarchist groups who while changing nothing of their particular specific structure, link with each other with informal, federative pacts in order to better coordinate their own action
- Propaganda to explain through books, pamphlets, newspapers, leaflets, graffiti, etc. what the intentions of the ruling structure are and the dangers facing the exploited. Also to supply indications of the anarchist struggle and show who anarchists are, or to urge the exploited to rebel, denouncing the consequences of obedience and resignation
- The struggle to claim better conditions — Although we are not reformists, the struggle to obtain improvements in one's immediate situation (wages, habitation, health, education, occupational, etc.) sees anarchists present although they do not see these moments as ends in themselves. They push the exploited towards this form of struggle so that they can develop the elements of self-organisation and refusal of the delegate which are indispensable in order to develop direct action at all other levels
- Violent struggle to realise the social revolution along with the exploited. The attack against the class enemy (State, government, capital, church, etc.) must necessarily be violent, in the case of the contrary it would only be a sterile protest and would determine a reinforcement of class dominion. This attack could be:
 - a. isolated attacks against individual structures or people who are responsible for repression
 - b. an insurrectional attack by a specific minority
 - c. a mass insurrectional attack

d. a mass revolutionary attack

Each of these levels, starting from the first, may or may not create the conditions leading to the successive one to develop. Political and economic analyses can foresee this possibility within certain limits, but cannot give an absolute response: action itself is the only test for action. The moral foundation of violent struggle already exists in the fact of repression as it has been exercised by power for centuries.

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Alfredo M. Bonanno
Revolution, Violence, Anti-authoritarianism — A few notes
1974–1984

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'*Dibattito sull'autogestione*', *Movimento e progetto rivoluzionario*, Catania 1977, pp. 162–168.

Translated by Jean Weir

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The Principles of Anarchism

Lucy E. Parsons

1905

Comrades and Friends:

I think I cannot open my address more appropriately than by stating my experience in my long connection with the reform movement.

It was during the great railroad strike of 1877 that I first became interested in what is known as the "Labor Question." I then thought as many thousands of earnest, sincere people think, that the aggregate power, operating in human society, known as government, could be made an instrument in the hands of the oppressed to alleviate their sufferings. But a closer study of the origin, history and tendency of governments, convinced me that this was a mistake.

I came to understand how organized governments used their concentrated power to retard progress by their ever-ready means of silencing the voice of discontent if raised in vigorous protest against the machinations of the scheming few, who always did, always will and always must rule in the councils of nations where majority rule is recognized as the only means of adjusting the affairs of the people.

I came to understand that such concentrated power can be always wielded in the interest of the few and at the expense of the many. Government in its last analysis is this power reduced to a science. Governments never lead; they follow progress. When the prison, stake or scaffold can no longer silence the voice of the protesting minority, progress moves on a step, but not until then.

I will state this contention in another way: I learned by close study that it made no difference what fair promises a political party, out of power might make to the people in order to secure their confidence, when once securely established in control of the affairs of society that they were after all but human with all the human attributes of the politician. Among these are: First, to remain in power at all hazards; if not individually, then those holding essentially the same views as the administration must be kept in control. Second, in order to keep in power, it is necessary to build up a powerful machine; one strong enough to crush all opposition and silence all vigorous murmurs of discontent, or the party machine might be smashed and the party thereby lose control.

When I came to realize the faults, failings, shortcomings, aspirations and ambitions of fallible man, I concluded that it would not be the safest nor best policy for society, as a whole, to entrust the management of all its affairs, with all their manifold deviations and ramifications in the hands of finite man, to be managed by the party which happened to come into power, and therefore was the majority party, nor did it then, nor does it now make one particle of difference to me what a party, out of power may promise; it does not tend to allay my fears of a party, when entrenched and securely

seated in power might do to crush opposition, and silence the voice of the minority, and thus retard the onward step of progress.

My mind is appalled at the thought of a political party having control of all the details that go to make up the sum total of our lives. Think of it for an instant, that the party in power shall have all authority to dictate the kind of books that shall be used in our schools and universities, government officials editing, printing, and circulating our literature, histories, magazines and press, to say nothing of the thousand and one activities of life that a people engage in, in a civilized society.

To my mind, the struggle for liberty is too great and the few steps we have gained have been won at too great a sacrifice, for the great mass of the people of this 20th century to consent to turn over to any political party the management of our social and industrial affairs. For all who are at all familiar with history know that men will abuse power when they possess it. For these and other reasons, I, after careful study, and not through sentiment, turned from a sincere, earnest, political Socialist to the non-political phase of Socialism — Anarchism — because in its philosophy I believe I can find the proper conditions for the fullest development of the individual units in society, which can never be the case under government restrictions.

The philosophy of anarchism is included in the word “Liberty,” yet it is comprehensive enough to include all things else that are conducive to progress. No barriers whatever to human progression, to thought, or investigation are placed by anarchism; nothing is considered so true or so certain, that future discoveries may not prove it false; therefore, it has but one infallible, unchangeable motto, “Freedom”: Freedom to discover any truth, freedom to develop, to live naturally and fully. Other schools of thought are composed of crystallized ideas — principles that are caught and impaled between the planks of long platforms, and considered too sacred to be disturbed by a close investigation. In all other “issues” there is always a limit; some imaginary boundary line beyond which the searching mind dare not penetrate, lest some pet idea melt into a myth. But anarchism is the usher of science — the master of ceremonies to all forms of truth. It would remove all barriers between the human being and natural development. From the natural resources of the earth, all artificial restrictions, that the body might be nurtured, and from universal truth, all bars of prejudice and superstition, that the mind may develop symmetrically.

Anarchists know that a long period of education must precede any great fundamental change in society, hence they do not believe in vote begging, nor political campaigns, but rather in the development of self-thinking individuals.

We look away from government for relief, because we know that force (legalized) invades the personal liberty of man, seizes upon the natural elements and intervenes between man and natural laws; from this exercise of force through governments flows nearly all the misery, poverty, crime and confusion existing in society.

So, we perceive, there are actual, material barriers blockading the way. These must be removed. If we could hope they would melt away, or be voted or prayed into nothingness, we would be content to wait and vote and pray. But they are like great frowning rocks towering between us and a land of freedom, while the dark chasms of a hard-fought past yawn behind us. Crumbling they may be with their own weight and the decay of time, but to quietly stand under until they fall is to be buried in the crash. There is something to be done in a case like this — the rocks must be removed. Passivity while slavery is stealing over us is a crime. For the moment we must forget that we are anarchists — when the work is accomplished we may forget that we were revolutionists — hence most anarchists believe the coming change can only come through a revolution, because the possessing class will not

allow a peaceful change to take place; still we are willing to work for peace at any price, except at the price of liberty.

And what of the glowing beyond that is so bright that those who grind the faces of the poor say it is a dream? It is no dream, it is the real, stripped of brain-distortions materialized into thrones and scaffolds, mitres and guns. It is nature acting on her own interior laws as in all her other associations. It is a return to first principles; for were not the land, the water, the light, all free before governments took shape and form? In this free state we will again forget to think of these things as “property.” It is real, for we, as a race, are growing up to it. The idea of less restriction and more liberty, and a confiding trust that nature is equal to her work, is permeating all modern thought. From the dark year — not so long gone by — when it was generally believed that man’s soul was totally depraved and every human impulse bad; when every action, every thought and every emotion was controlled and restricted; when the human frame, diseased, was bled, dosed, suffocated and kept as far from nature’s remedies as possible; when the mind was seized upon and distorted before it had time to evolve a natural thought — from those days to these years the progress of this idea has been swift and steady. It is becoming more and more apparent that in every way we are “governed best where we are governed least.”

Still unsatisfied perhaps, the inquirer seeks for details, for ways and means, and whys and wherefores. How ill we go on like human beings eating and sleeping, working and loving, exchanging and dealing, without government? So used have we become to “organized authority” in every department of life that ordinarily we cannot conceive of the most common-place avocations being carried on without their interference and “protection.” But anarchism is not compelled to outline a complete organization of a free society. To do so with any assumption of authority would be to place another barrier in the way of coming generations. The best thought of today may become the useless vagary of tomorrow, and to crystallize it into a creed is to make it unwieldy.

We judge from experience that man is a gregarious animal, and instinctively affiliates with his kind co-operates, unites in groups, works to better advantage, combined with his fellow men than when alone. This would point to the formation of co-operative communities, of which our present trade-unions are embryonic patterns. Each branch of industry will no doubt have its own organization, regulations, leaders, etc.; it will institute methods of direct communications with every member of that industrial branch in the world, and establish equitable relations with all other branches. There would probably be conventions of industry which delegates would attend, and where they would transact such business as was necessary, adjourn and from that moment be delegates no longer, but simply members of a group. To remain permanent members of a continuous congress would be to establish a power that is certain soon or later to be abused.

No great, central power, like a congress consisting of men who know nothing of their constituents’ trades, interests, rights or duties, would be over the various organizations or groups; nor would they employ sheriffs, policemen, courts or jailers to enforce the conclusions arrived at while in session. The members of groups might profit by the knowledge gained through mutual interchange of thought afforded by conventions if they choose, but they will not be compelled to do so by any outside force.

Vested rights, privileges, charters, title deeds, upheld by all the paraphernalia of government — the visible symbol of power — such as prison, scaffold and armies will have no existence. There can be no privileges bought or sold, and the transaction kept sacred at the point of the bayonet. Every man will stand on an equal footing with his brother in the race of life, and neither chains of economic thralldom nor metal drags of superstition shall handicap the one to the advantage of the other.

Property will lose a certain attribute which sanctifies it now. The absolute ownership of it — “the right to use or abuse” — will be abolished, and possession, use, will be the only title. It will be seen how impossible it would be for one person to “own” a million acres of land, without a title deed, backed by a government ready to protect the title at all hazards, even to the loss of thousands of lives. He could not use the million acres himself, nor could he wrest from its depths the possible resources it contains.

People have become so used to seeing the evidences of authority on every hand that most of them honestly believe that they would go utterly to the bad if it were not for the policeman’s club or the soldier’s bayonet. But the anarchist says, “Remove these evidence of brute force, and let man feel the revivifying influences of self responsibility and self control, and see how we will respond to these better influences.”

The belief in a literal place of torment has nearly melted away; and instead of the direful results predicted, we have a higher and truer standard of manhood and womanhood. People do not care to go to the bad when they find they can as well as not. Individuals are unconscious of their own motives in doing good. While acting out their natures according to their surroundings and conditions, they still believe they are being kept in the right path by some outside power, some restraint thrown around them by church or state. So the objector believes that with the right to rebel and secede, sacred to him, he would forever be rebelling and seceding, thereby creating constant confusion and turmoil. Is it probable that he would, merely for the reason that he could do so? Men are to a great extent creatures of habit, and grow to love associations; under reasonably good conditions, he would remain where he commences, if he wished to, and, if he did not, who has any natural right to force him into relations distasteful to him? Under the present order of affairs, persons do unite with societies and remain good, disinterested members for life, where the right to retire is always conceded.

What we anarchists contend for is a larger opportunity to develop the units in society, that mankind may possess the right as a sound being to develop that which is broadest, noblest, highest and best, unhandicapped by any centralized authority, where he shall have to wait for his permits to be signed, sealed, approved and handed down to him before he can engage in the active pursuits of life with his fellow being. We know that after all, as we grow more enlightened under this larger liberty, we will grow to care less and less for that exact distribution of material wealth, which, in our greed-nurtured senses, seems now so impossible to think upon carelessly. The man and woman of loftier intellects, in the present, think not so much of the riches to be gained by their efforts as of the good they can do for their fellow creatures.

There is an innate spring of healthy action in every human being who has not been crushed and pinched by poverty and drudgery from before his birth, that impels him onward and upward. He cannot be idle, if he would; it is as natural for him to develop, expand, and use the powers within him when no repressed, as it is for the rose to bloom in the sunlight and fling its fragrance on the passing breeze.

The grandest works of the past were never performed for the sake of money. Who can measure the worth of a Shakespeare, an Angelo or Beethoven in dollars and cents? Agassiz said, “he had no time to make money,” there were higher and better objects in life than that. And so will it be when humanity is once relieved from the pressing fear of starvation, want, and slavery, it will be concerned, less and less, about the ownership of vast accumulations of wealth. Such possessions would be but an annoyance and trouble. When two or three or four hours a day of easy, of healthful labor will produce all the comforts and luxuries one can use, and the opportunity to labor is never denied, people will become indifferent as to who owns the wealth they do not need. Wealth will be below par, and it will

be found that men and women will not accept it for pay, or be bribed by it to do what they would not willingly and naturally do without it. Some higher incentive must, and will, supersede the greed for gold. The involuntary aspiration born in man to make the most of one's self, to be loved and appreciated by one's fellow-beings, to "make the world better for having lived in it," will urge him on the nobler deeds than ever the sordid and selfish incentive of material gain has done.

If, in the present chaotic and shameful struggle for existence, when organized society offers a premium on greed, cruelty, and deceit, men can be found who stand aloof and almost alone in their determination to work for good rather than gold, who suffer want and persecution rather than desert principle, who can bravely walk to the scaffold for the good they can do humanity, what may we expect from men when freed from the grinding necessity of selling the better part of themselves for bread? The terrible conditions under which labor is performed, the awful alternative if one does not prostitute talent and morals in the service of mammon; and the power acquired with the wealth obtained by ever so unjust means, combined to make the conception of free and voluntary labor almost an impossible one. And yet, there are examples of this principle even now. In a well bred family each person has certain duties, which are performed cheerfully, and are not measured out and paid for according to some pre-determined standard; when the united members sit down to the well-filled table, the stronger do not scramble to get the most, while the weakest do without, or gather greedily around them more food than they can possibly consume. Each patiently and politely awaits his turn to be served, and leaves what he does not want; he is certain that when again hungry plenty of good food will be provided. This principle can be extended to include all society, when people are civilized enough to wish it.

Again, the utter impossibility of awarding to each an exact return for the amount of labor performed will render absolute communism a necessity sooner or later. The land and all it contains, without which labor cannot be exerted, belong to no one man, but to all alike. The inventions and discoveries of the past are the common inheritance of the coming generations; and when a man takes the tree that nature furnished free, and fashions it into a useful article, or a machine perfected and bequeathed to him by many past generations, who is to determine what proportion is his and his alone? Primitive man would have been a week fashioning a rude resemblance to the article with his clumsy tools, where the modern worker has occupied an hour. The finished article is of far more real value than the rude one made long ago, and yet the primitive man toiled the longest and hardest. Who can determine with exact justice what is each one's due? There must come a time when we will cease trying. The earth is so bountiful, so generous; man's brain is so active, his hands so restless, that wealth will spring like magic, ready for the use of the world's inhabitants. We will become as much ashamed to quarrel over its possession as we are now to squabble over the food spread before us on a loaded table. "But all this," the objector urges, "is very beautiful in the far off future, when we become angels. It would not do now to abolish governments and legal restraints; people are not prepared for it."

This is a question. We have seen, in reading history, that wherever an old-time restriction has been removed the people have not abused their newer liberty. Once it was considered necessary to compel men to save their souls, with the aid of governmental scaffolds, church racks and stakes. Until the foundation of the American republic it was considered absolutely essential that governments should second the efforts of the church in forcing people to attend the means of grace; and yet it is found that the standard of morals among the masses is raised since they are left free to pray as they see fit, or not at all, if they prefer it. It was believed the chattel slaves would not work if the overseer and whip were removed; they are so much more a source of profit now that ex-slave owners would not return to the old system if they could.

So many able writers have shown that the unjust institutions which work so much misery and suffering to the masses have their root in governments, and owe their whole existence to the power derived from government we cannot help but believe that were every law, every title deed, every court, and every police officer or soldier abolished tomorrow with one sweep, we would be better off than now. The actual, material things that man needs would still exist; his strength and skill would remain and his instinctive social inclinations retain their force and the resources of life made free to all the people that they would need no force but that of society and the opinion of fellow beings to keep them moral and upright.

Freed from the systems that made him wretched before, he is not likely to make himself more wretched for lack of them. Much more is contained in the thought that conditions make man what he is, and not the laws and penalties made for his guidance, than is supposed by careless observation. We have laws, jails, courts, armies, guns and armories enough to make saints of us all, if they were the true preventives of crime; but we know they do not prevent crime; that wickedness and depravity exist in spite of them, nay, increase as the struggle between classes grows fiercer, wealth greater and more powerful and poverty more gaunt and desperate.

To the governing class the anarchists say: "Gentlemen, we ask no privilege, we propose no restriction; nor, on the other hand, will we permit it. We have no new shackles to propose, we seek emancipation from shackles. We ask no legislative sanction, for co-operation asks only for a free field and no favors; neither will we permit their interference."(?) It asserts that in freedom of the social unit lies the freedom of the social state. It asserts that in freedom to possess and utilize soil lie social happiness and progress and the death of rent. It asserts that order can only exist where liberty prevails, and that progress leads and never follows order. It asserts, finally, that this emancipation will inaugurate liberty, equality, fraternity. That the existing industrial system has outgrown its usefulness, if it ever had any is I believe admitted by all who have given serious thought to this phase of social conditions.

The manifestations of discontent now looming upon every side show that society is conducted on wrong principles and that something has got to be done soon or the wage class will sink into a slavery worse than was the feudal serf. I say to the wage class: Think clearly and act quickly, or you are lost. Strike not for a few cents more an hour, because the price of living will be raised faster still, but strike for all you earn, be content with nothing less.

Following are definitions which will appear in all of the new standard Dictionaries:

Anarchism

The philosophy of a new social order based on liberty unrestricted by man made law, the theory that all forms of government are based on violence — hence wrong and harmful, as well as unnecessary.

Anarchy

Absence of government; disbelief in and disregard of invasion and authority based on coercion and force; a condition of society regulated by voluntary agreement instead of government.

Anarchist

No. 1. A believer in Anarchism; one opposed to all forms of coercive government and invasive authority. 2. One who advocates Anarchy, or absence of government, as the ideal of political liberty and social harmony.

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Lucy E. Parsons
The Principles of Anarchism
1905

Retrieved on April 29, 2010 from www.lucyparsonspj.org
A lecture by Lucy Parsons; published in Ahrens, Gale (Ed.). 2004. *Lucy Parsons: Freedom, Equality and Solidarity*. Chicago: Charles H. Kerr.

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The Black Struggle

Fred Ho & Quincy Saul (2013: 81-100) eds.

Maroon The Implacable:
The Collected Writings of Russell
Maroon Shoatz.

PM Press . Oakland, CA.

A study of the various Black political organizations in the United States between the years of 1960–1994 will reveal a number of “fighting formations.” These formations were usually subdivisions or offshoots of larger organizations, which were not primarily envisioned as combat groups. This lack of original dedication to a “fighting mission” will go a long way in helping to explain their strengths, weaknesses, and potentials.

Not included in this study are the nonpolitical Black fighting formations found among the street gangs or those dedicated to criminal activity. However, mention will be made of them in regard to the loss of potential that Black political fighting formations originally had.

We must look to Sun Tzu (ca. fifth century BC) and Karl Von Clausewitz (nineteenth century AD) for the most concise writings on the philosophy of warfare, the ultimate reasons for engaging in it and the main dynamics controlling its many variables. *The Art of War* (Sun Tzu) and *On War* (Von Clausewitz), are mentioned by military practitioners around the world as two of the best, tried and true, volumes available on the subject. There have been many outstanding military practitioners of African descent as well: Thutmose III (the first imperial conqueror), Ramses II and Ramses III (consistent subduers of the barbarian and savage hordes of Europe and Asia), Queens Nzinga and (the) Candace(s) of Angola and Ethiopia, Shaka Zulu (warrior par-excellence), and Toussaint L'Ouverture and Antonio Maceo (who out-led and out-fought vastly superior European armies in Haiti and Cuba). Finally, we must add the outstanding guerrilla leaders among the maroons and the African anti-colonial fighters. Although guerrilla warfare is often sufficient, it must be kept in mind that “guerrilla warfare” is only a subdivision of and sometimes a forerunner to “total war.” Despite the successes of these African warriors there is very little written work available about them and thus we must rely on the work of Sun Tzu and Karl Von Clausewitz.

Sun Tzu, in his *The Art of War*, instructs: “War is a matter of vital importance to the state. [It is] the province of life and death, [and] the

road to survival or ruin. It is mandatory that it be thoroughly studied.”¹ In *On War*, Karl Von Clausewitz states: “War is an extension of politics, politics by different means.”² Both of these authors demonstrate the connection between politics and warfare and the relative importance of both. (“Politics” here is simply the science and art of governing people.) It follows that those who are involved in shaping political affairs must recognize that they will, at some point, be required to pursue their political objectives “by different means” (Von Clausewitz) as “the road to survival or ruin” (Sun Tzu): warfare!

For the revolutionary, warfare cannot be a haphazard or belated consideration, as ignoring these principles (nonviolent pacifism) will ultimately lead to total destruction.

Therefore, all of our Black political organizations should have had a military component right from the beginning. From their inception it would have been the mission of these military components to study and prepare for war. This presupposes that the political and military leadership is sagacious enough to discern both the long-range interests of their people and the potential conflicts that they will invariably encounter by pursuing these interests. In other words, our Black political organizations should have known, right from the beginning, that they had to build a military component capable of defending our people from the attacks they were undergoing as a result of working to free themselves from oppression. Sadly, this was not the case.

In order to understand better what must be done now we need to learn from the mistakes of the past. When 1960 dawned, there were no Black fighting formations with the exception of the Nation of Islam’s paramilitary wing known as the Fruit of Islam. This was formed largely in response to Malcolm X’s tireless efforts. However, the Fruit of Islam was completely dedicated to internal security and static defense of the Nation of Islam’s leadership and property. It was further hobbled (in

qualitative development) by the group’s unwillingness to become actively involved in the civil rights struggle, where most of the action was taking place. Members of the Fruit of Islam were not much better than department-store security guards, far removed from the reality of “total war.” Subsequent events would expose its weaknesses.

To its credit, however, the Fruit of Islam had perfected a method of recruiting, organizing, and training (to the extent that training was done) that is unparalleled to this day. The secret of its success rested on the fact that it concentrated its main recruiting efforts among the most downtrodden segments of the Black community: the drug addicts, prison inmates, prostitutes, and destitute poor. It took a great effort to recruit and organize these people, but once they were fully brought into the organization they became steadfast and loyal members of their new (psychological) family. By the time the Nation of Islam had “fished” them out of the mud, they had no other family that would stand by them, as they had burnt their bridges well. These recruits were kept under extremely close supervision and were always provided with the means to acquire food, clothing, shelter, security, and entertainment (which was usually social fellowship in religious trappings). The Fruit of Islam provided everything that a functioning family would provide its members.

The organization itself had a nationalist-sounding program but no grand strategy to achieve any of its ends. The first dictum of war, “war is a matter of vital importance to the state . . . and it is mandatory that it be thoroughly studied” (Sun Tzu) was not observed. This statement is not just a matter of opinion—events have proven this to be true. It does not take long to build military capability. Of course, the organization has not had a free ride, as it continues to fight the government’s infiltration and manipulation in addition to the petty jealousies and rivalries that exist among leaders. Nevertheless, it is clear that with a few exceptions, the Fruit of Islam has thus far missed the boat when it comes to being an important Black fighting formation.

The civil rights movement was launched in 1955 with the Montgomery bus boycott and quickly spread throughout the South. In addition to many

1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).

2 (New York: Viking Press, 1983).

local groupings, which in some cases had already been active in their communities, a number of other organizations began to emerge on the national scene by 1960: the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the Urban League, and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) had been around since the early 1900s. From 1955 to 1965, all of the major actions taking place in the Black freedom struggle occurred in the South, and the aforementioned organization led these struggles. Each of these organizations professed nonviolence as their strategy, but ultimately relied on someone else's armed force to protect them, usually that of the U.S. government (with disastrous results). These groups would call ahead to the FBI and alert them to their plans, requesting protection. The FBI, in turn, would contact members of the local police force, who were often card-carrying Ku Klux Klansmen, or it would contact their undercover agents/operatives in the Klan who would subsequently organize a shooting, burning, bombing, or killing. These organizations were violating every rule in the "art of war." Instead of observing the rule "destroy your enemy and preserve yourself," they were actually aiding their enemy in their own destruction. This exact pattern was repeated, to one degree or another, when the government provided U.S. Marshals or federal troops. Despite this short-sighted, cowardly, and disastrous strategy, because of the heroic sacrifices made by the rank-and-file (largely Black men, women, and children) a number of changes were forced through during this period of time. And these groups did, albeit belatedly, give rise to a few armed fighting subdivisions and offshoots.

The Monroe County, North Carolina NAACP branch was headed by a Black man named Robert F. Williams who saw early on that his chapter of the NAACP would suffer countless casualties and could not survive unless they got rid of the nonviolent approach and adopted an armed self-defense strategy. This brother strongly advocated that all Blacks in the United States should adopt armed self-defense.

Williams walked his talk as his Monroe Country NAACP branch was both armed and trained. Because of this, its members survived a number

of shootouts with the local KKK (citizens and police). Unfortunately, he could not affect any widespread acceptance of his methods and his chapter was therefore isolated. After a so-called kidnapping of some white people, he was forced to leave the country.³ He continued his work while in exile by traveling throughout Africa and visiting China in an attempt to raise support for the struggle in the United States. He became a nationalist and published a paper called *The Liberator* in which he advocated the overthrow of the United States through guerrilla warfare. After a number of years, he was able to return to the United States as head of the revolutionary group, Republic of New Africa (RNA). He avoided prison, as RNA was able to expose and squash the trumped-up kidnapping charge.

At the same time, an organization called "Deacons for Defense and Justice" was formed in both rural Alabama and Mississippi. Unlike Williams's Monroe County chapter, the Deacons for Defense and Justice was not a subdivision of the NAACP. Rather, it was an offshoot, and therefore autonomous, from the national nonviolent leadership. The Deacons recruited, organized, and trained solely from this perspective. Because of this, they were more sophisticated than any other part-time militant Black organization during the civil rights struggle. For instance, the Deacons provided a tightly organized security and communications net around some of the most important civil rights marches. While the civil rights groups provided their posted marshals with armbands, the Deacons had roving patrols armed with automatic rifles. After a few skirmishes and firefights with Klan and Night Riders (part-time Klan who were afraid to show their faces during the day), they gave the Deacons a wide berth. Ultimately, however, the Deacons had a circumscribed potential for growth due to the civil rights movement's overall strategy of reliance on the U.S. government for protection.

3 Editors' note: The details about this complex and unfortunate frame-up cannot be detailed in full here. Readers are encouraged to investigate this further in the *Robert and Mabel Williams Resource Guide* (San Francisco: Freedom Archives, 2005) and in *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power* by Timothy B. Tyson (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

Rural Mississippi had also made believers out of the young SNCC cadre. SNCC had started its "Mississippi Freedom Summer" campaign in 1964 as nonviolent activists. After experiencing the death of several of their comrades and supporters and the raw terror that the police and Klan/Night Riders inspired, all of the SNCC cadre had armed themselves by the time they left Mississippi. SNCC leader H. Rap Brown was arrested when a rifle and banana clips were found in his luggage after a flight from Mississippi. SNCC eventually changed its name to the "Student National Coordinating Committee," dropping the "Nonviolent" description. Yet it was too little, too late, as the momentum was already shifting to the cities of the North and the West. SNCC's last effort in 1965 was to organize the Lowndes County Freedom Organization, whose emblem was a black panther (with no direct association to the Black Panther Party founded in October 1966). The Lowndes County Freedom Organization adopted armed self-defense from the beginning. Although they experimented with the slogan "Black Power," they did not make any far-reaching progress, as their political goal was still "civil rights."

The 1965 Watts rebellion in California was the signal that the momentum in the Black struggle was shifting to the cities. Within two years, a number of rebellions occurred in other major cities and small towns. This was a qualitatively different situation. Rather than peaceful demonstrators seeking to acquire "civil rights," these events were massive and widespread rebellions (Watts: thirty-four dead; New York, Philadelphia, Birmingham, and Newark: twenty-six dead; Detroit: forty-three dead. And in each case there were hundreds wounded, with massive property damage). The keen political observer could not miss the parallels between these rebellions and those that had preceded revolutions and armed struggles in other countries. But guess what was missing from this equation? No urban-based Black political groups had armed components.⁴ There were no Black fighting formations to organize, control, and direct these rebellions. The

Fruit of Islam was clearly not up to the job because they had not been able to properly respond to the killings and shootings of their members by the local police. Nor could the rural-based groups lend any support, as they were still involved in life-and-death struggles with the Klan and southern police. SNCC made a half-hearted attempt to transfer their operations to urban areas. However, besides H. Rap Brown and a few others, it seemed that after their southern experience SNCC was scared off.

The urban rebellions brought forth scores of new political formations and these formations generally adhered theoretically to the idea of armed self-defense. Along with this shift in tactics came the new nationalist (sounding) politics, which were usually of a separatist bent—although the rediscovery of pan-Africanism began to occur as well. Unfortunately these new formations adopted the "high profile" strategy of the civil rights movement, which brought excessive media coverage. In reality, these organizations were no longer part of the civil rights movement and were now involved in the "Black liberation struggle." The civil rights people needed this type of exposure to get their message across and to help protect them against the most flagrant abuses. The Black liberation struggle, however, demanded a more clandestine way of handling affairs. It had to prepare for a guerrilla war and to take on this preparation in secret.

This fact was lost on the new, younger organizations. They were impressed by Malcolm X and the fiery orators but did not realize that Malcolm X had served as a motivator and educator. They did not understand that they were embarking on a new phase that demanded quiet, patient organizing and training. The tens of thousands of potential recruits were already showing, through the massive rebellions, that they were already sufficiently stimulated and were waiting for someone to show them how to get the job done. ("Rattling a sword makes a lot of noise . . . drawing one is silent.") There was still a good deal of agitation, propaganda, and education that needed to be done, but not by those who saw their mission as forming Black fighting formations. This mistake was usually made because these groups tried to combine the activities of the military and political workers in the same cadre. They did not realize that

⁴ *National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, Report of the NACCD*, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1968, 19–21.

the situation demanded specialization: both political workers (motivators, educators, marchers, etc.) and military workers (armed self-defense and assault units). The Deacons had had it right!

An outstanding practitioner of this new form of resistance was the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM) which began an intensive organizing campaign in the Northeastern states in 1966 and 1967. Much of its activity was centered in Philadelphia. RAM was militant, nationalist, and high profile. Its cadre spray-painted "Join the Black Guard" slogan on walls in the communities. (The Black Guard was their public military arm). RAM's leaders were in front of the cameras on all the important issues and the Black Guard cadre could often be seen at their "cultural centers," wearing fatigues and black berets. The sisters and brothers in RAM's youth group, "The Liberators," dressed in black with black berets. These activities helped members of the Black community feel good and believe that revolution was right around the corner. (Ironically, no one in Philadelphia had heard of the similar group, which began in California, known as the Black Panther Party for Defense and Justice.) RAM's activity scared white folks, especially because some members of RAM went out of their way to ensure this. They reasoned that they had been kept down long enough and it was time to strike back!

Unfortunately in 1967 the white establishment struck back too, and over a period of months H. Rap Brown and other leaders and key cadre were arrested. While RAM advocated self-defense and owned weapons, its members did not carry them in public. Consequently, they were arrested for everything from jaywalking to conspiring to put cyanide in police department rations at a major holiday celebration.⁵ RAM had not fired a shot, however some alleged members and supporters were arrested bringing dynamite back from Canada (allegedly to blow up the Statue of Liberty!).

5 Maxwell C. Stanford/Akbar Muhammad Ahmed, "Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM): A Case Study of an Urban Revolutionary Movement," Master's Thesis, Atlanta: Atlanta University, 1986.

These arrests crippled RAM and the organization never regained its former vitality. Its leaders and cadres were forced to deal with the trumped-up charges for years afterward. RAM was not the only group facing this scenario, as it was also played out in Black communities around the country. In fact, the FBI—the original coordinators of this attack on RAM—transmitted its results to police forces throughout the country. The government's success in carrying out this campaign resulted from the fact that all of these groups were inexperienced. They were never given the time to get grounded after they publicly demonstrated their militancy. These Black fighting formations never had the chance to fight and many of their members became discouraged after such experiences, turning to crime and/or drugs.

The situation with the Black Panther Party for Defense and Justice (BPP) was somewhat different. This group, founded 1966 in Oakland, followed the same pattern as RAM, but it had an advantage. There was a clause in the California State law that allowed citizens to carry arms in public as long as they were not loaded. The BPP took full advantage of this clause in order to brandish weapons wherever they went. At that time, this seemed to be the height of militancy and they received more attention than any other group from the community, media, and police. Despite this attention, they could not be dealt with as easily as RAM because RAM always carried loaded weapons. After a few confrontations with the police it became apparent that the police could not bluff or intimidate these young Blacks. Because of this, BPP members were provoked into gun battles with the police and, within a year, cofounder Huey Newton had been shot and was imprisoned for killing the cop who shot him. "Little" Bobby Hutton was the first BPP member to be killed after two carloads of Panthers were ambushed by the police. Others were wounded and jailed. Bobby Seale, the other cofounder, had been jailed for marching into the state capital with other Panthers to protest a new law which prohibited carrying guns in public. The top three leaders, Newton, Seale, and Eldridge Cleaver (who was captured after the shootout with the police in which Hutton was killed) were all in prison, along with other key leaders and cadre.

There was a positive side to all of this, however—membership in the BPP skyrocketed! Chapters were formed up and down the West Coast, in the Midwest, Northeast, and South. The BPP became a magnet that attracted most of the smaller local organizations which were of a similar mindset. Additionally, the assassination of Martin Luther King in 1968 inspired even greater numbers to join. At this time the BPP was not carrying guns in public and yet the police onslaught continued. BPP offices and homes of Panthers were raided from coast to coast. Police agents infiltrated their ranks, provoked deadly confrontations with local police, and instigated rivalries with other Black organizations. BPP members were actually hunting and killing each other because of these agent-provocateurs. The Panthers were a potentially strong Black fighting formation but they were forced to take to the streets before they were ready. (“The field of battle is a land of standing corpses.”) Panthers were dying in the streets, in raids, and in prison (Soledad, San Quentin, Attica, and Atmore-Holman to name but a few). It was a “war to the knife!”⁶

The Panthers were not the only Black fighting formation. There were other revolutionaries and “free shooters” who were every bit as committed, armed, and involved in the Black liberation struggle. Examples of these others include:

Fred Ahmad Evans and his squad of Black guerrillas who were able to trap the Cleveland, Ohio, police in a deadly ambush in which a number of police were wounded and killed. Some guerrillas were unfortunately killed as well and others were wounded, while Evans was imprisoned. He later died in prison. In response to the ambush the police demanded more men and guns and displayed a .50 caliber heavy machine gun that had raked their squad cars.

Mark Essex, a “free shooter,” held off an army of police atop a high-rise hotel in Louisiana and inflicted many casualties. A helicopter gunship had to be called in to kill him.

Jonathan Jackson, who walked into a courtroom in San Rafael, CA, and pulled out a submachine gun from his duffel bag, disarmed all of the sheriffs (and gave pistols and shotguns to James McClain, William Christmas, and Ruchell Cinque Magee, who were comrades of his brother George Jackson). They rounded up the white judge, district attorney, and a number of jurors as hostages. After forcing their way past the rest of the sheriffs and other police, their get-away van was riddled with bullets, killing Jackson, McClain, and Christmas. Magee was wounded but survived. Before they died, they shot the judge in the head with the shotgun they had taped under his chin. The DA and a juror were also shot, but survived. Jonathan Jackson’s brother George was a field marshal in the BPP and was killed the following year in San Quentin, although not before he was able to kill three prison guards and two inmate snitches. As it turned out, all of these brothers were set up by agent-provocateur Louis Tackwood, who had married one of their sisters!⁷

The revolutionary Republic of New Africa (RNA) that Robert F. Williams once headed, gunned down a number of Detroit police after they tried to storm a meeting RNA’s leaders were holding out in a church. A few years later they killed a sheriff after their headquarters was raided in Jackson, Mississippi. That raid sent their entire leadership to prison.⁸

“Free shooters” killed police in sniper attacks in projects in Philadelphia, Chicago, St. Louis, and New Orleans.

H. Rap Brown became a fugitive after a bomb in his comrade’s car went off outside of a court building. A year or so later he was wounded and captured after a gun battle between his “liberators” from East St. Louis and the police in New York City. A number of the liberators were captured.

7 See Gregory Armstrong, *The Dragon Has Come* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), and Paul Liberator, *The Road to Hell* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1996).

8 See: Imari Abubakari Ohadele/Milton Henry, *Free the Land!* (Washington, DC: House of Songhay, 1984.)

6 George Jackson, *Blood in My Eye* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1990).

Police were being attacked while they sat in their cars or directed traffic. It was war: There were sisters and brothers hijacking passenger jets to Cuba and Algeria, where the BPP had a branch of fugitives headed by Cleaver. (Cleaver had left the country to avoid going back to prison for the Little Bobby Hutton shootout.) All of this was very sobering for BPP members. The early flash and profile was giving way to a desperate search to find a way to regain the initiative and plug the security gaps. Finally, it was decided that what was needed was an autonomous strike force that could handle all of the armed actions while the rest of the BPP would keep up and expand the community programs, such as free breakfast, education, sickle-cell testing, clothing drives, and so forth. In reality, it was again too little, too late.

Most of the mistrust had been instigated by the actions of the agents and their handlers (FBI, police). This was only possible because the youthful leadership had no firm understanding of intelligence and counterintelligence activities or how to combat them. More importantly, they did not have a firm grip on *The Art of War*, which included instructions on how to deal with all that troubled them. Unfortunately there was no turning back. Orders went out to the field marshals to begin organizing a separate guerrilla group known as the "Black Liberation Army."

A very important piece was missed at this point and that was the recruitment of the street gangs. The BPP had only made a half-hearted attempt to reach them and a lack of experience hindered that effort. The fact of the matter is that the street gangs were only susceptible to a program that included fighting as its main component. The street gangs told the old BPP, who wanted cadres who were both political and military workers, "Come back when you're ready to fight." Now the time for fighting had come, but in its haste to begin this new phase, the BPP ignored the gangs again. It must be recognized that events were happening at such a rapid and desperate pace that it was hard to do anything but proceed full steam ahead. Nevertheless, a little foresight would have indicated that there were benefits to thinking a strategy through in a more developed manner.

A major stumbling block in the launching of this new phase was the growing unrest among the rank-and-file because of the leadership's belated effort to deal with these problems. Despite this, the "new phase" was launched with the BPP cadres studying texts on guerrilla warfare, refusing to be arrested for any reason, and launching planned attacks on various targets. In New York City, a gun battle broke out between the police and BPP members after an attempted arrest for carrying concealed weapons. When the smoke had cleared, a cop was dead along with BPP member Harold Russell. Two other BPP members, Robert Ra'uf Vickers and Anthony Kimu White, were wounded and Kimu was arrested. Ra'uf escaped and went underground where doctors helped him heal his wounds. He was then able to return to the field. In California, Geronimo ji-Jaga Pratt was out on bail in connection with the 1969 gun battle that resulted from a police raid on the Los Angeles BPP headquarters. He went underground and formed a guerrilla group. In Philadelphia, a guerrilla group raided a police station, killing one cop and wounding another. BPP guerrilla groups were raiding banks for funds, hijacking food to give to the community, and acquiring sophisticated military weapons.

This intensified activity was bringing the pressure down on the BPP political workers and, after the raid on the Philadelphia police station, the police raided every BPP office in the city. The BPP, however, was ready for them.

After gun battles at two of the offices, the Panthers were forced to surrender. This activity also provoked gun battles between the police and other Blacks. In a forty-eight-hour period the score was: six cops in the hospital with gunshot wounds and one cop in the morgue, Panthers and guerrillas in prison, and other guerrillas on the run. They were learning! All of the Panthers were released because the police could not officially justify the raids in the face of a massive protest from the Black community.

It is unfortunate that groups in the Black liberation struggle did not operate this way from the beginning. The growing awareness on how to attack their problems had not being digested at all by the larger movement, and a split developed between those who advocated the new phase of

resistance and other leaders who advocated taking armed struggle out of the movement altogether. The latter group was moving backward and did not recognize that the lessons learned from Philadelphia were crystal clear: police were killed and wounded while the Panthers were released from prison and there were no Panther casualties. There was also heightened community support and participation. A few weeks after the Philadelphia incident, BPP members held a major convention in the city without any police interference. The convention was also held despite police intelligence sources within the BPP correctly informing their superiors that the guerrillas accused of the raids had been regularly seen at BPP offices and that one of them, Robert Saeed Joyner, was there every day. The Black community could clearly see a tenuous separation between those who were participating in planned assaults (the guerrillas) and the BPP political workers. It was also clear that there was no reason to suspend armed action and it was probably too late to do so.

Beyond the disagreements and splits over the issue of arms in the struggle, there were numerous complaints about the new "opulent" lifestyle that various leaders of the BPP had adopted. After his release from prison in 1970, Huey Newton hung out with Hollywood stars and rented expensive apartments. Despite disgust and anger over these developments, the real beef was with the poor strategy that continued to get members killed and imprisoned. Newton, who was still the top leader, advocated no guns. For those who wanted to fight or who were underground, he sent an open communiqué to the North Vietnamese government that he would make one thousand BPP members available to fight in Vietnam against U.S. forces. This was very odd to say the least. Of course the Panthers were highly supportive of the Viet Cong's fight, but very few could see any reason why they should not show their support by stepping up armed action within the United States rather than offer to fight on foreign ground. The Vietnamese government was of a similar opinion. It openly declined the offer and suggested that the BPP could better help by supporting them from within the United States.

At this point, other Panther leaders started speaking against Newton more strongly. Eldridge Cleaver (who had been feuding with Newton from Algeria) stated emphatically that it was time to stop bullshitting and that the armed struggle needed to be fully supported. He made arrangements with the Algerian government for Panthers and others to come to Algeria for military training. Similarly, Field Marshall George Jackson continued to advocate and write about the necessity for a similar shift in the struggle and how it needed to be carried out. He unquestionably would have been the most effective leader to implement this new strategy because of his superior theories, his desire to implement them, his desperation (at the time he was preparing to go to trial for the killing of a prison guard), and most importantly because of the widespread respect and admiration he received from others.

It would not have been difficult to "liberate" him from prison, provided that the BPP put its full resources behind the effort. There was no lack of BPP members, female and male, who would have volunteered for such an honored mission. Sadly, the West Coast leadership of Newton and company, along with the police and prison establishments, had cut him off from direct contact with those who were ready, willing, and able to carry it out. Consequently, he was set up by these establishments and was assassinated—though not before Jackson and his prison "Black Guerrilla Family" killed five of the enemy. Magee had recovered from his courthouse wounds and was in the battle as well.⁹ August 21, 1971, the date of Jackson's death, was a sad day. After his memorial, Attica exploded and the battle ended with forty-three deaths. Black guerrillas walked into a California police station, killed a sergeant and shot up the station. The George L. Jackson Assault Team of the BLA took credit for that act.

The question of the "split" on policy and strategy was solved after a force dispatched by Newton shot and killed Robert Webb when he revealed unfavorable details about the inner workings of the West Coast

9 Eric Mann, *Comrade George: An Investigation into the Official Story of His Assassination* (Cambridge, MA: Hovey Street Press, 1972.)

leadership clique. Robert Webb was a top Panther leader and bodyguard of Newton. It was his words at a New York meeting, attended by disgruntled Panthers from all over the country, that were the most damaging to the West Coast leadership. Allegations of opulence (penthouses, limousines, etc.), pimping BPP female members, and cocaine addiction were raised. The following day, the main West Coast representative, central committee member Samuel Napier, was found dead in a burned-out office. He had been tied to a chair and riddled with bullets. Shortly thereafter, the West Coast delegation placed themselves under police protection until they could make arrangements to return to California! The word went out that the police were looking for a number of people in connection with the shooting and the previously held meeting and this forced many to go underground. Although the Panthers should have been prepared for a situation like this, sadly they were not. Once again, the dictums of *The Art of War* were ignored. While some tried to adhere to them, too many others were still running their operations and actions in a haphazard and shortsighted manner.

This unfortunate situation did swell the ranks of the guerrillas considerably, however. Intensive training was undertaken by these new guerrillas. They raided banks for funds and gun stores for arms and ammunition. Once again, this should have been a new beginning, but because the situation was forced on them as a result of the actions of older BPP members, aboveground political work and activity was all but destroyed. The same mistake that the civil rights movement had made was revisited upon the BPP: Both had put too much stock in one facet of the resistance. With the civil rights movement there was too much focus on political work and not nearly enough on military components, and with the guerrilla groups it was just the opposite. It was not clear to either of these groups that professionals must lead revolutions if destruction is to be avoided.

One may not be professional from the start, but it's imperative that professionalism be acquired as soon as is possible. The hallmark of the professional is the ability to proceed from point A to point B without

wasting energy, learning from the mistakes of others and one's own, not repeating them, and emulating the successes of others whenever possible.

This new phase had not been solidly launched—rather it was launched in an unprofessional manner. Adequate time was not taken to evaluate where the movement had been, where it was at, and where it was going. After finally adopting the right style, it lost contact with the substance of what the struggle was all about. “War is an extension of politics”; it is “politics by different means.” It follows that the military wing had to take its cue from whatever was happening in the political arena, as the Deacons had done. But it was not to be. The BLA groups were busy acquiring and consolidating their logistical base (raiding banks, gun stores, acquiring transportation, safe houses, etc.) and this was understandable and proper. At the same time they were launching deadly attacks on the police, and since these were planned assaults they were much more successful than the old BPP shootouts. Usually these attacks were carried out so swiftly that when the smoke had cleared the cops were either dead or wounded and the guerrillas had disappeared. They had learned how to reverse the killed and wounded ratio. Once again, they should have been operating this way from the beginning. They still suffered casualties from the rare operations that resulted in a running gunfight, when they were subjected to car stops, and when they were forced into confrontations. The casualties in these situations were devastating because the BLA did not have an adequate political apparatus to replenish their forces, nor did they understand the necessity to integrate local street gangs into their activities.

The BLA became the top priority of the special FBI/local police task forces. To a great degree, BLA guerrilla groups did not fall victim to being infiltrated by agents. If they had not been caught off balance, they would have had to make some other mistake to give these task forces an advantage, such as increased surveillance. The BLA fielded the most effective Black assault units since the maroons! Their primary weakness, and the situation which caused them the most harm, was their failure to properly integrate themselves with the Black masses and their inability to interact with aboveground revolutionary political

groups. The BLA did attempt to reintegrate political workers who had left or been expelled from the BPP. Since most of these workers were located on the East Coast, they were known as the East Coast Panthers. This group did not have any of the same vitality, stature, resources, or connections that they had previously enjoyed, but they did have the know-how to put together a new political organization that could eclipse even the BPP by using aboveground recruiting from former Panthers and other political Blacks. In order to do this, they would have had to channel their energies and resources away from their armed activities while taking time to rebuild a political apparatus. Before the BLA guerrillas would come to this conclusion, however, they were imprisoned, killed, and exiled.

BLA members continued their revolutionary commitment after being imprisoned and several were able to escape or attempt escape:

BLA member John Andalewa Clark was killed in 1976 at Trenton State Prison in New Jersey, after he and other BLA members fought a battle against armed guards. Clark and his allies were armed with homemade weapons and bombs. The State Police discovered a van parked a few blocks from the prison that was loaded with weapons and camping supplies.

A BLA member was killed in a fall from a high-rise prison in New York, after another prisoner had descended on the same rope.

BLA member Herman Bell was overpowered after holding a guard hostage while attempting to escape from Rikers Island prison in New York. A rubber raft and other gear were discovered outside of his building.

Russell Maroon Shoatz and three other BLA members escaped in 1977 from the State Prison at Huntingdon, PA. Two of these brothers were recaptured and BLA member Wayne Musa Henderson was killed. Maroon was recaptured after a twenty-seven-day hunt.

BLA member Assata Shakur was liberated in 1979 by a BLA task force which walked into the Clinton Prison in New Jersey and commandeered the visiting area. She later resurfaced in Cuba.

BLA member Kuwasi Balagoon escaped from a New Jersey state prison. He was part of the BLA task force that liberated Assata Shakur.

Arthur Cetawayo Johnson and Robert Saeed Joyner, two BLA members, took over a cellblock in the State Prison at Pittsburgh, PA, in 1979 in an attempt to escape. They and a few of the brothers, who had helped, were overpowered.

Russell Maroon Shoatz and Cliff Lumumba Futch escaped from a state mental hospital in PA in 1980. They and Phyllis Oshun Hill, who had smuggled them the escape weapons, were captured three days later after a gun battle with the police and FBI.

BLA member Sundiata Acoli and a number of other prisoners were almost killed in 1980–1981 when guards at the federal prison at Marion, IL, opened fire after they learned that they were trying to cut through the security fence.

BLA member Joseph Joe-Joe Bowen and three other brothers held guards at gunpoint for six days in 1981 after a failed escape at the State Prison at Graterford, PA. Joe-Joe and the BLA member Fred Muhammad Kafi Burton had assassinated the warden and deputy warden at the Holmesburg prison in Philadelphia in 1973.

There were many more incidents and the prison authorities dealt with them by keeping BLA members in the hole for five, ten, even fifteen years. BLA member Ruchell Cinque Magee (courthouse shootout and the San Quentin rebellion in which Jackson was killed) has spent most of his thirty years in the hole. The prison authorities cut them off from

the general population, just like they had done to Field Marshal George Jackson. Most of them have sentences that make it unlikely that they will ever be released back into society. A campaign for their deportation to a foreign (African) country holds real possibilities that can serve as an organizing tool. There is much more that needs to be said about the lessons these Black fighting formations learned on a tactical level. However, that is another paper.

The Dragon and the Hydra
A Historical Study of
Organizational Methods
(2006)

The Dragon and the Hydra

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Russell Maroon Shoatz

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“You have fifteen, twenty, fifty years of civil wars and people’s struggles to go through, not only to change the conditions but in order to change yourselves and make yourselves fit for political rule.” – Karl Marx addressing the IWMA, the body that would later become the First International.

Marx’s words hit close to home. I’ve been involved in such movements for forty years, a product – originally – of the Black Liberation Movement of the 1960s, and subsequently being held as a political prisoner in the U.S. since 1972. Over that period, I’ve participated in a number of mass and party formations. It never fails to amaze me how much energy and time is dedicated towards establishing various groups’ claims to being the so-called vanguard of some struggle for justice, when in the end most of these exercises turn out to be sterile, when they don’t degenerate into fratricidal conflicts.

Furthermore, I’d hazard it to say, that the entire history of Marxist Leninist social change has known few other methods, leading me to further say that a sober analysis of that history points to a struggle for supremacy – not only over the bourgeois ruling class, but also against the working class and all other oppressed people; against any and all formations either of the latter pull together that escape their control. Thus, their mantra of doing everything to seize power for the working class and oppressed is a farce.

If there has ever been a Marxist Leninist Vanguard party who has found itself in power and did not subsequently follow that script, I’m not aware of it. While arguments can always be found to rationalize why it was/is necessary to resort to such measures, and many such arguments do make sense – initially – a closer look always seems to force adherents to fall back on the mantra of the flawed individual(s) who did not hold true to Democratic Centralism’s (DC) principles, which are themselves wide open to interpretation and manipulation, in order to seize the initiative in a struggle for domination – as opposed to trying to make a “concrete analysis of concrete conditions,” as V.I. Lenin instructed.

At the same time, history has shown that such ruthless methods are effective: if the objectives of those who used the DC methods were simply to seize power, then their record during the 20th century was impressive. It has proved itself as brutally efficient and capable of outdoing anything the bourgeois forces are capable of.

Nevertheless, in the end those who gained power using DC method have always ended up using it to defeat the aspirations of the workers and oppressed, and subsequently install the users of it as a new oppressive ruling class.

How could it be expected to produce any other outcome? DC concentrates more power in the hands of a relative few than any mechanisms the masses the former purport to be serving can muster: a recipe that’s bound to conflict with the vagaries of flawed humans.

Stan Goff, in his masterful *Full Spectrum Disorder* (2004, Softskull Press), believes that DC as practiced by Lenin and his Bolsheviks did have a democratic basis, whereby an open and intense democratic struggle was carried out in order to arrive at positions and policies. Then all the party workers would move in a decentralized, free wheeling manner to make possible the implementation of those decisions (in the teeth of czarist repression), which ultimately had the effect of centralizing their combined efforts, only later to change their methods. This led to a more all around centralization and very little democracy, if any. Without a doubt, any number of other Marxist/Leninist/Maoist (style) groups have had similar experiences.

Yet, if the clear historical tendency is to always gravitate towards less democratic and more oppressive forms of control, then quite frankly for one to say their use of historical materialism is leading them to formulate correct liberation ideas, theories and plans by using DC is ludicrous!

The Contemporary Situation

Here we are at the beginning of the 21st century, facing a global crisis unknown heretofore in the entire history of humankind. The threats to our collective existence are so multidimensional, it would take many other works to detail them all. Consequently, I'll limit myself to those that I believe are paramount to helping us break out of self-imposed mental roadblocks that hinder our efforts to move forward.

The main threat to humankind, the flora and fauna and our entire biosphere, is capitalist imperialism: a totally out of control, predatory, global system of accumulation and oppression that's on a collision course with the limitations of our planet: daily devouring children, women, people of color, the poor, workers of all stripes, wildlife and the environment in pursuit of profits.

All of our problems primarily rest on the artificial divisions that have been engendered between the oppressed for hundreds of years: divisions based on gender, race, ethnicity, culture, geography, sexual preferences, age and otherwise. These divisions have been fostered, historically, by those who have sought to use them in their pursuit of power and material gain.

Under imperialism, the overwhelming majority of our planet's humans are, ultimately, workers. Thus, Marx's address to the IWMA still holds true today. Albeit, he underestimated the degree of opposition the workers would face and the length of time it would take for them to overcome all of the obstacles in their path.

Marx, superb analyst that he was, due to the Eurocentric predilections that entrapped him, overlooked or dismissed important workers struggles that fell outside of Europe; or he at least failed to study them with the same intensity that he devoted to those European situations upon which he (primarily) based his otherwise well-based analysis. That set in motion other willful neglecting of formulating a proper evaluation of these 'other' struggles up until today even. A thorough study, evaluation, adaptation (wherever applicable) and understanding of some of these workers struggles will help us move forward in our struggle against imperialism. There, we'll find proven, workable alternatives to the flawed DC forms of organizing: ones that mirror Stan Goff's analysis of the strengths of the early Bolsheviks' use of that form.

Back to the Future

First off, let me state that I'm not an anarchist. Yet, a lot of what you'll read here is gonna look a whole lot like anarchism! To that I will only quote an unknown ancient, who after racking his brain to formulate answers to vexing problems, only later to discover that those who had come along before him had already expounded on what he thought were his intellectual inventions, is supposed to have blurted, "confound those ancients, they've stolen all of our best ideas."

Therefore, to the anarchist reader, what follows cannot properly be termed anarchism, simply because the practitioners themselves never knew that word, nor were they in contact with people of that view, as anarchism is a European ideology and these parties – for the most part – were Africans and Amerindians with very limited input by a small number of outcast Europeans. Further, all of the struggles here written about had pretty much taken off and gained success prior to that concept's spread – under its classical anarchist thinkers and practitioners.

Still, the affinity between anarchism and the following is not rejected; on the contrary, it's welcomed as a sister set of ideas, beliefs and concepts – as long as the anarchists understand that they stand on equal footing, in a spirit of inter-communal self determination.

Historical overview

The following is a short outline of various workers struggles against early European imperialism, as practiced in Suriname, Jamaica, a number of southern areas of what is today the U.S., and finally Haiti. I'll outline how workers who had been enslaved fought longer than Marx's, "fifteen, twenty, fifty years of civil wars and peoples struggles..." in order to ultimately be able to exercise their own forms of self-determination and 'political rule.' And although all of them were as stratified as we are today, they were still able to democratically derive methods and policies that were collectively pursued by decentralized formations of their own making. And once winning their freedom from the various imperialist powers, unlike the later states ruled by Marxist vanguard formations, they never again relinquished their worker's-based autonomy, until this day, with one exception (Haiti) which deserves special attention.

Afterwards, I hope that you do your own in depth research and study, because to most people the bulk of this history will be unfamiliar. Then you can decide whether such organizational forms and methods would be useful to us in our struggle to save ourselves and the planet.

Suriname

"We must slay the Hydra." That was the Dutch imperialists' main concern in Suriname from their earliest days there.

(Hydra: In Greek mythology, a many headed monster whose heads regrew when struck off. It was finally killed by Hercules. Also the largest and longest constellation in the sky, but with no particular bright star.)

On the northern coast of South America, this tropical country borders Guyana and French Guyana and fronts the Caribbean Sea, with Brazil to its south. Geographically above one-third, again, as large as Cuba.

The first European interlopers to visit the area were the British, which were followed by the Dutch. Always it changed hands between them, but the Dutch were the main imperial power to occupy the country from the mid 1600s, up until the 1970s. All during that period, the overwhelming majority of the indigenous Amerindian populations were either suppressed, forced to flee to less hospitable areas, or exterminated.

The Dutch at that time were one of the world's major imperial powers, vying alongside of the British, Spanish, Danish, Portuguese and the French for control of North and South America, the Caribbean and other places in the world.

The Dutch West Indies Company was one of the first, and a major corporation in the world. And in Suriname, it launched plantation-based production of cash crops on a large scale, using enslaved workers imported from different parts of Africa. Added to that were a number of other plantations run by other European 'entrepreneurs,' along with their overseers, shop-keepers, militias, artisans, administrators, bureaucrats and sailors, and a small percentage of (mostly) poor white women who had been exiled from Europe.

Compared to the enslaved Africans and the suppressed Amerindians, one could compare everyone else – but the small number of plantation operating entrepreneurs and administrators – with what we today recognize as the technologically-advanced countries' labor aristocracy and petty bourgeoisie with those elements being fully dependent for their livelihood and protection of their persons and property, from the enslaved workers and remaining indigenous people, on the Dutch military, militias, the imperial court and the big mercantilists.

I made those comparisons because we all too often fail to point out that the enslaved Africans were transported across the Atlantic to assume the role of workers, and just about everyone else associated with their plight were also – first and foremost – other workers, similar to our plight today. And the issue of race did not – could not – change that basic fact! So keep that in mind as we develop this work.

Amongst the Africans were many different ethnic groups from different areas of the continent, all speaking different languages and with many varied religious and cultural practices. To give an idea of the stratification of these Africans, the fact that they all had dark skins meant next to nothing to them in terms of solidarity. Where they originally came from everybody had dark skin: friends and enemies alike! Further, it was the practice of the plantation owners to try to purchase workers from different backgrounds in order to keep them divided as much as possible. And because the work was so brutal and the food was so inadequate, most plantations were really death camps, where the African workers were literally worked to death in a few years, only to be replaced with newly-imported enslaved workers, who would also go on to make handsome profits for the owners. Thus, the turnover itself was a powerful check on the formation of any solidarity between the enslaved workers.

Be that as it may, almost from the first importation of enslaved Africans, there developed a tradition of flight from slavery: Africans ran away to the forests, swamps and highlands. These fugitives came to be known as Bosch Creoles: Dutch for Bush Creoles, or “born in the forest” and later bush negroes, who we'll call Maroons throughout our study, as a generic name that has come to be used as an accepted way to describe fugitive, enslaved people throughout the western hemisphere.

Throughout the western hemisphere, we witness these collective Maroons developing and using a very effective form of decentralized organizing that not only served to help them defeat their former enslavers, but has helped them remain autonomous from all unwanted overseers for hundreds of years – until our time.

It must be recalled that the Suriname Africans were from many different backgrounds, so when they would come together as Maroons that would have to be factored in. They had to organize using democratic methods, and the glue that held them together was their collective focus on defeating their enslavers' attempts to control them; *that* centralized their efforts.

There remained, however, one class of their communities who did not fit into that category: those Africans who did not flee, but were forced by maroon raiders to leave the plantations. They did not enjoy a say in their communities' affairs until they had proven themselves.

But as a general rule, individuals and small groups would flee the plantations to join the Maroons, and on occasions large conspiracies were organized that saw the enslaved workers preparing the ground work for maroon guerrillas to raid plantations and liberate scores at a time.

This example exhibits decisions arrived at by truly democratic means, and then carried out in a centralized manner, all done by otherwise decentralized groups. Long before our later Bolsheviks!

Over a 150 year period, the various Maroon communities of Suriname would wage a guerrilla war with the Dutch and English slavers to remain free. Today in Suriname their direct descendants still

occupy the areas their ancestors fought on, and most of them have never suffered under slavery – even before the U.S. signed its own Declaration of Independence in 1776.

Even as this is written they remain autonomous from the government of Suriname – which gained its independence from the Netherlands – whose Dutch ancestors we’re discussing in 1775. In fact, the descendents of the early Maroons were again forced to fight another guerilla war against the newly-independent government in 1980: a successful effort on the part of the Maroons to maintain their autonomy and control over the lands they’ve historically occupied.

Their decentralized methods had their drawbacks. Their enemies in the imperialist camp were able to manipulate various Maroon communities into signing ‘treaties’ that gave those communities their freedom from enslavement and land to use – in exchange for them cooperating in the hunting down and capturing of other fugitives. By doing that, the enslavers could avoid the all but useless wars designed to capture or kill the skillful Maroon guerrillas, and everyone on the Maroon communities fell in that category: at the drop of a hat, the women and children in those communities could pack their belongings and escape to pre-arranged and built-up alternative settlements, while the men (and some women) busied themselves in fighting rear guard actions against the pursuing colonial soldiers.

It turns out, however, that although the treaties did solve some of the imperialist’s problems, the Suriname Maroons never really fulfilled their obligations to help the imperialists hunt and capture other Maroons. A narrative of the Dutch forces’ generations-long wars designed to either capture or kill the Boni Maroons is instructive in that regard (see *The Boni Maroon Wars in Suriname*).

By the mid-18th century, the Dutch had been forced by over a century of Maroon guerilla warfare to sign treaties with three of the most powerful Maroon communities: the Ndjuka, Saramaka and the Matawai. All of these Maroon communities had evolved over generations from fugitive African – from any different backgrounds – into new ethnicities which adopted the already mentioned names. Most importantly, they had soundly defeated all of the imperialist forces fielded to capture or kill them, while continuing to expand their numbers and offer an ever-growing threat to the Dutch colony.

The treaties came with yearly ‘gifts’ of all kinds that the Dutch would deliver to the Maroons: textiles, pots and pans, guns, powder, axes, knives, mirrors, nails, liquor and just about anything agreed upon during the periodic sit-downs between the parties. The underlying objectives of the imperialists were to both rid themselves of a dangerous enemy and turn them into valuable allies.

Yet once it became known to the still enslaved African workers that they could no longer rely on the Ndjuka, Saramaka and Matawai for refuge and protection, they began to seek out smaller Maroon concentrations. In the early 1700s, one of those small groups was headed by an African named Asikan Silvester. Born into this group was a child called Boni. His mother was a fugitive African and his father either African or Amerindian. Subsequently, the group chose Boni to be its new head, after Asikan became too old to serve in that position. This group of Maroons would eventually become known to the Dutch as a new center of resistance, and for the next two generations Boni would lead them, and they would be known to history as the Boni Maroons – becoming an ethnicity. Thus, the Boni Maroons just replicated what the imperialists thought they were suppressing by the signing of the treaties with the other Maroons. Consequently, they would not sign any more treaties with either the Boni’s or any other Maroons – up until the end of the slave period.

Boni – for his part – would lead his group to aggressively wage war on the imperialists until his death in his mid-sixties.

Yet even while the Boni’s became the main fighting force amongst all of those Maroons who were still at war with the Dutch, they still observed and respected the democratic wishes of any fugitives or Maroon groups they dealt with; never trying to centralize all control in their hands. Although they

were past masters in the use of coordinated guerilla campaigns amongst all of the decentralized groups – during which a unified command was essential – they still never demanded that everyone integrate themselves into the Boni community; or put themselves directly under Boni outside of when participating in agreed-upon guerilla campaigns and during raids. Thus, the Dutch recorded their knowledge of the frequent coming together of the decentralized fighters of Kormantin Kodjo, Chief Puja, Boni and Baron during large campaigns, while separating and remaining decentralized and autonomous otherwise.

Unlike the ‘treaty Maroons,’ they never became dependent upon the imperialists for anything, instead relying on their raiding capabilities to capture guns, powder, cannons, and other useful items. Moreover, they had perfected methods of large-scale open field agriculture that allowed them to raise harvest and store more food than they could consume – along with more farm animals than they could use to supplement their diets.

Dutch soldiers recorded discovering Boni and related Maroon fields that took them an hour one way and 30 minutes the other way to mark off for destruction, along with so many domesticated chickens they had to slaughter the excess after feasting on them for days. They and their Maroon foes always noted how much better the Maroons were fed, and how much better physical specimens the Maroons showed themselves to be. It became a prime motivator of the Dutch-led troops to hunt for and locate Maroon food stores and farm animals in order to supplement their own poor diets.

During the Dutch’s final major campaign in the second Boni war, an expeditionary force of 1600 Dutch regulars and European mercenaries, accompanied by thousands more Colonial soldiers and enslaved African workers and ‘free negro rangers’ was also unsuccessful, causing the commander to return to Europe with less than a dozen of his force he’d led to Suriname; and to die himself within a year.

From then until the ending of slavery, the Dutch relied on treachery, trying to manipulate the various treaties and (still) fighting Maroons against each other. And although they did succeed in getting a younger, less-experienced generation of treaty Maroons to assassinate Boni, Chief Puja and Kormantin Kodjo (who were old men, who had turned over their leadership to younger maroons), the other fighting Maroons continued to exercise their autonomy until slavery was abolished. And today the Boni Maroons still live autonomously in Suriname proper, where there’s more than 70 thousand direct descendants of the ‘bush negroes.’

The Dutch imperialists tried their best to slay the Hydra! They failed. Was it because the Maroons decentralized formations prevented the Dutch from concentrating their superior resources against any one centralized leadership – any bright star? I think so.

Have the various bush negroe ethnicities been able to maintain their autonomy over hundreds of years, against all oppressive forces, through their refusal to allow themselves to be subjected by any broad centralizing forces? I think so again.

Jamaica

Across the Caribbean from Suriname – in Jamaica – from as early as the 1650s there developed similar decentralized Maroon communities, only there they were fighting against the local enslavers of the British Empire. After generations of unsuccessful campaigns by the British against the Maroon guerrillas, they too hit upon the necessity of trying to divide the fighting Maroons from their main

source of new recruits: the enslaved African workers. So the British offered the Maroons ‘treaties’ similar to those in Suriname.

To force the British to adopt such methods, the Maroons fought tenaciously, skillfully and bravely for over 100 years! And even though there (also) we witness a number of decentralized groups, they roughly became to be recognized as the Windward and Leeward Maroons: the former located in the eastern (windward) end of Jamaica, and the latter on the westward (leeward) side. And history records the most noted Maroon of the Windwards as an African womyn named Granny Nanny – who even had a town named after her in the Maroon’s liberated territory. Indeed, Nanny Town became the center of the resistance to British plantation imperialism in Jamaica, the headquarters from which the Maroon bands almost succeeded in driving all of the imperialists from the island altogether – even though British soldiers captured and burned Nanny Town on a number of occasions.

The dominant personality amongst the Leewards was an African man named Kodjo. History records Kodjo as leading a tightly controlled and centralized operation. When the Windwards had to make a trek across the island during one fierce suppression effort, seeking the Leewards help, even Kodjo could not force them to abandon their autonomy.

Telling, it was Granny Nanny who led a segment of decentralized Windwards to resist signing the treaties the longest. She went as far as to have the British envoys killed on more than one occasion, and only submitted after Kodjo and all of the male Maroon heads had capitulated.

After that, these Maroons were used to help the British hunt and capture new runaways, as well as suppress revolts amongst the still enslaved African workers; although they fiercely clung to the freedom and autonomy they and their ancestors had fought for!

In fact, over a generation later their descendents would again engage the British in the Trelawny War in the middle of the 1790s, during which a mere 267 Maroon guerillas fought thousands of British soldiers, local militia and enslaved Africans to a complete stand still. They, however, were also tricked and placed on boats to be deported to Canada – and later to Africa after accepting a truce.

Even so, from then until our time, the descendents of those remaining Maroon communities in Jamaica still continue to occupy the lands they fought on, and they’ve never recognized any overlords; neither the later British or black governments!

The United States

It’s ironic that those of us who live in the U.S. continue to neglect to thoroughly study and critique the wealth of documented history about the anti-imperialist and anti-expansionist struggles that have occurred here since the Europeans first started colonizing this area, other than the well-known Native American suppression and genocide.

Like the volumes of works written about the Civil Rights, Black Liberation struggle of the 1960s and 1970s, the early Labor Movement, Womyn’s Suffrage Movement, Abolitionist Movement and Reconstruction period, there’s a mountain of other revolutionary material we can learn from. And not surprisingly, that information concerns the struggles of enslaved workers on these shores prior to the abolition of chattel slavery. In fact, it mirrors the already mentioned struggles in Suriname and Jamaica, with the important distinction that it encompasses multi-racial aspects – more so than either of the former cases. Namely, in the U.S. – until the abolition of slavery – Africans, Amerindians and Europeans (in some areas) allied themselves to fight against the imperialist and expansionist powers. That phenomenon was also evident in the Caribbean and South America, but due to the large

percentages of enslaved Africans, compared to enslaved Amerindians and Europeans, most of those struggles were primarily between the enslaved Africans and the European imperialists.

Thus today in the U.S., such emotionally charged epithets as hillbilly and poor white trash are totally divorced from their historical roots. The first people to be labeled as such were the descendents of the indentured European workers, who had escaped that status and allied themselves with both the Amerindian and Africans who had also escaped from slavery or servitude, all of whom combined into Maroon communities in areas that are now a part of the United States.

Initially, the derogatory 'poor white trash' label was reserved for the rebellious, unexploitable and non-conformist early Europeans who the colonial and imperial elites could neither control, nor use, to increase their power; thus the 'trash' label. And later the hillbilly label and imagery were used to similarly isolate those runaways who moved into the southern Appalachian mountains to also escape their former indentured status. Both segments were staunch enemies of the imperialists and colonists, who many times allied with Africans and Amerindians, also fugitives from enslavement. At times, these three groups formed tri-racial Maroon communities. At other times, they were firmly allied, though living separately – except in the case of the Amerindians and Africans who mixed freely.

Consequently, from the 17th century until the abolition of slavery in the U.S., there were also Maroon communities in areas stretching from the pine barrens of New Jersey, down the east coast to Florida, and in the Appalachian mountains and later to migrate to Mexico's northern border regions. The best known (but little studied) ones were those that occupied the dismal swamp of Virginia and North Carolina and the Seminoles of Florida, which contrary to popular belief have never been an Amerindian tribe, but instead – from their beginnings – an ethnic group made up of Africans and Amerindians who came together to form the ethnicity: just like the Boni Maroons were formed in Suriname.

All of this replicated the decentralized organizing forms of the Maroons in Suriname and Jamaica. And although their political histories fall short of them winning and maintaining the degree of autonomy achieved in Suriname or Jamaica, the descendents of the Seminoles in Mexico and the U.S. still fiercely guard their communities against the Mexican and U.S. governments: in Florida they're recognized as a semi-autonomous tribe, and the Africans (Seminoles) in Oklahoma, Texas and Mexico also distinguish themselves from their neighbors – while calling Blacks in the U.S. 'state negroes.' According to New Afrikan nationalist cadre from the U.S. who have worked around them, the African Seminoles never considered themselves citizens of the U.S. like African-Americans do.

Finally, the legendary history and present posture of the people of the Southern Appalachians – in still refusing to fully integrate into the fabric of the U.S. – rests more on a forgotten history of their ancestors' struggle to remain free from any servitude or domination, than they or we understand. Instead, we've adopted the bourgeoisie myth about them being hopelessly backwards and ultra-racist, although in reality true hillbilly culture and practice is really isolationist and independent, reflecting the autonomist spirit of their ancestors.

Haiti

The history of Haiti provides an excellent laboratory in which to test my thesis.

What would become the country of Haiti was once known as San Domingo or Saint Domingo, the western part of the island of Hispanola in the Caribbean. Today the country of the Dominican Republic occupies the larger eastern part of the island.

There, between 1791 and 1804, we witness one of the most titanic struggles ever engaged in between (enslaved) workers and their overlords. It is through an examination of the events surrounding that struggle that we can clearly measure the strengths and weaknesses of our dragon and hydra: centralized and decentralized forces of change. Here is a much neglected goldmine of historical contribution to our search for historical lessons – on par with the great French revolution of 1789.

For generations prior to the French revolution – that set the stage for the Haitian revolt two years later – Maroon guerrillas and communities had been operating throughout the entire island of Hispanola. And later many of their descendents would distinguish themselves amongst the multitudes of the little-known heroic figures of those times. Most notably, the intrepid Mackandal, in the pre-revolutionary period (CA 1750s), organized and led a select group of African Maroons and enslaved plantation workers in a conspiracy designed to overthrow the French and colonial powers by massive and bewildering use of a vast array of poisons: against individuals, livestock, supplies, water and any African workers who were believed to be sympathetic to, or in league with, the French.

After years of terrorizing the island, Mackandal slipped up and was betrayed and subsequently burnt at the stake, fatally crippling his tightly organized, centralized movement.

By that time, in just about all of the areas, original Amerindians had been exterminated, only to be replaced by an endless supply of enslaved Africans. The latter produced so much sugar and other agriculture crops that San Domingo became the crown jewel of the French empire and the backbone of the French economy. So Mackandal's terror campaigns were quickly pushed to the back of the exploiters' minds.

But within two years of the outbreak of the French revolution, and the subsequent turmoil caused by it in that colonial possession, a new generation stepped into Mackandal's shoes.

One dark night, a large assembly of the colony's Africans met at a secret ceremony; both enslaved workers and Maroon guerrillas met on a mountain outside of town. They represented thousands of other Africans – both on the many plantations and in the fugitive communities in the mountains. The ceremony and last minute plans were being overseen by Boukman and an enslaved female – they were both Vodun (Voodoo) spiritual leaders. There was no need to haggle over any last minute plans. They knew better than Karl Marx's (later) "wage slaves" that "they had nothing to lose but their chains." And the horrible treatment that their 'masters' heaped on them added a sense of desperation for them to kill or be killed once they revolted!

Yet, Boukman and the female offered more inspiration than centralized leadership. And when the revolt was launched shortly thereafter, it was led by scores of decentralized bands of African workers, Maroon guerrilla groups –who were all joined shortly thereafter by separate Mulatto-led groups.

Before the well-known Toussaint L'Ouverture came on the stage, the Haitian revolution was being led by figures that the decentralized groups propelled forward: the Maroons Jean Francois, Bissou and Lamour Derance, and the rebel-enslaved workers Romaine the Prophetess and Hyacinthe the fearless leader of the battle of Croix des Bouquets. And the Mulattos had a number of their own independent groups and distinguished leaders plus there was also a small segment of whites who were in league with the anti-slavery wing of the French Jacobins, and who loosely allied themselves with one rebel group or another.

Within two years of the beginning of the French revolution, and continuing for twelve harrowing years, the Haitian revolutionaries would go on to militarily engage and defeat first their colonial

enslavers, and afterwards a succession of armies fielded by Spain and England, as well as a traitorous Mulatto army, and finally tens of thousands of Napoleon Bonaparte's veteran French 'revolutionary' troops.

The victorious Africans would go on to found the country of Haiti in 1803/1804; the only country in world history established by formerly enslaved workers.

What better example could we use to weigh Marx's words about the "workers" engaging in, "fifteen, twenty, fifty years of civil wars and peoples struggles... in order to change yourself and make yourself fit for political rule?" (ref. cited)

The Marxist giant, C.L.R. James, who penned the classic *Black Jacobins* (1963, Random House) dissects that struggle. In it, James compares the Haitian revolutionary army led by Toussaint and later Jean Jacques Dessalines and Henry Christophe with the later Russian Bolshevik party: "[Toussaint and]...his Black army generals filling the political role of the Bolshevik party" (James, 283). This brilliantly led, tightly organized and courageous army represents my dragon here. And James' book does much to rescue them from the shadows of history from our study. They are the ones who would surface as the most notable elements, while scores of the decentralized receded to the background.

So on first reading about them, you would think that this centralized dragon was the revolutionaries' best weapon. But, the European empire builders of France, England, Spain – and the U.S. wannabes – were not going to give up, even though they all had been defeated, or were afraid to directly intervene (in the case of the U.S.).

As it turned out, however, with Toussaint – backed by the 'revolutionary' army – assuming the governance of the island, the imperialists pressured and maneuvered him into a position where he and his (dragon) army began to impose intolerable conditions on the revolutionary masses of workers. And, "in the north around Plaisance, Limbe, Dondon, the vanguard [masses] of the revolution was not satisfied with the new regime" (James, 275–276).

And astonishingly, in the teeth of Napoleon's renewed threats and the hostile machinations of the British and Americans, "Toussaint submits, along with his generals" (James, 325–327).

Thus, at one swell swoop, these leaders had been forced to play the role of neo-colonial compradors, our dragon had been corralled, hand-cuffed and chained, and they subsequently then set out to use the 'revolutionary army' to deliver the masses back into slavery! Simply because Napoleon feared them, his secret plan was to place all of Haiti's Africans into chattel slavery, and he sent his brother in law and (eventually) sixty thousand more French troops to accomplish his aims.

Recognizing the weaknesses of the dragon forces, and the true intentions of the French "[Lamour] Derance and the petty chieftains, North, South and West, each in his own district summoned Blacks to revolt" (James, 327).

So, here we see the hydra doing battle with the (now) traitorous dragon and the French imperialists.

"It is a recurrent tale this (Dessalines and his generals hunt down these 'Brigands'). Once more, the masses had shown greater political understanding than their leaders" (James 338–339 and footnote 39). Our formerly heroic revolutionary army had been reduced to suppressing the revolutionary masses and forcing the latter into, "...fighting Black generals [who were] trying to crush the 'Brigands' for the French," [propelling our hydra back to center stage]. "The little local leaders...beat off [their and the French] attacks...causing the French to be more open to yellow fever" (James, 346–347).

Consequently, we witness the decentralized hydra elements launching the revolution, being displaced by Toussaint's army – the dragon – only to resume their leadership roles during a crisis that saw the dragon capitulate to the French, thus showing itself as the most indispensable weapon the revolutionaries developed.

Later, as is well-known, Toussaint was kidnapped and taken to France where he later died in prison, opening the way for his chief lieutenant Jean Jacques Dessalines to (again) switch back to the rebels' side, rally the revolutionary army to also switch back to the masses' side, and along with the hydra forces go on to totally annihilate the remaining French forces on the island and declare independence and appoint himself the new country's emperor.

An excellent soldier, Dessalines showed himself to be a cruel tyrant over the Haitian people. Thus, he was assassinated by them within a few years of assuming power.

He was replaced by another general from the dragon forces: Henry Christophe, who was appointed president in 1807, but by 1811 had declared himself king. He too would be killed by his own people in 1829.

Thus, we can clearly see how Haiti's dragon forces played a very ambivalent role in the rebel fight for independence: They started out as tenacious and brilliant fighters against all of the European imperial and colonial elements, and the traitors amongst the Mulatto's, who were all but bent on keeping the enslaved Africans underfoot. During the course of the revolutionary struggle, they all opportunistically switched to the French imperialist's side, and went on to attempt to drown the still revolutionary masses and their decentralized group in blood; hoping that way the French would allow them to serve as a new elite class of African policemen against a re-enslaved African worker's class.

Failing to suppress the rebels, the dragon forces rejoined the hydra elements and lent their weight to totally defeating the French, only to once again turn against the revolutionary masses by establishing themselves as a dictatorial and exploitative African elite.

For its part, the decentralized hydra forces never veered from their objectives of winning as much freedom from servitude and oppression as possible. From the pre-revolutionary times of Mackandal, up through the 1791–1804 Haitian revolutionary war, and even down to our time, they've continued to struggle towards those ends. And it's highly instructive to know that in addition to fighting the French during their revolution, they were also under attack by Toussaint's dragon forces, who displayed hatred and fear of everything from their refusal to relinquish their maroon/decentralized organizational formations, to their practice of their traditional Vodun (Voodoo) spiritual systems, the latter which did a great deal to inspire their soldiers to martyr themselves for the cause of freedom. And the treacherous attacks carried out on them by Christophe and Dessalines – even while both sides were allied against the imperialists – were early signs that the dragon forces were ultimately concerned with power for its own sake.

Then, after being pushed to the side after the French were driven out, the decentralized hydra elements were forced to – again – go underground and eventually morph into semi-secret Vodun societies that until today remain a little recognized or understood autonomous element amongst the oppressed Haitians. Wade Davis' classic *The Serpent and the Rainbow*, as well as *Voodoo in Haiti*, by Alfred Metraux (1972, Shocken Books), paints a fascinating picture of how these decentralized elements went from centuries of being Maroon guerrillas, to revolutionary fighters, later to be forced underground only to surface as today's Bizango, Zobop, Bossu, Macandal, Voltigeurs and other semi-secret Vodun societies, thereby constituting a major segment of Haitian society that no domestic or foreign oppressors have ever been able to eradicate; although the dictator "Papa Doc" Duvalier was able to manipulate some of them by integrating them into dreaded "ton ton macoute" secret police.

And in another Stan Goff book, *Sex and War*, he tells us, "there are Maroons in Haiti again, with the wave of repression sweeping the country in the wake of the last U.S.-crafted coup d'état (February 29, 2004)... twice in 2004 I visited one of these Maroon communities in the Central Plateau" (8).

And it's hardly the case that we must restrict our study of the strengths and weaknesses of centralized and decentralized groups as I have. What about the history of how decentralized forces defeated Napoleon's army in Spain; how decentralized forces have defeated every known invader in the border regions of what is today Afghanistan and Pakistan, and how decentralized insurgents are today defeating the U.S. and her allies in Iraq?

Some Parting Words from a Farsighted Marxist

C.L.R. James penned *The Black Jacobins* many years before he would later crystallize his theories about the ideas here. Yet on this in the *Introduction to Marxism for Our Times: C.L.R. James on Revolutionary Organization*, edited by Martin Glaberman (1999, University Press of Mississippi) we learn, "in 1948 James wrote what was eventually published as 'Notes on Dialectics.'" This was a study of working class organization in light of dialectics and marked the ultimate break with Trotskyism, the rejection of the vanguard party. The importance of this break and the theoretical validation of the James viewpoint was demonstrated eight years later in the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and later the French revolt of 1968, the Czech spring of 1968, and the solidarity movement in Poland in 1980...On the one hand, no group of the left or of the right was in any way prepared to accept the possibility of proletarian revolution in totalitarian dictatorships of Eastern Europe or in a democratic country such as France. All of their assumptions proved false: that the working class needed a party to lead it in revolution; that the working class needed a press and a network of communication; that what was needed was some crisis in the society such as a depression or a war. With none of these factors in place, the workers of Hungary in forty-eight hours took over all of the means of production in that society, created a form of dual power, forced the Community Party to re-organize under another name, and was crushed by nothing in Hungarian society but by an invasion of Soviet tanks."

[And in his own words] "James wrote: 'Now if the party is the knowing of the proletariat, then the coming of age of the proletariat cans the abolition of the party. That is our universal, stated in its boldest and most abstract form...The party as we know it must disappear. It is disappearing. It will disappear as the state will disappear. The whole laboring population becomes the state. That is the disappearance of the state. It can have no other meaning. It withers away by expanding to such a degree that it is transformed into its opposite. And the party does the same... for if the party does not wither away, the state never will'" (C.L.R. James, *Notes on Dialectics*, London: Allison and Busby, 1980 175-76).

"On the other hand, even after the fact, the left could not deal with events that demolished their theories of the necessity of a vanguard party, and proceeded to ignore the movements in Hungary, in France and in Poland – movements which Marx or Lenin would have pounced on to study and to hone and bring up to date their revolutionary theories" (Glaberman's *Introduction to Marxism for Our Times*).

Conclusion

It's clear that today's center of gravity, the aspects on which all else is dependent and rests is the shared (global) consciousness of the multitudes of the earth's workers and oppressed peoples, that their lives are daily becoming more and more intolerable, hence, solidifying them ideologically around the necessity for revolutionary change (like our earlier Maroons were solidified around the need to

escape enslavement), and the ability of these multitudes to communicate with each other and share ideas and methods about the best ways to proceed towards that goal.

Therefore, the global hardships brought about by today's imperialists and their voracious accumulation of wealth, and their destruction of the environment and cultures will propel the multitudes to use any and all means to bring about the needed changes –or perish. And modern means of communications will provide them with the means to both update and imitate the earlier hydra's strengths, avoid its weaknesses –while guarding against the tendency of the dragons to concentrate oppressive power in its hands.

Thus, since both the shared needs and necessity for change is already present, along with the tools to communicate, then our final consideration is whether or not these masses must centralize their organizing (not to be confused with the obvious need to coordinate their efforts!). To that I answer with an emphatic, 'no!' and further, I contend that such centralization will only make it easier for our oppressors to identify and level repression upon us –prolonging the crisis our generation must deal with.

The historical records of our dragon hydra are clear. The choice is yours as to which you will choose.

Recommended Books

The Boni Maroon Wars in Suriname by Wim S.M. Hoogbergen (1997, Academic Publishers)

Voodoo in Haiti by Alfred Metraux (1972, Schocken Books)

The Serpent and the Rainbow by Wade Davis (1985 Simon & Schuster)

Hidden Americans: Maroons of Virginia and the Carolinas by Hugo Prosper Leaming (1995, Garland Publishing)

The Black Jacobins by C.L.R. James (1963, Random House)

Full Spectrum Disorder by Stan Goff (2004, Softskull Press)

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Angela Davis (2016)
Freedom is a Constant Struggle
Haymarker: Chicago

FIVE

Closures and Continuities

Speech at Birkbeck University (October 25, 2013)

They say that freedom is a constant struggle.

They say that freedom is a constant struggle.

They say that freedom is a constant struggle.

O Lord, we've struggled so long.

We must be free, we must be free.

The title of my talk is drawn from a freedom song that was repeatedly sung in the southern United States during the twentieth-century freedom movement. The other verses of that song evoke crying, sorrow, mourning, dying—they say *freedom is a constant dying / we've died so long we must be free*.

And I like the irony of the last line of each of the verses: *we've struggled so long / we've cried so long / we've sorrowed so long / we've moaned so long / we've died so long / we must be free, we must be free*. And of course there's simultaneously resignation and promise in that line, there is

critique and inspiration: *we must be free, we must be free*. But are we really free?

In 2007 I was invited by Baroness Lola Young to speak here in London on the occasion of the bicentennial of the abolition of slavery in the UK. But at the last minute I was unable to make the trip because my mother passed on the day I was scheduled to leave for London. Serendipitously, this is also a year of major anniversaries, anniversaries in the US that reflect the history of the Black freedom struggle. So I've been asked to speak about the meaning of freedom in the sesquicentennial year of the US Emancipation Proclamation and during the fiftieth anniversary year of pivotal events in the twentieth-century Black freedom struggle in the United States.

So let me begin by evoking some of the fiftieth anniversary events. This is the fiftieth anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," in which he defended his decision to organize in Birmingham where he was accused of being an outside agitator in this way: "I am cognizant," he wrote, "of the interrelatedness of all communities and states. I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

And you are probably familiar with that quote: "We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."

And then he proceeds to evoke history: "For more than two centuries," he wrote, "our forebears labored in this country without wages; they made cotton king; they built the homes of their masters while suffering gross injustice and shameful humiliation—and yet out of a bottomless vitality they continued to thrive and develop. If

the inexpressible cruelties of slavery could not stop us, the opposition we now face will surely fail."

We're also observing the fiftieth anniversary year of the Birmingham Children's Crusade. It may not be so widely known that the success of the Birmingham campaign was possible because vast numbers of schoolchildren—girls and boys—at the beginning of May, in 1963, faced police dogs and high-power hoses. Their televised demonstrations—and incidentally, television was quite young and it was really the first time that people outside of the South had the opportunity to witness these demonstrations—revealed to the world the determination with which Black people continued to struggle for freedom.

Nineteen sixty-three was also the year of the March on Washington, the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, which was attended by some 250,000 people. At that time it was the largest-ever human assembly in Washington.

This past August, there were two marches in Washington, one of which was addressed by Presidents Obama and Clinton, and the other by figures who represent themselves as current civil rights leaders; I won't go into their names.

And there were series of events that marked the fiftieth anniversary. Many people did not know which march to attend (I think one was on the 24th and one was on the 28th). But last month, in September, a number of events took place in Birmingham, Alabama, which as you heard is where I was born and where I grew up.

These events observe the fiftieth anniversary of the bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church and the killing of four young Black girls. The height of the observances was the bestowal of the highest civilian honor, the Congressional Gold Medal, on the families

of the four girls killed in the bombing; although the sister of one of the girls, Sarah Collins (sister of Addie Mae Collins) did not die, she lost an eye and was severely injured and to this day she has received no official assistance with her medical bills.

What I fear about many of these observances is that they tend to enact historical closures. They are represented as historical high points on a road to an ultimately triumphant democracy; one which can be displayed as a model for the world; one which perhaps can serve as justification for military incursions, including the increased use of drones in the so-called war on terror, which has resulted in the killing of vast numbers of people, especially in Pakistan.

While criticizing the Obama administration for the increased use of drones, I must at the same time acknowledge his speech on the fiftieth anniversary of the March on Washington for its attempt to represent freedom struggles as unfinished and for at least attempting to focus on continuities rather than closures. But, invoking the old adage, I must say, that actions really do speak louder than words.

No one can deny that global popular culture is saturated with references to the twentieth-century Black freedom movement. We know that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is one of the most widely known historical figures in the world. Inside the US there are more than nine hundred streets named after Dr. King in forty states, Washington, DC, and Puerto Rico. But it has been suggested by geographers who have studied these naming practices that they've been used to deflect attention from persisting social problems—the lack of education, housing, jobs, and the use of carceral strategies to conceal the continued presence of these problems.

There are more than nine hundred streets named after Dr. King, but there are also some 2.5 million people in US jails, prisons, youth

facilities, military prisons, and jails in Indian country. The population of those facilities constitute 25 percent of the world's incarcerated population as compared to 5 percent of the planet's population at large. Twenty-five percent of the world's incarcerated population serves as fodder for a vast prison-industrial complex with global dimensions that profits from strategies designed to hide social problems that have remained unaddressed since the era of slavery.

Moreover, police violence and racist vigilante violence is at its height. The Trayvon Martin case in the US recalls the Stephen Lawrence case here. But also Islamophobic violence is nurtured by histories of anti-Black racist violence. There is simultaneously a saturated geographical presence of the culture of the Black freedom movement and a lack of anything more than abstract knowledge about that movement.

I would dare say that most people who are familiar with Dr. Martin Luther King—and the vast majority of people in the world are familiar with him—they know little more than the fact that he had a dream. And of course all of us have had dreams. And as a matter of fact the "I Have a Dream" speech is the most widely circulated of all of his orations.

Relatively few people are aware of the Riverside Church speech on Vietnam and the way he came to recognize the intersections and interconnections of the Black liberation movement and the campaign to end the war in Vietnam. Therefore understandings of the twentieth-century freedom movement that help us cultivate more complicated ideas of the geographies and temporalities of freedom are suppressed.

Dominant representations of the Black freedom movement are a discrete series of historical moments largely produced by the 1955

Montgomery Bus Boycott. And somehow, although Martin Luther King Jr. himself began to emerge to prominence as a consequence of that boycott, he is seen as always already the orator and leader of the civil rights movement.

Even though numbers of books, both scholarly and popular, have been written on the role of women in the 1955 boycott, Dr. King, who was actually invited to be a spokesperson for a movement when he was entirely unknown—the movement had already formed—Dr. King remains the dominant figure.

And I wonder, will we ever truly recognize the collective subject of history that was itself produced by radical organizing? Early on during the 1930s/1940s, and I am referring, for example, to an organization which was known as the Southern Negro Youth Congress, which has largely been excised from the official historical record because some of its key leaders were communists.

As Carole Boyce Davies has pointed out in her wonderful book on Claudia Jones, *Left of Karl Marx*, Claudia Jones was one of the leaders of the Negro Youth Congress (the American Negro Youth Congress and the Southern Youth Congress). And I mention Jones both because of her important work in the US and because she became a pivotal figure in the organizing of Caribbean communities here in Britain after she was arrested for the work she did in the US and eventually deported.

How can we counteract the representation of historical agents as powerful individuals, powerful male individuals, in order to reveal the part played, for example, by Black women domestic workers in the Black freedom movement?

Regimes of racial segregation were not disestablished because of the work of leaders and presidents and legislators, but rather

because of the fact that ordinary people adopted a critical stance in the way in which they perceived their relationship to reality. Social realities that may have appeared inalterable, impenetrable, came to be viewed as malleable and transformable; and people learned how to imagine what it might mean to live in a world that was not so exclusively governed by the principle of white supremacy. This collective consciousness emerged within the context of social struggles.

Orlando Patterson has argued that the very concept of freedom—which is held so dear throughout the West, which has inspired so many world historical revolutions—that very concept of freedom must have been first imagined by slaves. During the era of the twentieth-century Black freedom movement, the human beings whose predicament most approximated that of slaves, that of the slaves from whom they were descended, were Black women domestic workers. We're referring to women who cleaned house, who cooked, who were laundrywomen.

As a matter of fact during the 1950s, some 90 percent of all Black women were domestic workers. And given the fact that the majority of people who rode buses in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1955 were Black domestic workers, why is it so difficult to imagine and acknowledge what must have been, among these Black women domestic workers, this amazing collective imagination of a future world without racial and gender and economic oppression?

Even though we may not know the names of all of those women who refused to ride the bus from poor Black communities to affluent white communities in Montgomery, Alabama, it seems that we should at least acknowledge their collective accomplishment. That boycott would not have been successful without their refusals,

without their critical refusals. And thus a figure like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. might never have emerged into prominence.

Fannie Lou Hamer—some of you may have studied the history of the US civil rights movement, the US freedom movement, you may have run across the name of Fannie Lou Hamer—she was a sharecropper and a domestic worker. She was a timekeeper on a cotton plantation in the 1960s. And she emerged as a leader of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and as a leader of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. She said, “All my life, I have been sick and tired. Now I am sick and tired of being sick and tired.”

In 1964, she achieved national prominence when she demanded that members of her Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, which was a racially integrated party, be seated at the national Democratic Party Convention at the expense of seats that were given to the all-white Democratic Party delegation. In many ways, she paved the way for Barack Obama. But that’s another story.

This is not only a year of fiftieth anniversary celebrations, but it is also the sesquicentennial of the Emancipation Proclamation. Interestingly, unfortunately, we have not been called upon to participate in any nationwide anniversary event. I remembered when you here at least had the opportunity to celebrate the bicentennial of the abolition of slavery and, of course, I think your figure is Wilberforce, so you had to also question the fact that a figure like Wilberforce would be symbolic of the abolition of slavery here.

But we haven’t even been really asked to participate in any major celebrations. Perhaps the closest we’ve come to that was the popular film *Lincoln*, which actually focuses on the effort to pass the Thirteenth Amendment. The sesquicentennial of that passage will

be coming up in two years. The historical significance of the Emancipation Proclamation is not so much that it enacted the emancipation of people of African descent; on the contrary, it was a military strategy. But if we examine the meaning of this historical moment we might better be able to grasp the failures as well as the successes of emancipation.

I have thought that perhaps we were not asked to reflect on the significance of the Emancipation Proclamation because we might realize that we were never really emancipated. But anyway, at least we might be able to understand the dialectics of emancipation, because we still live with the popular myth that Lincoln freed the slaves and that continues to be perpetuated in popular culture, even by the film *Lincoln*. Lincoln did not free the slaves.

We also live with the myth that the mid-twentieth-century civil rights movement freed the second-class citizens. Civil rights, of course, constitute an essential element of the freedom that was demanded at that time, but it was not the whole story, and maybe we’ll get to that later. Eric Foner, in his book called *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery*, wrote that, and I am quoting:

The Emancipation Proclamation is perhaps the most misunderstood of the documents that have shaped American history. Contrary to legend, Lincoln did not free the nearly four million slaves with a stroke of his pen. It had no bearing on slaves in the four border states, since they were not in rebellion. The Proclamation also exempted certain parts of the Confederacy occupied by the Union. All told, it left perhaps 750,000 slaves in bondage.

And of course popular narratives about the end of slavery produced by the pronouncing of this emancipation document by

Abraham Lincoln erase the agency of Black people themselves. But, there is something for which Lincoln should be applauded, I believe. And it is that he was shrewd enough to know that the only hope of winning the Civil War resided in creating the opportunity for Black people to fight for their own freedom, and that was the significance of the Emancipation Proclamation.

And as a matter of fact—has that film shown here? Do you remember one of the first scenes, which consists of a conversation with two Black soldiers? I think that perhaps is the most important scene in the film, so people who arrived late missed the most important moment in the film.

And in this connection I'd like to evoke W. E. B. Du Bois and chapter 4 of *Black Reconstruction*, which defined the consequence of the Emancipation Proclamation as a general strike. He uses the vocabulary of the labor movement. And as a matter of fact, chapter 4, "The General Strike," is described in the following manner: "How the Civil War meant emancipation and how the Black worker won the war by a general strike which transferred his labor from the Confederate planter to the Northern invader, in whose army lines workers began to be organized as a new labor force."

And so Du Bois argues that it was the withdrawal and bestowal of labor by slaves that won the war. And what he calls "this army of striking labor" eventually provided the two hundred thousand soldiers, "whose evident ability to fight decided the war." And these soldiers included women like Harriet Tubman, who was a soldier and a spy and had to fight for many years in order to be granted, later, on a soldier's pension.

In the aftermath of the war, we find one of the most hidden eras of US history. And that is the period of Radical Reconstruction.

It certainly remains the most radical era in the entire history of the United States of America. And this is an era that is rarely acknowledged in historical texts. We had Black elected officials, the development of public education. As a matter of fact, former slaves fought for the right to public education; that is to say, education that did not cost money as your education here costs. I'll say parenthetically—the fight was for noncommodified education. And as a matter of fact white children in the South, poor white children who had not had education, gained access to education as a direct result of the struggles of former slaves. There were progressive laws passed challenging male supremacy. This is an era that is rarely acknowledged.

During that era of course we had the creation of what we now call historically Black colleges and universities and there was economic development. This period didn't last very long. From the aftermath of the abolition of slavery, we might take 1865 as that date, until 1877 when Radical Reconstruction was overturned. And it was not only overturned, but it was erased from the historical record. So in the 1960s we confronted issues that should have been resolved in the 1860s, one hundred years later.

As a matter of fact, the Ku Klux Klan and the racial segregation that was so dramatically challenged during the mid-twentieth-century freedom movement was produced not during slavery, but rather in an attempt to manage free Black people who would have otherwise been far more successful in pushing forward democracy for all.

And so we see this dialectical development of the Black liberation movement. There is this freedom movement and then there is an attempt to narrow the freedom movement so that it fits into a much

smaller frame, the frame of civil rights. Not that civil rights is not immensely important, but freedom is more expansive than civil rights.

And as that movement grew and developed it was inspired by and in turn inspired liberation struggles in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Australia. It was not only a question of acquiring the formal rights to fully participate in society, but rather it was also about substantive rights—it was about jobs, free education, free health care, affordable housing, and also about ending the racist police occupation of Black communities.

And so in the 1960s organizations like the Black Panther Party were created. (And I should say the Black Panther Party was founded in 1966, which means that there should be a fiftieth anniversary celebration coming up!) I wonder how we are going to address, for example, the Ten-Point Program of the Black Panther Party. I'll just summarize the Ten-Point Program and you might get an idea why there are not efforts under way to guarantee a large fiftieth anniversary celebration for the Black Panther Party.

Number one was "We want freedom."

Two, full employment.

Three, an end to the robbery by the capitalists of our Black and oppressed communities—it was anticapitalist!

Number four, we want decent housing, fit for the shelter of human beings.

Number five, we want decent education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society. We want education that teaches us our true history and our role in present-day society.

And number six—which is especially significant in relation to the right-wing effort to undo the very small efforts made by the

Obama administration to produce health care for poor people in the US—we want completely free health care for all Black and oppressed people.

Number seven, we want an immediate end to police brutality and the murder of Black people, other people of color, and all oppressed people inside the United States.

Number eight, we want an immediate end to all wars of aggression—you see how current this still sounds.

Number nine, we want freedom for all Black and oppressed people now held in US federal, state, county, city, and military prisons and jails. We want trials by a jury of peers for all persons charged with so-called crimes under the laws of this country.

And finally, number ten: we want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice, peace, and people's community control of modern technology.

What is so interesting about this manifesto is that it recapitulates nineteenth-century abolitionist agendas, and of course the most advanced abolitionists in the nineteenth century recognized that slavery could not be ended by simply negatively abolishing slavery but rather that institutions had to be produced that would incorporate former slaves into a new and developing democracy.

The Black Panther Party was founded in 1966, the program recapitulates abolitionist agendas from the nineteenth century, and it continues to resonate with respect to abolitionist agendas in the twenty-first century.

A member of the Black Panther Party, Herman Wallace, who some of you may be familiar with, he was known as—in circles that continue to engage in campaigns to free political prisoners—as one of the Angola Three. He was released on the first of this month,

having spent forty-one years in solitary confinement, and he died on October 4th, three days after being released. If you're interested in Herman Wallace, you might look at the work in which he collaborated, an art piece called *The House That Herman Built*. He was asked by an artist to imagine what kind of house he wanted to live in, and this in the context of having inhabited a six-by-nine-foot cell for almost a half a century.

At the age of sixty-six, another member of the Black Panther Party, Assata Shakur, who received political asylum in Cuba after escaping from a US prison during the 1980s, was just recently designated one of the Ten Most Wanted terrorists in the world. Assata Shakur, who is a writer and an artist and who had made a life for herself in Cuba, now has to fear Blackwater-type mercenaries who might want to claim the \$2 million reward that has been offered in connection with placing her on the Ten Most Wanted terrorist list.

And I should say parenthetically, when I learned about this in May, I remembered when I was placed on the Ten Most Wanted. I didn't make the Ten Most Wanted terrorist list, I think they didn't have one at that time, but I made the Ten Most Wanted criminal list. And I was represented as armed and dangerous. And you know one of the things I remember thinking to myself was, what is this all about? What could I possibly do? And then I realized it wasn't about me at all; it wasn't about the individual at all. It was about sending a message to large numbers of people whom they thought they could discourage from involvement in the freedom struggles at that time.

Assata Shakur is one of the ten most dangerous terrorists in the world according to Homeland Security and the FBI, and then when I think about the violence of my own youth in Birmingham, Ala-

bama, where bombs were planted repeatedly and houses were destroyed and churches were destroyed and lives were destroyed, and we have yet to refer to those acts as the acts of terrorists.

Terrorism, which is represented as external, as outside, is very much a domestic phenomenon. Terrorism very much shaped the history of the United States of America. Acknowledging continuities between nineteenth-century antislavery struggles, twentieth-century civil rights struggles, twenty-first century abolitionist struggles—and when I say abolitionist struggles I'm referring primarily to the abolition of imprisonment as the dominant mode of punishment, the abolition of the prison-industrial complex—acknowledging these continuities requires a challenge to the closures that isolate the freedom movement of the twentieth century from the century preceding and the century following.

It is incumbent upon us not only to recognize these temporal continuities but also to recognize horizontal continuities, links with a whole range of movements and struggles today. And I want very specifically to mention the ongoing sovereignty struggles in Palestine. In Palestine, where not too long ago, Palestinian Freedom Riders set out to contest the apartheid practices of the state of Israel.

But I have been speaking too long. And despite my critique of closures I am compelled by time restrictions to close my talk this evening. So I want to try to close with an opening. All around the world people are saying that we want to struggle together as global communities to create a world free of xenophobia and racism. A world from which poverty has been expunged, and the availability of food is not subject to the demands of capitalist profit. I would say a world where a corporation like Monsanto would be deemed criminal. Where homophobia and transphobia can truly be called

historical relics along with the punishment of incarceration and institutions of confinement for disabled people, and where everyone learns how to respect the environment and all of the creatures, human and nonhuman alike, with whom we cohabit our worlds.



LET
THE
CROPS
ROT
IN
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FIELDS

LET THE CROPS ROT IN THE FIELDS:

A Call For New Strategy in The National Movement Against Mass Incarceration and Prison Slavery – Short Version

By Bennu Hannibal Ra-Sun, w/contribution from Kinetik Justice Amun

FREE ALABAMA MOVEMENT

After a period of over 40 years of an accelerated rate of incarceration, the issue of Mass Incarceration and Prison Slavery have now reached its crescendo.

Spurred on by factors that included racism, capitalism, free labor, and a politically motivated desire to provide jobs to a valued voting block of rural, conservative white citizens by building prisons in rural and agricultural areas that had been decimated by the Industrial Revolution and the outsourcing of jobs to China, India, Indonesia, etc.

Then, once the prisons were built, the government manufactured a “war on drugs” designed to fill those newly built prisons with black, brown and poor whites who had been rendered unemployable by corporate downsizing and outsourcing in the early 70’s, and who were considered a strain on social programs, unwanted competitors for limited jobs, and ideal candidates for corporations that needed a large labor pool for forced slave labor.

Mass incarceration has now culminated in a for-profit Prison Industrialized Complex that now holds over 2.5 million men, women and children hostage for the sole and exclusive purpose of exploitation and free labor.

Today, January 2015, the people in America’s prisons, mostly black, brown (and white), and all poor, now make up a free (or penny wages) labor force for a 500 billion dollar per-year industry that is producing a range of products and providing services so broad and extensive that it touches every area of the U.S. economy.

Virtually EVERY person in prison, our families, friends and supporters, and even every organization that states that they are against mass incarceration prison slavery, are all contributing financially to the very companies that are exploiting the people through mass incarceration and prison slavery.

Have you ate at McDonald’s or Wendy’s lately? Shopped at WalMart or Victoria’s Secret? How about that Dell computer? Have you used a customer service center? Where do you bank at, Wells Fargo? Are you in the military? Have you seen a soldier in that finely stitched uniform with night vision goggles? Do you work for a State University or agency that gets its furniture repaired somewhere?? Or that purchases large amounts of cleaning supplies, or hand-made brooms, mops, etc.? How many of these companies do you do business with?

Well, if you get up out of the bed and do anything more than breathe, chances are you contribute to the bottom line of a company that is engaged in warehousing millions of people for exploitation through mass incarceration and prison slavery.

Just to get a general idea of how pervasive this modern-day forced labor, i.e. slave system is, check out this article titled: Corporations Involved in Profiting off Prison Labour. Prison for Profit Dirty Secrets¹ :

“Prison labor— with no union protection, overtime pay, vacation days, pensions, benefits, health and safety protection, or Social Security withholding — also makes complex components for McDonnell Douglas/Boeing’s F-15 fighter aircraft, the General Dynamics/Lockheed Martin F-16, and Bell/Textron’s Cobra helicopter. Prison labor produces night-vision goggles, body armor, camouflage uniforms, radio and communication devices, and lighting systems and components for 30-mm to 300-mm battleship anti-aircraft guns, along with land mine sweepers and electro-optical equipment for the BAE Systems Bradley Fighting Vehicle’s laser rangefinder. Prisoners recycle toxic electronic equipment and overhaul military vehicles.”

For a listing of the many other companies, products and services, read the article: Corporations Involved in Profiting off Prison Labour. Prison for Profit Dirty Secrets²:

Don’t Trust the Mainstream Media

All across America, one can’t turn on the news, read a newspaper, or follow social media without seeing that mass incarceration and prison slavery (‘corrections’ or ‘prisons’ in mainstream terms) have become a national problem. The ‘problem’ though, as being reported in the mainstream media (msm), is not about the human devastation that mass incarceration has wrought, but about the costs associated with maintaining budgets to keep so many people in prison.

The mainstream media, which is controlled by the business elite no less than our current politicians, are reporting on this ‘problem,’ but with no real solutions being offered.

CAUTION: I must add that the reason the msm is reporting on this issue is because the prison profiteers are promoting a ‘reform’ plan to the public that in reality is a new scheme that has been thoroughly exposed by N. Heitzeg and K. Whitlock in their Smoke and Mirrors series,³ to expand the privatized prison industry directly into the communities with community corrections, privatized parole/probation, drug rehabilitation centers, traffic court, and more, with the sole purpose of releasing low level offenders, who will then be required to pay a ransom to enjoy a semblance of freedom.

Simply stated, every facet of the criminal justice enterprise will be contracted out to private for-profit businesses, and the human traffickers who own these businesses will become the new slave masters. The businessmen and women will make their campaign contributions, the politicians will ensure that the laws are in place, the police will make the arrest, the prosecutors and judges will guarantee the convictions, and the prisoner will be a slave.

The New Strategy: Using Direct Economic Action to Affect Change

When determining the best strategy to challenge Mass Incarceration and Prison Slavery, it is essential that we step back and take a look at the entire system. We must identify the fundamentals of what makes this system work and why this system exists. Once we thoroughly understand the underpinnings of the system of Mass Incarceration we can begin to see why the

old strategies and tactics have not and will not bring about any meaningful change. Then we can begin developing a New Strategy that attacks Mass Incarceration at its core.

Just like the Institution of Chattel Slavery, Mass Incarceration is in essence an Economic System which uses human beings as its nuts and bolts. Therefore, our new approach must be Economically based, and must be focused on the factors of production- the people being forced into this slave labor.

Our Three-Part Strategy

- 1) Organize prison shutdowns at prisons with major economic industries (tag plants, fleet services, food distribution centers, agriculture, etc.)
- 2) Call for a nationwide leaflet campaign, protests, and boycotts of McDonald's restaurants, which is one of the major corporation that has a national presence and that benefits from prison slavery, in addition to others like WalMart, Victoria Secret, AT&T, Wells Fargo Banks, Wendy's, GEO/CCA private prison companies that are listed on the NYSE, and more.
- 3) Having our families, friends, supporters, activists, and others holding protests at the prisons where the people are mass incarcerated and oppressed.

PART 1 : "SHUTDOWNS/WORK STRIKES"

- 1) Organize prison shutdowns at prisons with major economic industries (tag plants, fleet services, food distribution centers, agriculture, etc.)

Remember, we are working against a half trillion dollar system that is controlled by businessmen and women who are the modern-day slave profiteers. And just like any business, their focus is on the bottom line. From this viewpoint, we must organize work stoppages at prisons with economic industries that are operated by slave labor. The impact of a work stoppage is immediate and significant, as production is shutdown and profit margins plummet around the country.

Believe me, if you want to have commissioners, politicians and the like hunting you down, organize a strike. You won't have to call them, because they will call you. Prison industry is more than just license plates. Now it includes military, food, clothes, mining, recycling, call centers, car parts, cleaning supplies, printing, and so much more.

And when we organize, we have to demand that real "reforms" take place that will afford everyone an opportunity to earn our freedom, NOT JUST EARN A CHECK FOR OUR LABOR, and that fundamental changes be made throughout the system.

Experience has shown us at FREE ALABAMA MOVEMENT that this approach is more effective than hunger strikes, marching and writing letters combined, as those strategies will only bring publicity, lip service and some changes, while work stoppages shut down the entire economic system and gets directly into their pockets, which brings the movers and shakers to the prison for negotiations.

PART 2: McDonald's

Ronald McDonald: A Slavery Master in Clown's Clothing !!!!

When deciding on which company to protest we have to devise a strategy that we can use nationwide: We can't boycott all companies because there are simply too many corporations involved. What we have to do is focus on just one of them at a time that uses prison slave labor and that is large enough and visible enough to bring a true awareness about prison slavery, and target that one.

Starting off we have identified McDonald's as a company that presents itself as family-oriented, but which uses prison slavery to produce a number of goods:

"McDonald's uses inmates to produce frozen foods. Inmates process beef for patties. They may also process bread, milk and chicken products."4

We will start off our McDonald's protest by locating and reaching out to the people in the prisons where McDonald's products are produced. At the same time, we will begin letter-writing campaigns to their investors and shareholders, while also leaving leaflets/pamphlets on the cars of their customers at McDonald's restaurants nationwide, and organize protests at their storefronts, in a mall or headquarters, or wherever we can, and call for boycotts of their stores to force them to stop using products that are manufactured by forced prison slave labor.

But we focus all of our attention on one corporation at a time, instead of using a scattered approach of multiple orgs spread out thinly over several corporate fronts.

When one falls, we move on to the next prison profiteer, which can be Victoria's Secret, Wal Mart, GEO, CCA, JPay, Keefe, or something.

Part 3: Consolidating our Resources

HAVING OUR FAMILIES, FRIENDS, ACTIVISTS, AND SUPPORTERS ALL GALVANIZED AT A SELECT PRISON TO ENGAGE IN PROTESTS AND TO SHOW SUPPORT FOR THE PEOPLE ON THE INSIDE WHO ARE BEING OPPRESSED.

This strategic move is just as important as the strikes, because it brings all of the people together who oppose mass incarceration and prison slavery. We can't have a unified Movement Against Mass Incarceration and Prison Slavery if we are in a long-distance relationship with our supporters, organizers, activists and others who support our cause. We have to get everyone organized at the prisons, so that we can confront the system at the site of its oppression: the prisons.

By having our supporters in one location for each State, we maximize our resources, increase our strength in numbers, and we move with a unified front.

Very little can be done by the State at this point except to meet our demands.

The protests against police brutality are taking place at police stations. The workers at Wal Mart are protesting at WalMart. The Occupy Wall Street Movement protested on Wall Street. Therefore, the Movement and fight against mass incarceration must take place at the prisons !!!

"The Old Way"

Now, let's take a look at the familiar strategies of Movement Against Mass Incarceration and Prison Slavery, and see why we need a change in strategy:

- 1) Hunger Strikes
- 2) Marches and Protests at State Capitols, (as opposed to demonstrations at the prisons where they should be)
- 3) Letter writing campaigns, petitions and phone calls, etc.

1) HUNGER STRIKES

The demonstrations put on by the Men and Women in California (and Georgia, Washington State, and Texas) showed us all that with leadership and unity, we can defeat mass incarceration with the right strategy. But, we also learned that, while we did see progress in some areas, it has a minimal impact on the system of mass incarceration.

We have to strategize with the understanding that we are dealing with modern day slave profiteers. These businessmen will gladly let us die from starvation so long as their assembly lines keep moving.

"Leasing convicts to private businesses made a tidy fortune for both state and local governments, especially after slaves were emancipated. In 1878, 73% of Alabama's entire state revenue came from prison labor. Reconstruction-era plantation owners, though, were hardly incentivized to care about their charges: When any of their starving workers died, they simply asked the state for new ones, at no cost to their bottom line."⁵

The net effect on the bottom line from a hunger strike is negligible. This is not going to get the response we need, so we have to do more.

2) MARCHES

Sure, the traditional marches bring attention to issues and they bring people together, but they simply don't bring about much results. If we must march, then let's March at the prisons where mass incarceration and prison slavery are taking place at.

As I said above, when the people protest against police brutality in Ferguson, Memphis, and California, they are doing it at the police stations.

When "BANTHEBOAT"-activists protested in support of Palestine, they protested at ports. We have to ask ourselves: If we are protesting against mass incarceration and prison slavery, then why aren't we doing it at the prisons where our economic strength can be felt?

Just like we saw in California with the hunger strikes, the families and supporters showed their support at the prison. The people in the prisons can see that support and receive the boost in morale that will be needed to carry this thing through. The meeting place is at the prisons!!!

3) LETTER WRITING, PETITIONS, ETC.

Letter writing campaigns and making phone calls are still effective, but we have to change who we are targeting and what we are attempting to communicate.

Letters/calls help when written to alternative media sources and other activists, organizations and supporters of our Movement, to let them know that we are striking so that we can inform other prisons in other states, so that they can join in also.

Letters/petitions also help when we target companies that are using prison made good to let them know that we will boycott them if they don't stop, and it also helps to contact their customers and let them know that they are purchasing slave-made good. But the old habit of writing politicians and commissioners won't work in today's world, and just haven't produced meaningful results.

It's time to find a new target audience and bring attention to a new strategy and a new message!!

Is The Current Movement Against Mass Incarceration Spread Too Thin?

In F.A.M. we strategize around bringing all of the forces and resources together from each individual state into one collective whole. Groups that are fighting against the death penalty, solitary confinement, children in prison, voting rights, mentally ill people in prison, free labor, disenfranchisement, parole reform, and a few other issues. We will address all of these issues in our "FREEDOM BILL", so everyone and every organization that is fighting against these issues should all be fighting together.

Note: Each State should draft their own FREEDOM BILL

The best way that we see to do this in Alabama is to identify the most economically important prison(s) in Alabama, and start organizing shutdowns until all of the strategically important prisons are shut down. One main prison will serve as the "headquarters" for our families, organizers and supporters, etc. At that point, the negotiations begin as to how to tear down the system of exploitation and create a new system based on the structure as outlined in the FREEDOM BILL, which promotes Education, Rehabilitation and Re-Entry Preparedness.

Take for example the situation that just occurred in California with the various lawsuits that the State fought for over 20 years (See the Plata decision by the U.S. Supreme Court) and passage of the Prop 47 law that went into effect. Despite the fact of California's prison system being overcrowded with a 160% occupancy rate, the State's prison officials and Attorney General's office still refused to budge on releasing people who were eligible.

"Most of those prisoners now work as groundskeepers, janitors and in prison kitchens, with wages that range from 8 cents to 37 cents per hour. Lawyers for Attorney General Kamala Harris had argued in court that if forced to release these inmates early, prisons would lose an important labor pool.

Prisoners' lawyers countered that the corrections department could hire public employees to do the work." (LA Times, 11/14/2014 Federal judges order California to expand prison releases⁶)

As for the Firefighters, the Attorney General's Office concluded that these men who risked their lives for the State, who saved the State over \$1,000,000,000 billion dollars annually, were simply too valuable a commodity to release, even though these men worked outside of prison every day and were clearly not a threat to society anymore:

“About half of the people fighting wildland fires on the ground for the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire) are incarcerated: over 4,400 prisoners, housed at 42 inmate fire camps, including three for women.

Together, says Capt. Jorge Santana, the California Department of Corrections & Rehabilitation (CDCR) liaison who supervises the camps, they save the state over \$1 billion a year.”⁷

While it is extremely rare to receive these type of admissions from the State, what we witnessed in the California litigation is the reality of modern slavery: Yes, the people have an education and are already working in society, but, NO!!!, they can't be release because it would cost too much to replace their free or penny labor!!

This episode highlights why the strategy of work strikes/shutdowns being promoted by FREE ALABAMA MOVEMENT, and now joined by FREE MISSISSIPPI MOVEMENT, is the key to bringing the system of mass incarceration and prison slavery to its death: If we are been held solely for our labor and exploitation even after educating and rehabilitating ourselves, then why should we continue to work? If the firefighters in California can't be freed because they save the State a billion dollars that they don't otherwise have, then why don't the firefighters go on a workstrike? The fires will continue to burn until they either come up with 1 billion dollars to train other firefighters, or they can release them and then hire them to do the job that at prevailing wages.

Also please note that the State is saving one billion dollars just on the firefighters alone. How much more pressure would a work strike/shutdown put on the CDCR or any other prison system, when all the kitchen workers go on strike? All the maintenance and electrical workers? All the garbage workers? The yard crew? Gym and library workers? And then the BIG whammy, when ALL of the factory and farm workers in prisons go on strike at one time, and this strike is spread regionally and nationally?

The financial numbers and fallout from such a strike will be felt from Wall Street to Main Street, and every street in between. This is the power of economics at play, and this strategy is the only strategy that will stop mass incarceration in its tracks.

WE MUST LET THE CROPS ROT IN THE FIELD IF WE AREN'T RECEIVING BENEFIT OF THE HARVEST

LET THE CROPS ROT IN THE FIELD is a proven strategy that was passed down to us from our Ancestors from the slave plantations that was used to disrupt the economics of the field. The harvest of the planter season was reaped when the crops were picked from the field and sold on the open market. When the slave master had invested all that he owned into his next crop (prison factories), the slaves would wait until just before the harvest and rebel against the slave system by 'going on strike' and causing the crops to rot in the field. This tactic would completely ruin the slave master's investment.

While these crops were rotting in the field, the slave master would come down from the big house, make nice and beg the slaves to go back to work

But when that didn't work, the slave master, just like the modern prison commissioners and wardens, would then result to threats and violence. But those determined for their freedom would resist and fight to the end.

In the end, when the crops were left to rot in the field, the slave master would sometimes lose his plantation if he had used it as collateral to secure a loan from the bank to plant. This is what happens to a prison system that is built upon the exploitation and free labor of the people incarcerated: when the laborers stop working, the free labor prison system collapses because there isn't any revenue coming in to finance the system of 30,000 people in Alabama, 23,000 in Mississippi, 160,000 in California, or 2.5 million nationwide, who still must be fed, still must be provided medical care, still must have lights, water and basic hygiene.

These obligations and costs don't stop, but the means to pay for them — the revenue that is produced by our labor — stops when we stop.

In 2014, Alabama has a 400 million dollar budget to run its prisons, which is paid by the sale of the products and services that are manufactured by the slave labor from the people incarcerated.

All told, Alabama is making anywhere from 2 to 3 billion dollars each year from our labor, fines, fees, canteen, phone calls, etc. while over \$500,000,000,000 dollars is made nationwide off of prison slave labor.

If we are to end Mass Incarceration and Prison Slavery, which only those caught up in the slave system can do, then we must Unify nationwide from inside of these prisons and we must stop our labor and LET THE CROPS ROT IN THE FIELD.

Notes:

See online at: <http://truthcdm.com/corporations-involved-in-profiting-off-prison-labour-prison-for-profit-dirty-secrets/>

Idem: <http://truthcdm.com/corporations-involved-in-profiting-off-prison-labour-prison-for-profit-dirty-secrets/>

See: truth-out.org/news/item/27125-smoke-and-mirrors-inside-the-new-bipartisan-prison-reform-agenda

See: Atlanta Black Star, Oct. 10th, 2014: 12 Mainstream Corporations Benefiting from the Prison Industrial Complex <http://atlantablackstar.com/2014/10/10/12-mainstream-corporations-benefiting-from-the-prison-industrial-complex/>

See: BuzzFeed News: The Prisoners Fighting California's Wildfires, Oct 31st, 2014 <http://www.buzzfeed.com/amandachicagolewis/the-prisoners-fighting-californias-wildfires#.ajPXZzq8xr>

See: LA Times, Nov. 14, 2014 <http://www.latimes.com/local/political/la-me-ff-federal-judges-order-state-to-release-more-prisoners-20141114-story.html>

See: BuzzFeed News: The Prisoners Fighting California's Wildfires, Oct 31st, 2014 <http://www.buzzfeed.com/amandachicagolewis/the-prisoners-fighting-californias-wildfires#.ajPXZzq8xr>

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If we look closely we also see that gender itself cannot be reconciled with a slave's genealogical isolation; that, for the Slave, there is no surplus value to be restored to the time of labor; that no treaties between Blacks and Humans are in Washington waiting to be signed and ratified; and that, unlike the Settler in the Native American political imagination, there is no place like Europe to which the Slave can return Human beings.

**THE
BLACK
LIBERATION
ARMY
& THE
PARADOX
OF POLITICAL
ENGAGEMENT**

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THE BLACK LIBERATION ARMY & THE PARADOX OF POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

FRANK B. WILDERSON, III

A BREAK IN THE ARC OF AUTHORIZATION

On October 22, 1970, the Black Liberation Army detonated a timed-release antipersonnel bomb at the funeral of a San Francisco police officer. This, according to the Justice Department and BLA sanctioned literature, was the first of their forty to sixty paramilitary actions launched between 1969 and 1981.¹ Even though they probably never numbered more than four hundred insurgents, nationwide, working in small, often unconnected cells, their armed response to the violence that enmeshes Black life was probably the most consistent and politically legible response since the slave revolts that occurred between 1800 and 1840.

Twenty years after the Black Liberation Army launched its first attack on the state, Toni Morrison, appearing on Bill Moyers' PBS talk show *A World of Ideas* was queried about the moral ground which Sethe stood on when she killed her child, Beloved, in order to save her from slavery. What right, in other words, did she have to offer her child death as a sanctuary from bondage? Herein lies the paradox of political engagement when the subject of politics is the slave. "It was the right thing to do," Toni Morrison said, "but she had no right to do it."²

The analogy between on the one hand, Sethe and Beloved, and, on the other hand, insurgents from The Black Liberation Army is a structural analogy which highlights how both the BLA insurgents and Toni Morrison's characters (Toni Morrison herself!) are void of relationality. In such a void, death is a synonym for sanctuary. When death is a synonym for sanctuary, political engagement is, to say the least, a paradoxical undertaking.

The political communiqué is that text which the revolutionary offers the world in order to make her/his thought and actions legible to all, if acceptable only to some. The political communiqué attends to the legitimacy of tactics ("the right thing to do"), and it attends to the ethics of strategy ("the right to do it"). It can only succeed if its author has a "right" to authorization. But Blacks do not have a right to authorization because our status as beings who are sentient but socially dead means that our "everyday practices...occur in the default of the political, in the absence of the rights of man or the assurances of the self-possessed individual, and perhaps even with a 'person,' in the usual meaning of the term" (Hartman 65). This means that our existence is not *our* existence, but is embedded in "the master's prerogative" (Hartman and Wilderson 188).

20 Filial: any community one is born into: nation, religion, ethnicity, family. Affilial: a voluntary association, a community one chooses to enter. In *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, Edward Said describes affiliation as “the transition from a failed idea or possibility of filiation to a kind of compensatory order that, whether it is a party, an institution, a culture, a set of beliefs, or even a world-vision, provides men and women with a new form of relationship, which I have been calling affiliation but which is also a new system. Now whether we look at this new affiliative mode of relationship as it is to be found among conservative writers like Eliot or among progressive writers like Lukacs and, in his own special way, Freud, we will find the deliberately explicitly goal of using that new order to reinstate vestiges of the kind of authority associated in the past with filiative order. This, finally, is the third part of the pattern. Freud’s psychoanalytic guild and Lukacs’ notion of the vanguard party are no less providers of what we might call a restored authority. The new hierarchy or, if it is less a hierarchy than a community, the new community is greater than the individual adherent or member, just as the father is greater by virtue of seniority than the sons and daughters; the ideas, values, and the systematic totalizing world-view validated by the new affiliative order are all bearers of authority too, with the result that something resembling a cultural system is established. Thus if a filial relationship was held together by natural bonds and natural forms of authority—involving obedience, fear, love, respect, and instinctual conflict—the new affiliative relationship changes these bonds into what seem to be transpersonal forms [for our purposes, mediating objects]—such as guild consciousness, consensus, collegiality, professional respect, class and the hegemony of a dominant culture. The filiative scheme belongs to the realms of nature and of “life,” whereas affiliation belongs exclusively to culture and society.” (Said 19-20)

21 This may seem paradoxical given my earlier assertions that the slave is barred from subjectivity. I am not going back on that here, but it must be remembered that though the slave stands in no dialectical relation to the Human subject, s/he facilitates, makes possible, the legibility of that very subjectivity from which s/he is barred. As Hartman writes, “The slave is the object or the ground that makes possible the existence of the bourgeois subject and, by negation or contradistinction, defines liberty, citizenship, and the enclosures of the social body” (*Scenes of Subjection*...p. 62). And, the political and interpersonal striving for that very subjectivity which is unattainable characterizes the conscious intentionality of the Black political communiqué (as well as of Black love songs) even though (or perhaps because) a Hegelian outcome is impossible.

22 For a critique of Hardt’s and Negri’s notion of the withering away of civil society, from a Black perspective, see my *Red, White & Black*, 247–284.

To the extent that the arrangement of domination in the antebellum south (and in the one-thousand-three-hundred-year enslavement of people who, through slavery, became known as Africans (Anderson *The Black Holocaust for Beginners*)) is to be thought of as history, it should be thought of as “a history of the present” (Hartman and Wilderson 190); as a schematization of Black life which changes in important but ultimately inessential ways.³ Literary and cultural theorist and historian Saidiya Hartman writes, “If slave status was the primary determinant of racial identity in the antebellum period, with ‘free’ being equivalent to ‘white’ and slave status defining blackness, how does the production and valuation of race change in the context of freedom and equality?” (118) The question, of course, is rhetorical; its purpose is to alert us to the blind spots which critical theorists have when thinking relations of power through the figure of the Black, the Slave: the end of the chattel technologies of slavery is often transposed as the end of slavery itself; which, in turn, permits the facile drawing of political analogies between Blacks and workers, and between Blacks and postcolonial subjects. Hartman goes on to highlight the theoretical pitfalls which result from this ruse of analogy.

Legal liberalism as well as critical race theory, has examined issues of race, racism, and equality by focusing on the exclusion and marginalization of those subjects and bodies marked as different and/or inferior. The disadvantage of this approach is that the proposed remedies and correctives to the problem— inclusion, protection, and greater access to opportunity—do not ultimately challenge the economy of racial production or its truth claims or interrogate the exclusion constitutive of the norm but instead seek to gain equality, liberation, and redress within its confines. (Hartman 234)

This explains why the Slave’s political communiqué raises a specter of something far more portentous than the call to arms of a revolutionary Marxist or postcolonial political communiqué. In this essay, I argue that Marxist and postcolonial armed struggle, though radically destabilizing of the status quo, are also endeavors which, through their narrative capacity to assimilate “universal” frameworks of liberation and redress, unwittingly work to reconstitute the paradigms they seek to destroy. They interrogate and attack the violence which constitutes bourgeois modes of authorization in the hopes of instantiating analytic modes of authorization. A Black Liberation Army political communiqué becomes symptomatic of an undertaking that threatens authorization itself.

The arc of an emancipatory progression which ends in either equality, liberation, or redress, in other words, a narrative of liberation, is marked by the three generic

moments that one finds in any narrative: a progression from equilibrium (the spatial-temporal point prior to oppression), disequilibrium (capitalist political economy or the arrival and residence taking of the settler), and equilibrium restored/reorganized/ or reimagined (the dictatorship of the proletariat or the settler's removal from one's land).⁴ But this generic progression, which positions the *Human* subject within a dynamic, dialogical context (a terrain pregnant with uncertainty and multiplicities of outcomes, a terrain on which one is not merely an object of uncertainty but a subject of it) fortifies and extends the *Slave's* "carceral continuum,"⁵ the time of no time at all. This is why the Black insurgent's communiqué is a torturous clash between, on the one hand, an unconscious realization that structural violence has elaborated Blacks so as to make our existence *void of analogy* and, on the other hand, a plaintive yearning to be recognized and incorporated by analogy nonetheless. Black Liberation Army member Assata Shakur's "To My People" communiqué is illustrative of this paradox.

Assata Shakur was captured on the New Jersey Turnpike in 1973, during a shootout with state troopers that left one BLA paramilitary dead and one police officer dead. She was shot in the chest and then dragged into the roadside and kicked and punched by police officers who demanded to know in which direction her comrade Sundiata Acoli had fled. She spent four years in and out of court on trumped-up charges for a series of so-called crimes, such as bank expropriation. She was acquitted on all charges except for the murder of a New Jersey state trooper. Forensic evidence showed that she could not have fired a gun that evening; and the trajectory of bullets that are, to this day, still lodged in her chest indicated that when the police shot her, her hands were in the air in a universally recognized sign of surrender. (Shakur, *Assata: An Autobiography*, 3-4, xix, xi-xviii)

Assata spent her first month in the Middlesex County Workhouse hammering out a communiqué intended to counter the police and press campaigns portraying her as a common criminal "going around," she wrote, "shooting down cops for the hell of it. I had to make a statement" (Shakur, 49). Her attorney, Evelyn Williams, who was also Assata's aunt, smuggled a tape recorder into the prison; and, on July 4th, 1973, America's Day of Independence, her communiqué was broadcast on many radio stations.

It begins like this:

Black brothers, Black sisters, i want you to know that i love you and i hope that somewhere in your hearts you have love for me. My name is Assata

Gerhard Richter's October 18, 1977 Paintings"; Sarah Colvin's "Ulrike Meinhof as Woman and Terrorist: Cultural Discourses of Violence and Virtue"; Julian Preece's "The Lives of the RAF Revisited: The Biographical Turn"; Gerd Koenen's "Armed Innocence, or 'Hitler's Children' Revisited." A notable exception to the interpretive frame which exhibits an ease of transfers and connections between filiation and affiliation culminating in the subordination of the latter to the former, is Joanne Wright's *Terrorist Propaganda: The Red Army Faction and the Provisional IRA, 1968-86*. It is a book of the 1980s, not of the 21st century. So it does not ooze with affect and melancholia which typifies someone looking back on their youth (or the youth of their parents). However, the last section of the book, titled "Propaganda," Wright inevitably fortifies and extends the authority of the Symbolic Order, by way of a triangulation between The Uncommitted Audience, the Sympathetic Audience, and the Active Audience, which has strong resonances with Jeremy Varon's state, terrorist, and public triangulation. Even though her points of attention diverge from Varon's, authorization is still vouchsafed via third term mediation. See Wright pp. 73-173.

17 In addition to being the first woman named as a Most Wanted Terrorist, Assata Shakur is only the second domestic terrorist to be added to the list. <http://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/2013/may/joanne-chesimard-first-woman-named-most-wanted-terrorists-list> (Accessed August 3, 2013)

18 Rosenau is an analyst for the Center for Naval Analyses (CNA), a federally funded research and development center which has served the Navy and US intelligence agencies since its founding in 1942. He works in CNA's Strategic Studies division where all of the analysts are American citizens and have security clearance. On the one hand, Rosenau's article "'Our Backs Are Against the Wall': The Black Liberation Army and Domestic Terrorism in 1970s America," labors as an obituary of what he describes as "a once-notorious but now largely forgotten terrorist group" (177) — à la Pluchinsky's obituary of the RAF. But it also labors as a cautionary tale, imploring law enforcement not become so fixated on Islamic fundamentalist that they take their eyes off of Black folks here at home. To this end, he reminds his readers that "the BLA was directly responsible for at least 20 fatalities, making it far more lethal than the WUO [Weather Underground Organization] or SLA [Symbionese Liberation Army]. Among the most notorious BLA's actions were the 1973 killing of a New Jersey state trooper and the prison escape in 1979 of BLA leader Joanne Chesimard (also known as Assata Shakur) who had been convicted of the murder and today remains a fugitive in Cuba" (177).

19 Lemaire, Anika. *Jacques Lacan*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977: 55–56. Quoted in Feldman 289.

and *Revolutionary Armed Struggle* [pamphlet] Abraham Guillen Press/Arm the Spirit—a handbook on revolutionary armed struggle written by an anonymous Black Liberation Army soldier in the 1970s.

7 “[T]he compulsion to repeat is an ungovernable process originating in the unconscious. As a result of its action, the subject deliberately places himself in distressing situations, thereby repeating an old experience, but he does not recall this prototype; on the contrary, he has the strong impression that the situation is fully determined by the circumstances of the moment. (Laplanche and Pontalis *The Language of Psycho-Analysis*, 78)

8 But I should make it clear that this does not mean that the Black has no inner life and that psychoanalysis is of no use to us in thinking about that inner life. It just means that such a journey involves both a symptomatic analysis of the text anal (and, by extension, the Black’s inner life), as well as an epistemological critique of psychoanalysis itself—which does not involve a wholesale rejection of it. This dual intervention has been the focus of David Marriott’s work and, of course, of Frantz Fanon’s work as well. See Marriott’s “Frantz Fanon’s War,” in *On Black Men*.

9 Jared Sexton, private conversation.

10 The late Safiya Bukhari, a Black Panther turned BLA paramilitary writes, “The Republic of New Afrika was founded in the right of self-determination of Black people in the United States. Its name refers to the five states in the South (Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, Georgia, and South Carolina) that Black people developed and enriched with their labor and where they have lived for more than four hundred years. Because of this history, these states form the land base of an independent nation for whose liberation Black people fight.” (Bukhari, *The War Before...* 42)

11 Attributed to Ulrike Meinhof, “The Urban Guerrilla Concept,” 1971. In O’Boyle 32–33. (Italics mine)

12 This is also true of the latter communiqués, such as the April 1992 RAF communiqué which announced a ceasefire in exchange for the release of prisoners and the easing of draconian living conditions for those who would remain behind bars.

13 Jeremy Varon’s work is characteristic of a uniquely American way of raising tactics to the level of a principled concern. He is also amongst the most prolific. See his *Bringing the War Home: The Weather Underground, The Red Army Faction, and Revolutionary Violence in the Sixties and Seventies*.

14 Edward Said 1984, p. 20.

15 Said, *ibid*, p. 20.

16 See, for example, Neal Ascherson’s “The Wife Who Became Public Enemy No. 1”; Eric Kligerman’s “Transgenerational Hauntings: Screening the Holocaust in

Shakur (slave name joane chesimard), and i am a revolutionary. A Black revolutionary. By that i mean that i have declared war on all forces that have raped our women, castrated our men, and kept our babies empty-bellied.

I have declared war on the rich who prosper on our poverty, the politicians who lie to us with smiling faces, and all the mindless, heartless robots who protect them and their property.

I am a Black revolutionary, and, as such, i am a victim of all the wrath, hatred, and slander that amerika is capable of. Like all other Black revolutionaries, amerika is trying to lynch me.

I am a Black revolutionary woman, and because of this i have been charged with and accused of every alleged crime in which a woman was believed to have participated. The alleged crimes in which only men were supposedly involved, i have been accused of planning. They have plastered pictures alleged to be me in post offices, airports, hotels, police cars, subways, banks, television, and newspapers. They have offered over fifty thousand dollars in rewards for my capture and they have issued orders to shoot on sight and shoot to kill.

I am a Black revolutionary, and, by definition, that makes me part of the Black Liberation Army. The pigs have used their newspapers and TVs to paint the Black Liberation Army as vicious, brutal, mad-dog criminals. They have called us gangsters and gun molls and have compared us to such characters as john dillinger and ma barker. It should be clear, it must be clear to anyone who can think, see, or hear, that we are the victims. The victims and not the criminals. (Shakur 49–50)

The conscious declarations of Assata’s communiqué—its Marxist/postcolonial intention⁶—struggle to assert something within Blackness that is prior to the devastation that defines Blackness (Judy); but the force of the repetition compulsion with which the communiqué lists, illustrates, and returns to this devastation is vertiginous. “i am a victim of all the wrath, hatred, and slander that amerika is capable of...amerika is trying to lynch me...The pigs have used their newspapers and TVs to paint the Black Liberation Army as vicious, brutal, mad-dog criminals” (Shakur 49–50).

The communiqué contains few narrative fragments which can be cobbled together with enough muscle to check this devastation, to act on it in a contrapuntal way: This is not a case of the “compulsion to repeat,” which Freud describes in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, whereby the repetition is “something that seems [...] more elementary, more instinctual than the pleasure principle which it over-rides” (Freud 23).⁷ Assata Shakur’s communiqué contains no political strategy or therapeutic agency through which the violence which engulfs her flesh can be separated from the text’s compulsion to repeat that violence.

In a “normal” situation, a therapeutic and/or political intervention could be made to help, in the case of therapy, the subject become aware of a distinction between the violence she may indeed encounter from the state and a range of psychic alternatives to letting that violence consume her unconscious; and, in the case of politics, the vision elaborated by a movement could help the subject imagine a new day, and thus imbue state violence with a temporal finitude (“our day will come” as Irish Republicans used to say, and, so it did), even if the subject doesn’t live to experience that finitude. But recourse to political and therapeutic resources presumes a potential for separating skeins of unconscious compulsion (the compulsion to repeat) from the violence whose incursions are being compulsively repeated. This presumption only works for Human subjects, subjects whose relationship to violence is contingent upon their transgressions. The Slave’s relationship to violence is not contingent, it is gratuitous—it bleeds out beyond the grasp of narration, from the Symbolic to the Real, where therapy and politics have no purchase.⁸

In declaring “i have declared war on all forces that have raped our women, castrated our men, and kept our babies empty-bellied,” she claims, for herself and for Black people, in general, a gendered integrity which the unconscious symptoms of her text (the violent swirl) indicate are *not* recognized by the world in which she lives. It is as though, by positing these horrific sexual violations in a manner which is properly gendered, one which relegates castration to Black men and rape to Black women, the communiqué offers her (and her Black readers) the protection of a sanctuary that they otherwise might not have. It is not, of course, sanctuary from actual rapes and castration but the sanctuary of gendered recognition and incorporation which emplotment in a narrative continuum provides: the event of gender (equilibrium) is now being violated, by rape or castration (disequilibrium), and this turn of events is the essence of agency, through which equilibrium can be restored. But “if the definition of the crime of rape,” as Hartman argues:

with the ontological and epistemological time of modernity itself, in which Blackness and Slaveness are imbricated *ab initio*.” My argument, below, is that one kind of sentient being (the worker and the postcolonial) experiences violence within historical time (a temporality that can be known as temporality); whereas another kind of sentient being, the Black-qua-Slave, is constituted ontologically by violence. One should be alive to the oxymoronic, indeed, paradoxical nature of this claim—a violence that makes for ontological is like no ontology at all. The Black is constituted by a “violence that separates ontological time (the time of the paradigm) from historical time (the time in the paradigm).” Wilderson, 339-340.

4 What distinguishes the bourgeois narrative from the Marxist narrative is the decision regarding to whom and how causal agency is to be ascribed; the “because” principle of why things happen. “A particularly strong feature of the classical [bourgeois] narrative,” says Wayne, “is the way it locates causal agency [...] at the level of individual characters. The characters with the most strongly defined goals are the characters who are charged with the causal principle of making things happen, of pushing the narrative along” (Wayne 152). The revolutionary writer would locate causal agency at the sites of collectivities in revolt and antagonisms at the site of institutional forces rather than interpersonal encounters with lovers, villains, and foes. But the story of love lost and found again, and the story of a social formation in revolt rely on the same tripartite progression.

5 “Soon the black ghetto, converted into an instrument of naked exclusion by the concurrent retrenchment of wage labour and social protection, and further destabilized by the increasing penetration of the penal arm of the state, became bound to the jail and prison system by a triple relationship of functional equivalency, structural homology and cultural syncretism, such that they now constitute a single carceral continuum which entraps a redundant population of younger black men (and increasingly women) who circulate in closed circuit between its two poles in a self-perpetuating cycle of social and legal marginality with devastating personal and social consequences.” (Wacquant, 52-53) Wacquant’s definition of the carceral continuum is helpful, even though his explanation of its generative mechanism is weighted heavily within the logic of political economy. By weighting my analysis of the Black condition on an interrogation of political discourse and the Symbolic Order, I am arguing that the carceral continuum describes the essential nature of a Black person’s life whether she is in the ghetto or the White House.

6 Primary texts which show how the BLA adapted Marxism and Postcolonial logic to a Black American context included: *Black Liberation Army Co-ordinating Committee*, eds. (197?, 2005) *Black Liberation Army Political Dictionary* [pamphlet] Montreal: Kersplebedeb Publishing; Jalil Muntaqim (1979, 2002) *On the Black Liberation Army* [pamphlet] Abraham Guillen Press/Arm the Spirit;

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NOTES

1 The Justice Department-LEAA Task Force report on BLA activity records sixty BLA actions between 1970 and 1976. In the past, this report has been reproduced on BLA sanctioned websites and, most recently, in a book of essays by Jalil Muntaqim, a Black Liberation Army prisoner of war. See *We Are Our Own Liberators: Selected Prison Writings*, pp. 29-34. The University of Maryland's Global Terrorism Database puts the number at thirty-six. Whereas the GTD includes BLA bank expropriations, it does not, unlike the BLA-reproduced Justice Department report, include prison escapes (successful and unsuccessful). <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?page=2&search=Black%20Liberation%20Army&expanded=no&charttype=line&chart=overtime&ob=GTDID&od=desc#results-table> (accessed July 26, 2013)

2 Toni Morrison. "Toni Morrison: Part 1 – On Love and Writing." On *Bill Moyers A World of Ideas*. Broadcast March 11, 1990. <http://billmoyers.com/content/toni-morrison-part-1/>. Accessed July 18, 2013.

3 Blackness, then, predates the Middle Passage and reconceptualizes enslavement history to include the Arab slave trade. In other words, the time of Blackness, is the time of the paradigm; it is not a temporality that can be grasped with the epistemological tools at our disposal. The time of Blackness is no time at all, because one cannot know a plenitude of Blackness distinct from Slaveness. "Historical time is the time of the worker, the time of the Indian, and the time of the woman—the time of analysis. But whereas historical time marks stasis and change within a paradigm, it does not mark the time of the paradigm, the time of time itself; the time by which the Slave's dramatic clock is set. For the Slave, historical time is no more viable a temporality of emancipation than biographical time—the time of empathy. Thus, neither the analytic aesthetic nor the empathetic aesthetic can accompany a theory of change that restores Black people to relationality. The social and political time of emancipation proclamations should not be confused

relies upon the capacity to give consent or exercise will, then how does one make legible the sexual violation of the enslaved when that which would constitute evidence of intentionality, and thus evidence of the crime—the state of consent or willingness of the assailed—opens up a Pandora's box in which the subject formation and object constitution of the enslaved female are no less ponderous than the crime itself or when the legal definition of the enslaved negates the very idea of "reasonable resistance"? (80) We might also consider whether the wanton and indiscriminate uses of the captive body can be made sense of within the heteronormative framing of sexual violation as rape. (74)

By parceling rape out to women, castration to men, the political communiqué offers the Black author and the Black reader a sense that their political agency is something more than mere "borrowed institutionality."⁹ And it saves the Black insurgent from the realization that the dust up is not between the workers and the bosses, not between settler and the native, not between the queer and the straight, but between the living and the dead. If we look closely we also see that gender itself cannot be reconciled with a slave's genealogical isolation; that, for the Slave, there is no surplus value to be restored to the time of labor; that no treaties between Blacks and Humans are in Washington waiting to be signed and ratified; and that, unlike the Settler in the Native American political imagination, there is no place like Europe to which the Slave can return Human beings.

DEATH AND DIALOGUE

Assata Shakur begins her communiqué by declaring her love for Black people; but there's a note of uncertainty as to their love for her: "i hope that somewhere in your hearts you have love for me." This is an early example of something that troubles the communiqué from beginning to end: that there is no third term, no "mediating objects" which can be called upon as third-term semiotic markers in self-representation (Raggatt 401). In, for example, her explanation of the change of her name from joanne chesimard to Assata Shakur, the third-term semiotic marker, the mediating object, is slavery, which is to say the abyss of social death, as opposed to a site of culture or economic plenitude, like a lost nation. In other words, the signifier that mediates this aspect of a presumed relation to a presumed people is really the absence of signification, rather than an event – or a place within

signification. “it is a “trace[...] of memory [which] function[s] in a manner akin to a phantom limb, in that what is felt is no longer there. It is a sentient recollection of connectedness experienced at the site of rupture, where the very consciousness of disconnectedness acts as a mode of testimony;” and as such it cannot function as a catalyst for a “return to an originary plenitude” (Hartman 74). Nor, as we scale up the ladder of abstraction, do we find the plenitude of mediating objects which most postcolonial and Marxist paramilitaries would take for granted.

In “The Dialogical Self and Thirdness: A Semiotic Approach to Positioning Using Dialogical Triads,” Peter Raggatt reminds us of Charles Sanders Peirce’s semiotic deployment of the idea of “‘Thirdness’ as the influence of one subject on a second mediated by a third.” “Third-term mediators are distinctive,” Raggatt argues “because they have a doubled quality, defining both similarities and differences between opposing positions” (401). Land, labor-power, and culture artifacts (such as language and customs) are often the third-term mediator as we move up the scale of abstraction in paramilitary political communiqués. The Black Liberation Army did, in fact, take positions on the land question, in which they demanded that most of the Southeastern United States, what’s known as “The Black Belt,” be given to the descendants of slaves to form an independent country called New Afrika.¹⁰ I want to bracket the objection that this land belongs to the Cherokee and other so-called Civilized Tribes, and it wasn’t the BLA’s land to claim or reclaim. While one can only agree with that argument, I think it misses the point. The point is that social death is a condition, void, not of land, but of a capacity to secure relational status through transindividual objects—be those objects elaborated by land, labor, or love. My argument is not that the BLA’s politics were ethical or unethical, but that the genome of political discourse is *inherently* anti-Black. The inherent anti-Blackness of political discourse can be discerned by discovering the anti-Blackness of narrative itself, by examining how the ontology of basic elements which constitute narrative are themselves constituted by the violence of slavery and how and why the narrative elements cannot be assimilated by genealogical isolates.

In a postcolonial political communiqué (a communiqué written by an insurgent who is not Black), Assata’s phrase, “I have declared war,” would typically function as a chronotope, a spatial-temporal fragment. In *The Dialogic Imagination*, Bakhtin writes:

We will give the name chronotope (literally, “time space”) to the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are [...] expressed in literature. [In the chronotope, time]

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thickens, takes on flesh, becomes [...] visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. This intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the chronotope. (Bakhtin 84)

The Bakhtinian chronotope is one narrative element whose ontological status is ruptured when it is deployed as an element in the Slave's narrative. When the Slave is the primary figure in narrative (such as the discourse of liberation), a thirteen-hundred-year carceral continuum incarcerates and suppresses the elements which are deployed to produce what Bakhtin called the dialogic imagination. Reciprocation, reversals, hybrid amalgamations—all this becomes unsustainable when the figure in the narrative is Black. We should note, however, that before the chronotope is manifest in discourse, and before it is refashioned and deployed in the narrative of liberation, its assumptive logic comes to us with capacities the Slave does not possess: the capacity to transpose time into event, and the capacity to transpose space into place.

Assata's communiqué is not a postcolonial or Marxist political communiqué, even though its narrative intent aspires to recognition and incorporation by way of its assumptive logics. We see that even though the chronotope of "resistance time" is repeated several times, it cannot establish a relay between itself and a *mediating object* (such as land or labor power) which can be recognized and incorporated as an object of loss.

For Bakhtin, the integrity of the chronotope depends on its being *delinked* from certainty. "Resistance time" should not be embedded with the certainty of victory but with an *uncertainty* which rests upon the labors of Human agency. Its life force is *not* contained in the realization that the postcolonial subject will get her land back eventually, but in the realization that the outcome of the conflict is up for grabs. The guaranteed return of the land is not what imbues a people with their collective sense of futurity. On the contrary, it is the knowledge that the outcome is not known. This heightens their sense of urgency, intensifies their experience of themselves as beings who are alive, whose agency might fail or succeed in their efforts to remake the world. Bakhtin writes, "nothing conclusive has yet taken place in the world, the ultimate word of the world and about the world has not yet been spoken, the world is open and free, everything is still in the future and will always be in the future" (Bakhtin 166).

In “The Chronotopes of Humanness: Bakhtin and Dostoevsky,” Gary Saul Morson amplifies Bakhtin’s assertion that the dialogic situation does not “follow any preset path”; it “does not ‘unfold,’ it ‘becomes’”; because “[t]he same conversational starting point can always lead to multiple continuations” (Morson 94). “For life to be meaningful,” Morson continues:

[t]he world must really be uncertain in this sense *and* we must experience it as such. Determinism destroys uncertainty, while capital punishment destroys the sense of uncertainty. The horror of absolute certainty explains the remarkable image of a man begging for mercy even after his throat has been cut: the victim may know that he is sure to die, but so unacceptable is that knowledge, that he acts as if his throat were only just about to be cut. He manufactures suspense. (Morson 104-105)

David Marriott is a critical theorist whose psychoanalytic explanations of the role mutilated, dying or dead Black men play in the psychic life of culture clashes with the idea that all lives can be made meaningful, as Morson’s vignette of a dying man suggests. There are profound ways in which Marriott agrees with Morson: Marriott would concur that determinism destroys uncertainty; and that capital punishment destroys the *sense* of uncertainty. But Marriott would choose a different image to illustrate what Morson calls the horror of absolute certainty. Instead of borrowing Morson’s image of a man whose throat had been slit, Marriott borrows Assata Shakur’s image of castration. Once this happens the analogy breaks down; the ontological implications of the two men bleeding to death cannot be reconciled. Compare Morson’s dying man...“The horror of absolute certainty explains the remarkable image of a man begging for mercy even after his throat has been cut: the victim may know that he is sure to die, but so unacceptable is that knowledge, that he acts as if his throat were only just about to be cut. He manufactures suspense” (105)... to Marriott’s dying man. Marriott begins by quoting from a 1934 book titled *The Lynching of Claude Neal*: “‘After taking the nigger to the woods ...they cut off his penis. He was made to eat it. Then they cut off his testicles and made him eat them and say he liked it’” (Marriott 6). These are the words of a White man who was there and probably partook in the “festivities.” Marriott continues:

The act of forcing a man to ‘fuck’ himself to death with his own excised genitals, to feed and gorge himself on his own violating (violated) pleasure, may well have been hugely satisfying to those assembled—especially when the man got to confess his own (seeming) enjoyment.

communiqué is not the effect of symbolic transgressions, nor is it the result (as Allen Feldman would have it) of a new, global shift in political economy—it is simply an extension of the master’s prerogative.

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then by the Europeans. In other words, the idea of “going back” imbues Black suffering with a temporality that it doesn’t have; emplots the slave in the arc of equilibrium, disequilibrium, equilibrium restored; when, in point of fact, Blackness and Slaveness are coterminous.

The total subsumption of civil society by the violent command modalities of capital rob the Irish and the working class of the narrative coherence that Meinhof’s and Mac Stíofáin’s political communiqués take for granted—a totalizing violence that delivers their revolutionary heirs (for example, the third generation of RAF fighters and the IRA Hunger Strikers led by Bobby Sands) into what might be called a context of terror. Because the third-term symbolic mediators of this *new* dispensation have been so deracinated by new formations of violence, it *appears* as though the worker and the postcolonial have been repositioned as beings upon whom violence acts in accordance with its own necessity, a world in which violence is not contingent upon narrative acts, a world very much like the Slave’s. It would be tempting to end here, link arms and sing Kumbaya. If not for the fact that even this tectonic shift, this shift from the supremacy of narrative to the supremacy of violence on its own terms is predicated on a narrative progression.

Again, Blackness cannot be disimbricated from slavery, in the way that Irishness can be disimbricated from colonial rule or in the way that labor can be delinked from capital. The violence which subsumes the Irish has temporal limits (the time of the Troubles, from the late 1960s to the “Good Friday” Agreement of 1998) as well as spatial limits (the urban North). Not only is there no punctuation in the temporality of the violence that subsumes Assata, but furthermore, no cartography of violence can be mapped, for that would imply the prospect for a map of non-violent space. To the contrary, Assata Shakur’s political communiqué demonstrates that she and other Black people are in the throes of what historian David Eltis calls “violence beyond the limit” (1423), by which he means (a) in the *libidinal* economy there are no forms of violence so excessive that they would be considered too cruel to inflict upon Blacks; and (b) in *political* economy there are no rational explanations for this limitless theatre of cruelty, no explanations which would make *political or economic* sense of the violence she describes (as, for example, Ulrike Meinhof does). Whereas the Human’s relationship to violence is always contingent, triggered by her transgressions against the regulatory prohibitions of the Symbolic Order or by macro-economic shifts in her social context, the Slave’s relationship to violence is open ended, gratuitous, without reason or constraint, triggered by prelogical catalysts which are unmoored from her transgressions and unaccountable to historical shifts. In short, the violence of Assata Shakur’s

To hear him desire his own death—and so turn their terrible pleasure into his own violent wish—was to construct a vision of a castrated black man as one actively seeking the pleasures of castration. (Marriott 6, 9)

The determinism that Morson laments in his cautionary tale about how life goes askew when conditions necessary for Bakhtinian dialogue are corrupted is a determinism which is situated in the realm of experience. We know this because even as the man with the slit throat is dying he still has a hand in the tyranny of closure that will end his life and, also, end his sense of life. Morson calls the injunction that prevents a dialogic situation “capital punishment”; in other words, we have arrived at this moment of the slit throat because the victim has transgressed some code, some law, for which he is being punished. But the lynching victim in Marriott’s example is not being punished. Even if the lynchers claim the he is. Marriott implies that punishment is a ruse, a secondary consideration at best. What the scene is really about is the lynchers’ ritual of self-making; through this ritual they fashion themselves as selves. The man being lynched has “no ontological resistance” (Fanon 110) in their eyes; which may explain why he, unlike Morson’s victim, doesn’t waste his last precious moments manufacturing suspense. Morson’s victim finds the knowledge of his certain death, the determined end to a life of uncertainty, to be “unacceptable.” Marriott’s man knows that such a posture reeks of agency, reeks of entitlement, reeks of a man who may be dying but who will carry his unconscious to the grave with him. In contradistinction, the lynching ritual demands of its victim much more than death. The violence is all around this victim, *but it is inside him as well*. His psychic capacity to manufacture suspense, to possess, that is, his own desire has been usurped by the desire of his lynchers. No executioner makes such demands on behalf of the state. As Marriott writes, “he must turn [the lyncher’s] terrible pleasure into his own violent wish.” In his dying moments he must pursue White pleasure through his own castration. Something more profound and ineffable than “determinism” is at work here. Determinism implies a temporary injunction against narrative sequencing, and by extension against political activity; an injunction against what Bakhtin calls the “dialogic situation.” What Marriott is describing is a permanent injunction against ontology—whether that ontology is experienced as the determinism of capital punishment or as the uncertainty of the dialogic situation. The sentient being in Morson’s cautionary tale enters the event of capital punishment as a subject, and he takes his Human inheritance with him to the grave; his neurotic machinations are proof of this. The sentient being in Marriott’s example—the slave, the Black—cannot even savor some form of neurotic pleasure in his own annihilation. The photographs of Assata

that she writes about in her political communiqué—or of some Black women who may or may not have looked like her—are photographs which graced post offices, airports, hotels and banks, and labor like the photographs of lynching victims which became post cards to be circulated well beyond the time and place of the ghastly event. The photographs of Assata were not photographs whose main purpose was to catch a so-called political terrorist. That would be too simple; that would be too Human. They were photographs in which she, like the lynched man above, became a “figure in a public event”; a figure whose political agenda and motive will was never under consideration; a figure who is always already an implement to help the Human (and I need to be clear here: by Human I mean not only Whites, but Latinos, Asians, Native Americans, and non-Black women of color—Whites and their junior partners) fashion selfhood, to help them secure the integration and closure of their bodily schemas; to help them facilitate the identification with their fellow citizens whom they may never meet: nonetheless these dead implements and the images of them which circulate in all their mutilated splendor are the genetic material of civil society, the DNA of Human life.

A GATED COMMUNITY

Postcolonial and Marxist paramilitaries are assimilated by a range of transindividual icons, images, and concepts which secure their communiqués’ coherence. Consider Seán Mac Stíofáin’s (first chief of staff of the Provisional IRA) message printed in *Hands Off Ireland!*

[T]he *nationally minded*, the Irish-minded people of the North know that the IRA is their army, is the revolutionary army of the Irish people, and they know that many IRA volunteers have died fighting in defence of their areas. They know they will never be able to lead a normal, peaceful and happy life until the British imperialist presence has been removed from this country. (O’Boyle 32)

Land, as a transindividual third term, mediates a dialogical situation, one which implies a rich field of semiotic play at a level of abstraction which is higher than Assata Shakur’s level of abstraction. Mac Stíofáin’s communiqué enables him to enter the lists of similarities and differences more indicative of the Symbolic push and pull of hegemonic struggle, over, for example, the status of national identity,

constructions. Violence, Feldman argues, begets its own semiotic structure, it is not the product of a (non-violent) semiotic arrangement; in other words, it is not an effect of ideological imposition. He argues that the postindustrial context of economic relations, otherwise known as globalization, has subsumed all of civil society by the command modality of capital.

The work of Mikhail Bakhtin provides Feldman with the theoretical license he needs to argue that violence is not a subtracted effect from an originary mise-en-scene (Britain’s ideology of domination): in a postindustrial world, where all of civil society, to echo Hardt and Negri,²² has been subsumed by command, violence has become a dialogical situation in its own right. “The dialogical situation,” which violence itself can now constitute, without the aid of narrative, Feldman writes:

is one in which two or more conflictual heterogeneous, or polarized social codes are present in the same set of signifiers. These composite signs trace a history of desemantization: their incomplete detachment from prior references and their realignment with new meanings and inferences. (284)

Now that the global economy has been unhinged from production and from the gold standard, Feldman argues, violence has been unhinged from its discursive moorings. Violence forms a dialogical situation all its own; it has its own grammar, with its own heterogeneous and conflictual codes; and though this postindustrial violence bears the traces of prior references (i.e. the trace of ideology). What is equally important to our understanding violence on its own terms, to our theorizing it as a dialogical situation, is the radical implications of this detachments *from* those prior references: the realignment of its codes through new meanings and inferences means that political logic which underwrote Meinhof’s and Mac Stíofáin’s political communiqués has lost a great deal of its explanatory power, as the condition of the subjects on whose behalf they wrote has radically changed for the worse.

Though for Feldman’s Northern Irish men and women, topos has now been subsumed by violence, the same is not true for Assata and Black people on whose behalf she fights and writes. The subsumption of their topography by violence is the very condition of Black emergence, it was *not* contingent upon shifts in global economic relations, and it did not start when Nixon took the dollar off the gold standard. We cannot even say “it goes back” to the Arab slave trade which started in 625 (Anderson; Lewis) because this would imply that there was a figure called the Black or the African who was enslaved first by the Arabs and

This is why civil society is so genuinely *terrified* by the prospect of Black paramilitary terror. Everyone knows (if only instinctively) how all-encompassing and timeless the terror which subsumes Blackness is. When civil society is stable, this knowledge can be a comfort, for it helps non-Black people fashion self-hood (David Marriott's lynchers) by way of a comparative calculus which reveals to them that they are safe on the shore of contingent violence rather than adrift in a sea of gratuitous violence; that even when "terror" engulfs them violence can still "mediate relationship[s] through the intervention of a third term," and can harvest symbols which restore their lives to relational logic. But when the Black paramilitary picks up the gun, the crisis on the horizon is not one of a radical shift in the temporal drama of value (as Meinhof would have it) nor one which portends a new and disorienting map (new for Mac Stíofáin, disorienting for Thatcher). It is not a crisis which looms, what looms is a catastrophe of symbolic capacity, for no symbols can represent what Black violence portends. No rational assessment of the objective conditions can soothe the nerves. This is what the phrase, "fear of a Black planet" really means: the fear of no planet at all, the fear of living one's life like a Black. A life in which there is no civic, no society, in which death is a synonym for sanctuary.

Throughout Assata's communiqué there is a stark collapse between what Antonio Gramsci calls political society ("the pigs") and civil society (newspapers, TV, hotels, subways, airports) (Gramsci 1971). The pigs have used their newspapers and TVs to paint the Black Liberation Army as vicious, brutal, mad-dog criminals" (Shakur 1987, 50)—as though it would be unimaginable for her to have had an experience in the domain of respite, civil society, that is qualitatively different from the violence she experiences in prison, political society. This absorption of civil society by political society resembles a violent totality that Allen Feldman describes in *Formations of Violence: The Narrative of the Body and Political Terror in Northern Ireland*. He argues that violence has become "a dialogic situation" unto itself. Violence is no longer an effect of a prior, originary narrative.

Feldman's study of paramilitary violence in Northern Ireland from 1969 through the 1980s provides us with an important corrective to the cognitive map of postcolonial studies. His aim is to help us view paramilitary violence in Northern Ireland as a "political technology of the body connected to paramilitary practice both inside and outside the prison"; and to analyze violent episodes "within the general framework of the *cultural* construction of violence in Northern Ireland" (231). He urges us to think of violence *itself* as a cultural construction, rather than thinking of violence as an *effect* of, or in contingent relation to, cultural (meaning ideological)

the value of political martyrdom, and the restoration of civil society; all of which grounds his discourse in a kind of political *sanity* which is indicative of how well the Symbolic push and pull protects him from the Imaginary's collisions of murder and absolute identification found throughout Assata Shakur's communiqué.

His communiqué can enter into the realm of politics, a world of surprise endings and possibilities; the narrative will not fold in on itself—it can escape the loop of repetition; a loop that would otherwise crowd out politics because it crowds out agency. The political agency resides in the uncertain outcome of the struggle over transindividual objects—transindividual because they secure political ontology for the British *and* the Republicans alike. The question Mac Stíofáin's communiqué poses is who will prevail at a conceptual level, not the question of who is alive and who is dead, as in the case of the Human and the Slave.

Assata Shakur's political communiqué starts much closer to the body than the IRA or Red Army Faction communiqué (below). When she says she hopes that her people love her, she is intimating something deeper than a question of affection—there is a paradigmatic, ontological, question here as well. There is no need for Seán Mac Stíofáin to solicit Catholic working class affection because the question of love has already been mediated through/by the concept of land. In other words, it is not a question of *Mac Stíofáin's subjectivity* which is at stake. Affection is not so mimetic in his situation as to make it an all or nothing proposition. Land acts as a third term, a grounding wire which *shifts the affect from one of immediacy to one of mediacy*; it takes the neurotic charge out of the question of love, it makes love a symbolic, and therefore negotiated, endeavor, one which has a range of possible outcomes and interpretations, rather than a precursor to the confirmation or denial of his existence. Mac Stíofáin, the paramilitary author of the communiqué, has no need for the reader to recognize and incorporate his psychic presence through a declaration of love, because his psychic presence has been secured, *a priori*, by his—and his readers (be they friend or foe!)—shared capacity to inhabit and transform meaningless space into meaningful place. Mac Stíofáin is a person, and the Irish are his *people* because they are always already cartographically located; even at the time of the communiqué's release (when their land is occupied by invaders). And this is where temporality and spatiality cross: there was a time of place, even though it was almost a thousand years ago; therefore, there can be a time of place again, when the British are driven away. Equilibrium. Disequilibrium. Equilibrium restored.

Peter Raggatt's third-term mediators facilitate narrative progression, even when they do not bear the tactile solidity of spatial metaphors. The narrative arc of *equilibrium, disequilibrium, equilibrium restored* still maintains its moorings in the realm of the Symbolic; that is to say, it and its author are protected from the ravages of the Imaginary even though the event of equilibrium restored promises the restoration of an abstraction whose referent is hard to concretize. (The olive tree is a common symbol of a Palestinian third-term mediator but no two artists would paint the same portrait of lost labor time or labor time restored.) Ulrike Meinhof's Red Army Faction communiqué of third-term mediators is able to work temporally, without, to a large extent, the tactile solidity of spatial metaphors.

Three years before Assata Shakur's "To My People," Ulrike Meinhof issued one of the first Red Army Faction communiqués, in which, on behalf of RAF paramilitaries, she argued that urban guerrilla warfare represents "the only revolutionary method of intervention available to what are on the whole weak revolutionary forces."

To this extent the urban guerrilla is the logical *consequence of the negation of parliamentary democracy* long since perpetuated by its very own representatives; the *only and inevitable response to emergency laws and the rule of the hand grenade*; the readiness to fight with those same means the system has chosen to use in trying to eliminate its opponents. The urban guerrilla is based on a recognition of the facts instead of an apologia of the facts. The urban guerrilla can concretize verbal internationalism as the requisition of guns and money. He can blunt the state's weapon of a ban on communists by organizing an underground beyond the reach of the police. The urban guerrilla is a weapon in the class war. The urban guerrilla signifies armed struggle, necessary to the extent that it is the police which makes indiscriminate use of firearms, *exonerating class justice from guilt and burying our comrades alive unless we prevent them* [...]. The urban guerrilla's aim is to attack the state's apparatus of control at certain points and put them out of action, to *destroy the myth* of the system's omnipresence and invulnerability.¹¹

Meinhof's political communiqué asserts the ethical necessity of urban guerilla activism as though there was consensus on this point within the West German Left. But the fact that not everyone on the West German Left supports RAF tactics, and that the West German Right has an economic analysis which cannot be reconciled with hers, does *not* throw into crisis the temporal logic, the Human

What Feldman is describing by way of Lemaire is a matrix for relational status of which a genealogical isolate like Assata Shakur cannot avail herself. She is an *object* of "structures of representation" and "institutional structures," but she cannot be a subject of them, whether filial or affilial.²⁰ Her communiqué cannot "mediate relationship[s] through the intervention of a third term," and thereby establish "recognition between subjects." The violence which elaborates and sustains her haunted presence (if presence is the right word) allows for no "passage from [an] immediate 'dual' relationship to a mediate relationship."

The textual heat of Assata Shakur's communiqué is not cathected by transindividual concepts like land and labor power, but instead is dispersed throughout an array of bodily violations, horrifying images indexical of a structural rupture of her capacity to lay claim to transindividual concepts, to mediating objects. In Assata Shakur's communiqué, we do not get a picture of someone whose native land has been stolen, whose labor power has been usurped, or whose culture has been quashed and corrupted. Instead, we get a picture of someone whose condition of possibility is elaborated by violence too comprehensive to comprehend: violence without analogy, violence so totalizing it prevents the closure of her bodily schema.

This comes through most poignantly in the repetition and intensity with which she invokes rapes, murders and castrations that she and her people have experienced—the violence that prohibits the closure of her bodily schema. In the one of the few places where she invokes politically coherent transgressions committed against her and her people, "the rich who prosper on our property," we find that the cathexis is not located in the *idea* of capitalist accumulation (à la Meinhof), but in images of capitalist physiognomy: the faces, hearts, and minds of the rich and powerful—images of sentient being rather than the drama of value which that being dominates and controls.

At the lowest scale of abstraction she cannot lay claim to a proper noun, a form of unique conceptualization; nor, moving up the scale, can she lay claim to a common noun, a form of conceptualization which is collective. Therefore, her "political" violence, the armed struggle which Black Liberation Army paramilitaries embarked upon, is characteristic not of noun-possessioned subjects who use violence to change the conceptual context in which they are named, i.e. political, national, and economic status, but of a nameless object fighting for *the status of subjectivity itself*;²¹ which is what makes the threat of Black armed insurrection terrifying in a way that Marxist or postcolonial and IRA insurrection could never be.

of the socius, understands that Assata is a symbolic threat, but not in the same way that Ulrike Meinhof is a symbolic threat. Meinhof is a threat to stable arrangements of symbolism: both filial, the wayward daughter with a gun who threatens to unhinge The Name of the Father; and affilial, the wrathful anti-imperialist with a gun who threatens to unhinge capitalist hegemony. Assata, on the other hand (and the gun she *used* to wield), threatens not symbolic arrangements—she is not recognized and incorporated by such arrangements—but the Symbolic Order itself. A workers’ revolution blows the lid off the economy. A postcolonial revolution blows the lid of the colony. A Slave revolt blows the lid of the unconscious. The slave does not threaten capitalism with a new economic order, or filiation with a new nonpatriarchal order. The Slave threatens Order itself, whether manifest as an economic struggle between the capitalist and worker, or as a generational struggle between parent and child. Assata is a threat to the symbolic legibility and psychic coherence of Humanity writ large.

Though Klaus Kinkel and Margaret Thatcher might never have admitted it, the common relationship to symbolic presence, which they share with their RAF and IRA paramilitaries, takes the terror out of terrorism by restoring relational logic to terror, thereby ratcheting the scale of abstraction downward from terror to fear. The so-called terror of the communist, the post-colonialist, and even the jihadist labor as modes of articulation with the terror of the state; their terror constructs and conserves: it guards a *gated community* known as the Symbolic Order; gated because it keeps the Slave from entering; community because it secures a spatial-temporal context which allows for “relational positioning and articulation of identities between subjects and between subjects and objects [...]”. The symbolic order is the representational limit formed by institutionalized closure that allows codes to operate, relationality to take place, and commensurations to be stabilized” (Feldman 289). “[T]he symbolic order is formed by the convergence between linguistic and social symbolism [...] that is, the fusion of structures of representation and institutional structures, as in Levi-Strauss’s linguistic model of kinship systems” (Feldman 289).

The homologous character of linguistic symbolism and social symbolism derives from the fact that both are structures of oppositional elements capable of being combined, that both establish the possibility of *recognition between subjects*, and, finally, that both necessitate the passage from *immediate “dual” relationship to a mediate relationship through the intervention of a third term*: the concept of language, and the Ancestor, the Sacred cause, the God or Law in Society.¹⁹

community’s assimilation of the communiqué’s third-term mediators. A common orientation to a call to arms is not what secures and stabilizes the coherence of a political communiqué. The communiqué’s coherence is secured and stabilized because Ulrike Meinhof and her readers are assimilated by the event—not by this or that event but *by event as a formal instantiation of Human endeavors*. It must be re-emphasized that the *event* is not in service to political agreement; it is in service to symbolic exchange, to the elaboration of dialogic context. Where the transindividual modalities of cartography labored to this end in Seán Mac Stíofáin’s political communiqué, Ulrike Meinhof’s communiqué is anchored by its transindividual inheritance and heritage.

The working day swans throughout Meinhof’s text without needing to be named. The character of the working day is what the RAF and the capitalist struggle over—not the coherence of labor-time itself. To be sure, this is a high-stakes struggle (as the violence of the state and Meinhof’s counter violence indicate) over the character and ownership of labor time (will it be exploited by those who consume or will it be exploited by those who work); but it is not a struggle over the narrative coherence of labor-time itself. Though the RAF and the capitalist are locked in mortal combat over economic supremacy and symbolic hegemony, this combat is *not a struggle between species*. They both belong to the Human race. The transindividuated nature of the working day as a third-term mediator secures the political integrity of their species, just as the more generic capacity to produce, distribute and consume (or be assimilated by) third term mediators secures the integrity of their mutual Humanity. It also—and this is key—is what separates them from the dead (i.e., Assata, the BLA, and Black people at large).

Political agreement is secondary to species consolidation; in fact, we could say that the political disagreement might consolidate the Human species more effectively than political agreement. The temporal shifts in class relations which Meinhof’s communiqué reports on, i.e., the “*negation of parliamentary democracy*” which led to “emergency laws and the rule of the hand grenade” are not, as Meinhof and other Marxist and postcolonial writers aver, indicators of temporal shifts in species relations. Put differently, the violence which enables and maintains these shifts cannot be analogized with the violence which enables and maintains Assata Shakur’s subjugation. Class warfare marks important shifts in *intra-species* relations, not essential shifts in relations between antagonists. Meinhof is wrong: the bosses are not her antagonists. Mac Stíofáin is wrong: the British are not his antagonists. They and their oppressors have a common antagonist, the Black.

The mediating objects of cartography and the event, which Meinhof and Mac Stíofáin possess not as a result of their labors but which are, rather, bequeathed them as Human inheritance, stabilize the political communiqué in those moments when they must legitimize political violence. Mac Stíofáin asserts the goal is to remove British “presence” from Ireland and to die, if necessary, in the process. The imposition of a British cartography inhibits the restoration of Irish territorial integrity—from the corporeal to the nation. But the corporeal and the national are not threatened as *schemas*; symbolic resonance remains intact.

Ulrike Meinhof extends Mac Stíofáin’s cartographic mediation by invoking the temporality of narrative itself: revolutionary violence will “destroy the myth of the system’s omnipresence and invulnerability” and “exonerate[e] class justice from guilt.” In other words, RAF violence is in service to a project which infuses chronology with ethics; a violence which enables a pilgrim’s progress from mystification to clarification. This makes urban guerrilla warfare something very different for Meinhof and Mac Stíofáin than it is for Assata Shakur. What Meinhof’s communiqué is saying is that urban guerrilla warfare is that force which contributes to the unmasking of capitalist social relations. The crisis in civil society which this brings about will catalyze a more essential unmasking of the commodity form’s circuit of displacement, substitution, and signification. Meinhof and Mac Stíofáin think they will undo the world in this way and bring about a new paradigm, but by leaving the violence of Black revolt out of the equation, their proletariat and postcolonial violence “destroy[s] the myth” of a capitalist or colonizing “omnipresence and invulnerability” (Meinhof), while it simultaneously reinvigorates the generative mechanisms of Human life (i.e., the Symbolic Order), mechanisms which are not available to the Slave.

Revolutionary strategies, which unmask the hypostasized form that value (i.e., the commodity) takes as it masks both its differential and social relations, experience the humiliation of their explanatory power when confronted with the Black. For the Black has no social relation(s) to be either masked or unmasked—not, that is, in a structural sense. Social relations depend on various pretenses to the contrary; therefore, what gets masked by Meinhof’s and Mac Stíofáin’s revolutionary violence is, as we will see, the matrix of violence that makes Black relationality an oxymoron. To relate, socially, one must enter a social drama’s *mise-en-scène* with spatial and temporal coherence—in other words, with human capacity. Shakur is not so much the antithesis of human capacity (for that might imply a dialectic potential in the Slave’s encounter with the world) as she is the absence of Human capacity.

renewal. The pageantry of “strike and counter-strike” between the BLA and the state never elaborated—never *could* have elaborated—such a renewal of Human kinship; at least not one in which the Black paramilitaries in particular and Black people in general could be imagined as members of the Human family. It did not promote civic debate about the affilial isolation of Black people with respect to civil society and political economy; nor did it facilitate a reimagining of Black people *as people*, as Human kin.

Sundiata Acoli, Assata Shakur’s co-defendant in the New Jersey Turnpike shootout, had been a computer programmer for NASA prior to joining the BLA. He was an accomplished mathematician who wrote software for the USA’s first lunar landing. This aspect of his biography does nothing for him when he comes up for parole. He cannot be re-construed as former contributing member of society who helped put a man on the moon. Instead, he has been denied parole at least nine times in forty years. In 2010, at the age of seventy-three, the parole board gave him a ten year hit which means he must serve an additional six years. He will be seventy-nine years old when (if) he gets out.

In 2012 Assata Shakur, a sixty-five year old grandmother and political exile living in Cuba with three bullets in her chest, a member of a routed paramilitary organization, someone who is so isolated that she often has to go underground in Cuba to evade bounty hunters who slink from Key West to Cuba in light sea crafts in hopes of capturing her and cashing in on the now two million dollar reward, became the first woman to be added to the FBI’s Most Wanted Terrorist list.¹⁷ American civil society has not argued over her fitness as a mother, her rebirth as an educator, or whether her femininity should be compared with fascists or saints. And William Rosenau, a government sanction analyst like Pluchinsky and Moghadam, consoles his readers by claiming that today the USA faces no clear and present danger of another Black American paramilitary offensive which occurred in the 1970s.¹⁸ Per capita, more young Black men and women are in chains and cages than at the height of chattel slavery. Government assisted drug trafficking has decimated the Black urban landscape. Fewer Blacks are enrolled in tertiary educational institutions than there were prior to the advent of affirmative action. And the White American radical “allies” who in the sixties and seventies wanted to change the world, succumbed to ennui and changed their minds. At whatever scale of abstraction one might want to consider the FBI’s adding of Assata Shakur to its list of Most Wanted Terrorists, it would be hard to see the logic in it. That’s because it is not logical, it is prelogical; prelogical in the sense that the collective unconscious of law enforcement, as an integral part of the collective unconscious

as Baader who allow such women to dominate” (Bielby 137, 138, 147)

One of the more bizarre examples of what I am describing is to be found in the visual artist Jutta Brückner’s comments about her video installation, *Bräute des Nichts: Der weibliche Terror: Magda Goebbels und Ulrike Meinhof* (Brides of nothing: female terrorism: Magda Goebbels and Ulrike Meinhof), in which she asserts an “‘unprecedented connection between Magda Goebbels and Ulrike Meinhof’”; a connection which “‘allows a different, female story of modern times to be told’.” “‘I understand Magda Goebbels and Ulrike Meinhof as women who, each in their own way fought out the battle between old and new forms of politics through the medium of their bodies.’” These assertions are crowned by the declaration: “‘Magda Goebbels could have been the mother of Ulrike Meinhof’” (Quoted in Bielby, 145-46).

A less peculiar but no less instructive example of filial authorization manifest as the foundation for state authorization—resultant from the pageantry of RAF and government violence—occurred in the West German state of Bremen when, during the 2007 parliamentary elections, it was discovered that Susanne Albrecht, a former RAF paramilitary who participated in the July 1977 attempted kidnapping and subsequent slaying of Dresdner Bank chief Jürgen Ponto, was teaching English in a local public school. The Christian Democrats (CDU) said they didn’t want terrorists teaching children. The Social Democrats (SPD) argued Albrecht had served her time and renounced terror and was no longer a threat, but a citizen with rights like everyone else. The parents weighed in, issuing a statement saying, “They were outraged that Albrecht’s past was being used as a campaign issue in the Bremen elections. Albrecht ‘should continue her very successful work with the children of our school.’” (*Deutsche Welle* staff / DPA (tt), “Ex-Terrorist Becomes an Issue in German State Poll” May 12, 2007). The heat of this exchange is not to be found in the disagreement over the safety of “our” children; but rather in the unspoken consensus of the *status* of “our” children. Again, intra-Human political violence has such a disruptive effect in the realm of experience (people are injured and many die) that it can harden political and social attitudes for years; but it is also a balm, a means of relational therapy which elaborates strategies for Human renewal, and these strategies are themselves the effects of the fusion of symbolic resonances through which relationality and subjectivity, as formal entities, are constituted.

The thing to bear in mind here is how profoundly unmarked a Black paramilitary’s plight is by this messy and contrariness of civic recognition, incorporation, and

There is no shortness of breath, no unmoored flights of impressionism in Meinhof’s¹² and Mac Stíofáin’s legitimization of terror, not because they are brave and committed but because, compared to Assata Shakur, the spatial-temporal context from which they espouse terror is not so terrifying. Everywhere you look, the terror they describe and the terror they unleash has symbolic resonance and legitimation. Therefore terrorism, as a way of characterizing IRA violence against the British, or RAF violence against the West German upper class, loses its universal horror and is made relative by how one Human lives her symbolic presence with, through, and against the symbolic presence of another Human. This shared context of symbolic resonance and legitimation, a dialogic context, continues to exist once the state has quashed non-Black paramilitaries.

Dennis A. Pluchinsky, an analyst who, in 1993, worked for the U.S. Department of State, Office of Intelligence and Threat Analysis, Bureau of Diplomatic Security, characterized the final communiqués of the RAF as documents “that reflect the RAF’s ideological fatigue, strategic confusion, and organizational isolation” (Pluchinsky 136), but his gloating obituary of the RAF also reveals the degree to which the RAF existed in a dialogic context with the state it sought to destroy, as evinced in prison reforms and prisoner releases which came about as a result of armed assaults against the state *and* as a result of discussions between the RAF and the government, reflected in the “Kinkel Initiative,” named after Klaus Kinkel, the then-Minister of Justice in West Germany.

Government sanctioned intellectuals like Pluchinsky see the demobilization of groups like the RAF as a failure of political discourse when, in point of fact, the ability of a handful of paramilitaries to “occup[y] the European stage for over 22 years” (Pluchinsky 136), bring one of the strongest police states in the Western world to the negotiating table, secure better conditions for some of their comrades and, from 1992 to 2011, the release of virtually all of their comrades (Assaf Moghadam “Failure and Disengagement in the Red Army Faction” 172-173) could just as readily be characterized as the *success* of RAF political discourse, and of a certain amount of “ideological fatigue, strategic confusion, and organizational isolation” (Pluchinsky 136) on the part of the government.

The most important intervention to be made here is not, I am arguing, one which takes the form of a corrective to the neoliberal agenda of state sanctioned intellectuals like Pluchinsky and Moghadam who denounce armed struggle on the left and characterize its aftereffects as political failures. Nor is my project one of shoring-up the revolutionary backbone of more left-leaning intellectuals who

misconstrue tactics for strategy, and thereby produce scholarship which anguishes over questions such as “how to judge [60’s- and 70’s-era left wing violence] in political and moral terms” (Varon “Refusing to be ‘Good Germans’...29) and, as soon as they ask the question, turn around and answer it with a lament that left wing political violence of the era “irrespective of [its] grandiose goals of advancing ‘revolution,’ contributed to a domestic climate of chaos that imposed a political limit on the length and intensity of the Vietnam War” (Varon, *ibid*, 33-34)¹³. Both projects, though at opposite ends of a political spectrum, are enmeshed in the same project of civic (Human) stability and monumentalization.

The left liberal Weltschmerz over tactics is, perhaps, the most pernicious because, compared to the straight-ahead condemnation of political violence from scholars like Pluchinsky and Moghadam, it more successfully reproduces networks of “connections, transfers and displacements” (Miller and Rose 1994: 31), in short, articulations, between members of the Human family (articulations which, I am also arguing are both necessary for Human renewal and for the ontological isolation of the Slave). Varon’s epilogue to an anthology on the RAF’s cultural impact is a case in point. He writes:

States combating terrorism typically claim to defend not simply their legitimacy and the well-being of their political community, but the values of the civilised world—civilisation itself—against a resolutely evil foe. The “terrorists,” by contrast, declare the wholesale illegitimacy of the power they oppose. Claiming the mantle of freedom fighters, agents of liberation, or holy warriors, they see their violence not simply as a grim political necessity but as virtuous and even, in many cases, explicitly sacred service to some grand narrative of emancipation or moral cleansing. The public—the vital “third term” within terrorism—is drawn not only into the material drama of strike and counter-strike, but into a larger discursive battle of the conflict itself and the broader social realities. (Varon “Stammheim Forever and the Ghosts of Guantanamo... 2008b, 303)

Here, the paramilitaries and the state exist in a macabre exaggeration of the Lacanian Imaginary, a neurotic and deadly dyad of mirror images which impoverish the collective psyche of the Human family. But “the public,” as a third-term mediating object, stands as that entity which triangulates the exchange and provides the Humans with a path from the Imaginary to the Symbolic: “the fusion of structures of representation and institutional structures, as in Levi-Strauss’s linguistic model

of kinship systems” (Feldman 289). Though Varon’s assessment is moral, intended to labor in the realm of experience, it unintentionally demonstrates how Human capacity functions and is authorized in its more formal dimensions, thereby giving us insight into the divergence between Human ontology and the Black’s ontological void. It allows us to segue into an explanation as to how intra-Human violence functions as the rebar of relationality rather than the wrecking ball of relationality, as both the liberal left and the neo-liberal right would have us believe.

The pageantry of “strike/counter-strike” intensified White Germans’ proclivity to imagine political conflict, which is to say “affilial” struggles, through filial frames. Throughout the critical and journalistic literature, the “Good German” dilemma raised by the strike/counter-strike violence, questions of citizenship and state power which would ordinarily be categorized as affilial dilemmas involving “transpersonal forms of authority...such as...class...and hegemony¹⁴, are displaced onto the good wife dilemma (to be or not to be), the dilemma of the good daughter, the good son, the good father or the good mother, questions which would ordinarily be categorized as filial, involving “natural forms of authority...involving obedience, fear, love, respect, and instinctual conflict.”¹⁵ The violence wove a tapestry of articulations, “connections, transfers and displacements” (Miller and Rose 31), between affilial frames of reference and filial frames of reference (some were rational and level-headed, others quite bizarre) *in which the filial frame was, primarily, hegemonic*, for the simple reason that it orients and grounds the scholarship and journalism in the manner of a faith-based initiative: without the need for an justifications for, or explanations of, its deployment.

The three phases of RAF armed insurgency are referred to as “generations” regardless of whether the writer is hostile to the groups or in some way sympathetic. What the framing allows for is a deeper, more unconscious saturation of Human authority because this framing naturalizes state authority as family authority. “[C]haracteristics of the family environment are projected onto the social environment” in such a way as to allow for “no disproportion between family life and the life of the nation” (Fanon *Black Skin, White Masks* 121-122).

Generational framing consolidates the orientation of criticism,¹⁶ and it overdetermines the way visual representations of the RAF-era are curated. “The most striking example of this is the use of a pram as memory object at the permanent exhibition of the German History Museum...Germany’s controversial terrorist past is represented by an object associated with woman’s cultural role...reduced to a pram carrying weapons...blamed on phallic women... and ‘effeminate’ men such

The Prison Slave as Hegemony's (Silent) Scandal

Frank B. Wilderson, III

The Black experience in this country has been a phenomenon without analog. — Eugene Genovese (Boston Review, October/November 1993)

THERE IS SOMETHING ORGANIC TO BLACK POSITIONALITY THAT MAKES IT ESSENTIAL to the destruction of civil society. There is nothing willful or speculative in this statement, for one could just as well state the claim the other way around: There is something organic to civil society that makes *it* essential to the destruction of the Black body. Blackness is a positionality of “absolute dereliction” (Fanon), abandonment, in the face of civil society, and therefore cannot establish itself, or be established, through hegemonic interventions. Blackness cannot become one of civil society’s many junior partners: Black citizenship, or Black civic obligation, are oxymorons.

In light of this, coalitions and social movements, even radical social movements like the Prison Abolition Movement, bound up in the solicitation of hegemony, so as to fortify and extend the interlocutory life of civil society, ultimately accommodate only the satiable demands and finite antagonisms of civil society’s junior partners (i.e., immigrants, white women, and the working class), but foreclose upon the insatiable demands and endless antagonisms of the prison slave and the prison-slave-in-waiting. In short, whereas such coalitions and social movements cannot be called the outright handmaidens of white supremacy, their rhetorical structures and political desire are underwritten by a supplemental anti-Blackness.

In her autobiography, Assata Shakur’s comments vacillate between being interesting and insightful to painfully programmatic and “responsible.” The expository method of conveyance accounts for this air of responsibility. However, toward the end of the book, she accounts for coalition work by way of extended narrative as opposed to exposition. We accompany her on one of Zayd Shakur’s many Panther projects with outside groups, work “dealing with white support

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groups who were involved in raising bail for the Panther 21 members in jail” (Shakur, 1987: 224). With no more than three words, her recollection becomes matter of fact and unfiltered. She writes, “I hated it.”

At the time, i felt that anything below 110th street was another country. All my activities were centered in Harlem and i almost never left it. Doing defense committee work was definitely not up my alley.... i hated standing around while all these white people asked me to explain myself, my existence. i became a master of the one-liner (Shakur, 1987: 224).

Her hatred of this work is bound up in her anticipation, fully realized, of all the zonal violations to come when a white woman asks her if Zayd is her “panther...you know, is he your black cat?” and then runs her fingers through Assata’s hair to cop a kinky feel. Her narrative anticipates these violations-to-come at the level of the street, as well as at the level of the body.

Here is the moment in her life as a prison-slave-in-waiting, which is to say, a moment as an ordinary Black person, when she finds herself among “friends” — abolitionists, at least partners in purpose, and yet she feels it necessary to adopt the same muscular constriction, the same coiled anticipation, the same combative “one-liners” that she will need to adopt just one year later to steel herself against the encroachment of prison guards. The verisimilitude between Assata’s well-known police encounters, and her experiences in civil society’s most nurturing nook, the radical coalition, raises disturbing questions about political desire, Black positionality, and hegemony as a modality of struggle.

In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon makes two moves with respect to civil society. First, he locates its genuine manifestation in Europe — the motherland. Then, with respect to the colony, he locates it only in the zone of the settler. This second move is vital for our understanding of Black positionality in America and for understanding the, at best, limitations of radical social movements in America. For if we are to follow Fanon’s analysis, and the gestures toward this understanding in some of the work of imprisoned intellectuals, then we have to come to grips with the fact that, for Black people, civil society *itself* — rather than its abuses or shortcomings — is a state of emergency.

For Fanon, civil society is predicated on the Manicheism of divided zones, opposed to each other “but not in service of a higher unity” (Fanon, 1968: 38–39). This is the basis of his later assertion that the two zones produce two different “species,” between which “no conciliation is possible” (*Ibid.*). The phrase “not in service of a higher unity” dismisses any kind of dialectical optimism for a future synthesis.

In “The Avant-Garde of White Supremacy,” Martinot and Sexton assert the primacy of Fanon’s Manichean zones (without the promise of higher unity), even in the face of American integration facticity. Fanon’s specific colonial context does not share Martinot and Sexton’s historical or national context. Common to

both texts, however, is the settler/native dynamic, the differential zoning, and the gratuity (as opposed to the contingency) of violence that accrues to the blackened position.

The dichotomy between white ethics [the discourse of civil society] and its irrelevance to the violence of police profiling is not dialectical; the two are incommensurable whenever one attempts to *speak* about the paradigm of policing, one is forced back into a discussion of particular events — high-profile homicides and their related courtroom battles, for instance (Martinot and Sexton, 2002: 6; emphasis added).

It makes no difference that in the U.S. the “casbah” and the “European” zone are laid one on top of the other. What is being asserted here is an isomorphic schematic relation — the schematic interchangeability — between Fanon’s settler society and Martinot and Sexton’s policing paradigm. For Fanon, it is the policeman and soldier (not the discursive, or hegemonic, agents) of colonialism that make one town white and the other Black. For Martinot and Sexton, this Manichean delirium manifests itself by way of the U.S. paradigm of policing that (re)produces, repetitively, the inside/outside, the civil society/Black world, by virtue of the difference between those bodies that do not magnetize bullets and those that do. “Police impunity serves to distinguish between the racial itself and the elsewhere that mandates it...the distinction between those whose human being is put permanently in question and those for whom it goes without saying” (*Ibid.*: 8). In such a paradigm, white people are, ipso facto, deputized in the face of Black people, whether they know it (consciously) or not. Whiteness, then, and by extension civil society, cannot be solely “represented” as some monumentalized coherence of phallic signifiers, but must first be understood as a social formation of contemporaries who do not magnetize bullets. This is the essence of their construction through an *asignifying* absence; their signifying presence is manifested by the fact that they are, if only by default, deputized against those who do magnetize bullets. In short, white people are not simply “protected” by the police, they *are* — *in their very corporeality* — the police.

This ipso facto deputization of white people in the face of Black people accounts for Fanon’s materiality, and Martinot and Sexton’s Manichean delirium in America. What remains to be addressed, however, is the way in which the political contestation between civil society’s junior partners (i.e., workers, white women, and immigrants), on the one hand, and white supremacist institutionality, on the other hand, is produced by, and reproductive of, a supplemental anti-Blackness. Put another way: How is the production and accumulation of junior partner social capital dependent upon on an anti-Black rhetorical structure and a decomposed Black body?

Any serious musing on the question of antagonistic identity formation — a formation, the mass mobilization of which can precipitate a crisis in the institu-

tions and assumptive logic that undergird the United State of America — must come to grips with the contradictions between the political demands of radical social movements, such as the large prison abolition movement, which seeks to abolish the prison-industrial complex, and the ideological structure that underwrites its political desire. I contend that the positionality of Black subjectivity is at the heart of those contradictions and that this unspoken desire is bound up with the political limitations of several naturalized and uncritically accepted categories that have their genesis mainly in the works of Antonio Gramsci, namely, work or labor, the wage, exploitation, hegemony, and civil society. I wish to theorize the symptoms of rage and resignation I hear in the words of George Jackson, when he boils reform down to a single word, “fascism,” or in Assata’s brief declaration, “i hated it,” as well as in the Manichean delirium of Fanon, Martinot, and Sexton. Today, the failure of radical social movements to embrace symptoms of all three gestures is tantamount to the reproduction of an anti-Black politics that nonetheless represents itself as being in the service of the emancipation of the Black prison slave.

By examining the strategy and structure of the Black subject’s absence in, and incommensurability with, the key categories of Gramscian theory, we come face to face with three unsettling consequences:

(1) The Black American subject imposes a radical incoherence upon the assumptive logic of Gramscian discourse and on today’s coalition politics. In other words, s/he implies a scandal.

(2) The Black subject reveals the inability of social movements grounded in Gramscian discourse to think of white supremacy (rather than capitalism) as the base and thereby calls into question their claim to elaborate a comprehensive and decisive antagonism. Stated another way, Gramscian discourse and coalition politics are indeed able to imagine the subject that transforms itself into a mass of antagonistic identity formations, formations that can precipitate a crisis in wage slavery, exploitation, and hegemony, but they are asleep at the wheel when asked to provide enabling antagonisms toward unwaged slavery, despotism, and terror.

(3) We begin to see how Marxism suffers from a kind of conceptual anxiety. There is a desire for socialism on the other side of crisis, a society that does away not with the category of worker, but with the imposition workers suffer under the approach of variable capital. In other words, the mark of its conceptual anxiety is in its desire to democratize work and thus help to keep in place and insure the coherence of Reformation and Enlightenment foundational values of productivity and progress. This scenario crowds out other postrevolutionary possibilities, i.e., idleness.

The scandal, with which the Black subject position “threatens” Gramscian and coalition discourse, is manifest in the Black subject’s incommensurability with, or disarticulation of, Gramscian categories: work, progress, production, exploitation, hegemony, and historical self-awareness. Through what strategies does the

Black subject destabilize — emerge as the unthought, and thus the scandal of — historical materialism? How does the Black subject function within the “American desiring machine” differently than the quintessential Gramscian subaltern, the worker?

Capital was kick-started by the rape of the African continent, a phenomenon that is central to neither Gramsci nor Marx. According to Barrett (2002), something about the Black body in and of itself made it the repository of the violence that was the slave trade. It would have been far easier and far more profitable to take the white underclass from along the riverbanks of England and Western Europe than to travel all the way to Africa for slaves.

The theoretical importance of emphasizing this in the early 21st century is twofold. First, capital was kick-started by approaching a particular body (a black body) with direct relations of force, not by approaching a white body with variable capital. Thus, one could say that slavery is closer to capital’s primal desire than is exploitation. It is a relation of terror as opposed to a relation of hegemony. Second, today, late capital is imposing a renaissance of this original desire, the direct relation of force, the despotism of the unwaged relation. This renaissance of slavery, i.e., the reconfiguration of the prison-industrial complex has, once again, as its structuring metaphor and primary target the Black body.

The value of reintroducing the unthought category of the slave, by way of noting the absence of the Black subject, lies in the Black subject’s potential for extending the demand placed on state/capital formations because its reintroduction into the discourse expands the intensity of the antagonism. In other words, the positionality of the slave makes a demand that is in excess of the demand made by the positionality of the worker. The worker demands that productivity be fair and democratic (Gramsci’s new hegemony, Lenin’s dictatorship of the proletariat, in a word, socialism). In contrast, the slave demands that production stop, without recourse to its ultimate democratization. Work is not an organic principle for the slave. The absence of Black subjectivity from the crux of radical discourse is symptomatic of the text’s inability to cope with the possibility that the generative subject of capitalism, the Black body of the 15th and 16th centuries, and the generative subject that resolves late capital’s over-accumulation crisis, the Black (incarcerated) body of the 20th and 21st centuries, do not reify the basic categories that structure conflict within civil society: the categories of work and exploitation.

Thus, the Black subject position in America represents an antagonism or demand that cannot be satisfied through a transfer of ownership/organization of existing rubrics. In contrast, the Gramscian subject, the worker, represents a demand that can indeed be satisfied by way of a successful war of position, which brings about the end of exploitation. The worker calls into question the legitimacy of productive practices, while the slave calls into question the legitimacy of productivity itself. Thus, the insatiability of the slave demand upon existing structures means that it cannot find its articulation within the modality of

hegemony (influence, leadership, consent). The Black body cannot give its consent because “generalized trust,” the precondition for the solicitation of consent, “equals racialized whiteness” (Barrett, 2002). Furthermore, as Orlando Patterson (1982) points out, slavery is natal alienation by way of social death, which is to say, a slave has no symbolic currency or material labor power to exchange. A slave does not enter into a transaction of value (however asymmetrical), but is subsumed by direct relations of force. As such, a slave is an articulation of a despotic irrationality, whereas the worker is an articulation of a symbolic rationality.

A metaphor comes into being through a violence that kills the thing such that the concept might live. Gramscian discourse and coalition politics come to grips with America’s structuring rationality — what it calls capitalism, or political economy — but not with its structuring irrationality, the anti-production of late capital, and the hyper-discursive violence that first kills the Black subject, so that the concept may be born. In other words, from the incoherence of Black death, America generates the coherence of white life. This is important when thinking the Gramscian paradigm and their spiritual progenitors in the world of organizing in the U.S. today, with their overvaluation of hegemony and civil society. Struggles over hegemony are seldom, if ever, asignifying. At some point, they require coherence and categories for the record, meaning they contain the seeds of anti-Blackness.

What does it mean to be positioned not as a positive term in the struggle for anti-capitalist hegemony, i.e., a worker, but to be positioned in excess of hegemony, to be a catalyst that disarticulates the rubric of hegemony, to be a scandal to its assumptive, foundational logic, to threaten civil society’s discursive integrity? In *White Writing*, J.M. Coetzee (1988) examines the literature of Europeans who encountered the South African Khoisan in the Cape between the 16th and 18th centuries. The Europeans were faced with an “anthropological scandal”: a being without (recognizable) customs, religion, medicine, dietary patterns, culinary habits, sexual mores, means of agriculture, and most significantly, without character (because, according to the literature, they did not work). Other Africans, like the Xhosa who were agriculturalists, provided European discourse with enough categories for the record, so that, through various strategies of articulation, they could be known by textual projects that accompanied the colonial project. But the Khoisan did not produce the necessary categories for the record, the play of signifiers that would allow for a sustainable semiotics.

According to Coetzee, the coherence of European discourse depends upon two structuring axes. A “Historical Axis” consists of codes distributed along the axis of temporality and events, while the “Anthropological Axis” is an axis of cultural codes. It mattered very little which codes on either axis a particular indigenous community was perceived to possess, with possession the operative word, for these codes act as a kind of mutually agreed-upon currency. What matters is that

the community has some play of difference along both axes, sufficient in number to construct taxonomies that can be investigated, identified, and named by the discourse. Without this, the discourse cannot go on. It is reinvigorated when an unknown entity presents itself, but its anxiety reaches crisis proportions when the entity remains unknown. Something unspeakable occurs. Not to possess a particular code along the Anthropological or Historical Axis is akin to lacking a gene for brown hair or green eyes on an X or Y chromosome. Lacking a Historical or Anthropological Axis is akin to the absence of the chromosome itself. The first predicament raises the notion: What kind of human? The second predicament brings into crisis the notion of the human itself.

Without the textual categories of dress, diet, medicine, crafts, physical appearance, and most important, work, the Khoisan stood in refusal of the invitation to become Anthropological Man. S/he was the void in discourse that could only be designated as idleness. Thus, the Khoisan's status within discourse was not that of an opponent or an interlocutor, but rather of an unspeakable scandal. His/her position within the discourse was one of disarticulation, for he/she did little or nothing to fortify and extend the interlocutory life of the discourse. Just as the Khoisan presented the discourse of the Cape with an anthropological scandal, so the Black subject in the Western Hemisphere, the slave, presents Marxism and American textual practice with a historical scandal.

How is our incoherence in the face of the Historical Axis germane to our experience of being "a phenomenon without analog"? A sample list of codes mapped out by an American subject's historical axis might include *rights or entitlements*; here even Native Americans provide categories for the record when one thinks of how the Iroquois constitution, for example, becomes the U.S. constitution. *Sovereignty* is also included, whether a state is one the subject left behind, or as in the case of American Indians, one taken by force and dint of broken treaties. White supremacy has made good use of the Indian subject's positionality, one that fortifies and extends the interlocutory life of America as a coherent (albeit imperial) idea because treaties are forms of articulation — discussions brokered between two groups are presumed to possess the same category of historical currency, sovereignty. The code of sovereignty can have a past and future history, if you will excuse the oxymoron, when one considers that 150 Native American tribes have applied to the Bureau of Indian Affairs for sovereign recognition so that they might qualify for funds harvested from land stolen from them.¹ *Immigration* is another code that maps the subject onto the American Historical Axis, with narratives of arrival based on collective volition and premeditated desire. Chicano subject positions can fortify and extend the interlocutory life of America as an idea because racial conflict can be articulated across the various contestations over the legitimacy of arrival, immigration. Both whites and Latinos generate data for this category.

Slavery is the great leveler of the Black subject's positionality. The Black

American subject does not generate historical categories of entitlement, sovereignty, and immigration for the record. We are “off the map” with respect to the cartography that charts civil society’s semiotics; we have a past, but not a heritage. To the data-generating demands of the Historical Axis, we present a virtual blank, much like that which the Khoisan presented to the Anthropological Axis. This places us in a structurally impossible position, one that is outside the articulations of hegemony. However, it also places hegemony in a structurally impossible position because — and this is key — our presence works back upon the grammar of hegemony and threatens it with incoherence. If every subject — even the most massacred among them, Indians — is required to have analogs within the nation’s structuring narrative, and the experience of one subject, upon whom the nation’s order of wealth was built, is without analog, then that subject’s presence destabilizes all other analogs.

Fanon (1968: 37) writes, “decolonization, which sets out to change the order of the world, is, obviously, a program of complete disorder.” If we take him at his word, then we must accept that no other body functions in the Imaginary, the Symbolic, or the Real so completely as a repository of complete disorder as the Black body. Blackness is the site of absolute dereliction at the level of the Real, for in its magnetizing of bullets the Black body functions as the map of gratuitous violence through which civil society is possible: namely, those bodies for which violence is, or can be, contingent. Blackness is the site of absolute dereliction at the level of the Symbolic, for Blackness in America generates no categories for the chromosome of history, and no data for the categories of immigration or sovereignty. It is an experience without analog — a past without a heritage. Blackness is the site of absolute dereliction at the level of the Imaginary, for “whoever says ‘rape’ says Black” (Fanon), whoever says “prison” says Black, and whoever says “AIDS” says Black (Sexton) — the “Negro is a phobogenic object” (Fanon).

Indeed, it means all those things: a phobogenic object, a past without a heritage, the map of gratuitous violence, and a program of complete disorder. Whereas this realization is, and should be, cause for alarm, it should not be cause for lament, or worse, disavowal — not at least, for a true revolutionary, or for a truly revolutionary movement such as prison abolition. If a social movement is to be neither social democratic nor Marxist, in terms of structure of political desire, then it should grasp the invitation to assume the positionality of subjects of social death. If we are to be honest with ourselves, we must admit that the “Negro” has been inviting whites, as well as civil society’s junior partners, to the dance of social death for hundreds of years, but few have wanted to learn the steps. They have been, and remain today — even in the most anti-racist movements, like the prison abolition movement — invested elsewhere. This is not to say that all oppositional political desire today is pro-white, but it is usually anti-Black, meaning it will not dance with death.

Black liberation, as a prospect, makes radicalism more dangerous to the U.S.

This is not because it raises the specter of an alternative polity (such as socialism, or community control of existing resources), but because its condition of possibility and gesture of resistance function as a negative dialectic: a politics of refusal and a refusal to affirm, a "program of complete disorder." One must embrace its disorder, its incoherence, and allow oneself to be elaborated by it, if indeed one's politics are to be underwritten by a desire to take down this country. If this is not the desire that underwrites one's politics, then through what strategy of legitimation is the word "prison" being linked to the word "abolition"? What are this movement's lines of political accountability?

There is nothing foreign, frightening, or even unpracticed about the embrace of disorder and incoherence. The desire to be embraced, and elaborated, by disorder and incoherence is not anathema in and of itself. No one, for example, has ever been known to say "gee-whiz, if only my orgasms would end a little sooner, or maybe not come at all." Yet few so-called radicals desire to be embraced, and elaborated, by the disorder and incoherence of Blackness — and the state of political movements in the U.S. today is marked by this very Negrophobogenesis: "gee-whiz, if only Black rage could be more coherent, or maybe not come at all." Perhaps there is something more terrifying about the joy of Black than there is in the joy of sex (unless one is talking sex with a Negro). Perhaps coalitions today prefer to remain in-orgasmic in the face of civil society — with hegemony as a handy prophylactic, just in case. If, through this stasis or paralysis they try to do the work of prison abolition, that work will fail, for it is always work *from* a position of coherence (i.e., the worker) on *behalf* of a position of incoherence of the Black subject, or prison slave. In this way, social formations on the Left remain blind to the contradictions of coalitions between workers and slaves. They remain coalitions operating within the logic of civil society and function less as revolutionary promises than as crowding out scenarios of Black antagonisms, simply feeding our frustration.

Whereas the positionality of the worker (whether a factory worker demanding a monetary wage, an immigrant, or a white woman demanding a social wage) gestures toward the reconfiguration of civil society, the positionality of the Black subject (whether a prison-slave or a prison-slave-in-waiting) gestures toward the disconfiguration of civil society. From the coherence of civil society, the Black subject beckons with the incoherence of civil war, a war that reclaims Blackness not as a positive value, but as a politically enabling site, to quote Fanon, of "absolute dereliction." It is a "scandal" that rends civil society asunder. Civil war, then, becomes the unthought, but never forgotten, understudy of hegemony. It is a Black specter waiting in the wings, an endless antagonism that cannot be satisfied (via reform or reparation), but must nonetheless be pursued to the death.

NOTE

1. White supremacy transmogrifies codes internal to Native American culture for its own purposes. However, unlike immigrants and white women, the Native American has no purchase as a junior partner in civil society. Space does not permit us to fully discuss this here. Ward Churchill and others do explain how — unlike civil society's junior partners — genocide of the Indian, like the enslavement of Blacks, is a precondition for the idea of America. It is a condition of possibility upon which the idea of immigration can be narrativized. No web of analogy can be spun between, on the one hand, the phenomenon of genocide and slavery and, on the other hand, the phenomenon of access to institutionality and immigration. Thus, although white supremacy appropriates Native American codes of sovereignty, it cannot solve the contradiction that, unlike civil society's junior partners, those codes are not imbricated with immigration and access.

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The Armed Struggle

Smashing the State in Rojava and Beyond:
The Formation and Intentions of the International
Revolutionary People's Guerrilla Forces





*To the comrades, revolutionaries, partisans & guerrillas who have
fought, struggled & died*

*To those who continue to fight and sacrifice for liberation and a
new world*

To our comrades held in the dungeons of the state & capital

To the ones who silently suffer under tyranny

To the unknown martyrs



**GLORY AND HONOR TO ALL THE HEROIC MARTYRS OF
ROJAVA!**

**VICTORY TO THE REVOLUTION IN ROJAVA AND
KURDISTAN!**

**MILITANT HORIZONTAL SELF-ORGANIZED
COLLECTIVES & COMMUNITIES**

FOR THE REVOLUTION AND ANARCHISM!





IRPGF

Who We Are...

The International Revolutionary People's Guerrilla Forces (IRPGF) is a militant armed self-organized and horizontal collective working to defend social revolutions around the world, to directly confront capital and the state, and advance the cause of anarchism. We recognize and affirm that principled action necessitates principled politics. We are not a political party or platform but rather an armed collective comprised of comrades with different anarchist positions. The IRPGF's collective unity manifests itself in the praxis of militant action which we consider a prerequisite for achieving liberation.

Our role is twofold; to be an armed force capable of defending liberatory social revolutions around the world while simultaneously being a force capable of insurrection and struggle against all kyriarchal forms of power wherever they exist. We do not enter conflict zones with intent to command but rather, while retaining our autonomy as a collective, to fight alongside other armed groups in solidarity with those who are oppressed, exploited and facing annihilation. The IRPGF believes collective action, solidarity and unity are necessary for struggle. International solidarity is the most powerful weapon of the oppressed.



Members of IRPGF announce the group's formation and membership within the International Freedom Battalion (IFB).

Why We Fight...

We fight not only in defense of life but for life itself. The life we fight for is one of total liberation where we can voluntarily choose to form communities of solidarity and mutual aid with the goal of both truly flourishing as individuals and as a collective. Therefore, we fight against the isolation and prison of capitalist modernity which has alienated us not only from each other but from ourselves and nature; turning us into the monotonous, self-absorbed and depressed “zombie” consumers. Our communities are ones in which no one dominates or oppresses but a place where all work together to achieve common goals. Liberated communities are ones that are no longer under the constant threat of violence, eviction and capitalist market values and speculation, but places that belong to the community members as a whole and one that can ecologically coexist with the planet. Our communal strength provides the foundation for a free life whereby we can prevail and transcend hierarchical relationships and become authentic human beings free from the identities systemically imposed on us.

The current social revolution in Rojava (Western Kurdistan - Syria) is the epicenter of such a struggle. It is one of the greatest beacons of militant self-organized and autonomous revolutionary praxis of the 21st Century. Within a brutal civil war in Syria that has cost upwards of half a million lives, the Kurdish peoples along with other ethnic groups including Ezidis, Arabs, Assyrians, Armenians, Turkmen and Circassians as well as foreigners from other countries outside the region, have stood up to the barbarity of both Bashar al-Assad and the theocratic totalitarianism of Daesh (ISIS) in order to create a democratic entity which transcends the archetypal nation-state.



“We are not in the least afraid of ruins. We are going to inherit the earth; there is not the slightest doubt about that... We carry a new world here, in our hearts. The world is growing in this minute.” - Buenaventura Durruti

The fight for social autonomy, gender equality, direct democracy and worker controlled industries is at the heart of the project in Rojava and the goal for an autonomous Kurdistan. We recognize the struggle against all forms of kyriarchy and we support the ongoing revolution in the region.

Who We Fight...

The nation-state, authority, capital and social hierarchy are the enemies of a liberated world and therefore enemies of us all. While we struggle through self-criticism and collective criticism of our personal and collective internalizations of these oppressive behaviors, attitudes and practices, the external enemies; the bosses, along with their armies and police, must be confronted with bullets, bombs and dynamite. The fires of justice and freedom are cleansing and all consuming. For us, there is no stepping back and no way to achieve liberation except through struggle. Our communities will only be liberated when we destroy those few whose wealth and power depend on the suffering and exploitation of many.

Meanwhile, hierarchy and domination are only becoming further entrenched with the rise of the far right in Europe and the United States. As millions of people seek to escape the horrors of the wars in the Middle East and Africa in an effort to survive and to save their families and themselves, they are met with tear gas, batons and barbed wire. The fences and walls that only a few decades ago were torn down to welcome those in the Eastern Bloc countries are now built at a rapid pace to keep out those undesirable; the outsiders, the foreigners and those who are Muslim.

The rise of the far right is, for the IRPGF, a direct function and result of the continuing disillusionment of the people in regards to their governments and the ongoing economic crisis. While people understand that something is deeply wrong with the system, the ones that are able to provide the simplistic “answers” are the ones who profit or seek to profit from the emerging conflicts and instability. They claim to provide an alternative by blaming those that are “other”; the refugees, the foreigners, the Muslims, gays/trans* peoples, Jews etc. The right wing calls for a return to traditional values; the family, gender roles, religion and patriotism. They want to convince people of a glorious golden age of democracy and national strength that is simply a myth.

Once again we witness that fascism is in fact a consequence of democracy. Fascism is not the opposite of the democratic state but merely a further entrenching of the democratic states' authority. While many have rejoiced in the emergence of the far right and their ability to capture hearts, minds and state power; there are many who have realized the system is and always was bankrupt. This is where the fight for freedom and the abolition of hierarchy are a new path forward for humanity. The fight for the revolution in Rojava is about creating and defending one such society.



Werin Barîkadan!

As anarchists and members of the IRPGF, we acknowledge that non-violence only legitimizes the state and its authority. We do not recognize any borders, nations or states as legitimate. For antifascism to be effective, it must be violent; smashing the fascists and their organizations and burning and looting their spaces. While we recognize the humanity of our enemies, we realize that they give up their humanity when they embark on a crusade to oppress other people and seize state power. We will defend our spaces and all oppressed people's wherever they are.

Therefore, we announce the creation of the International Revolutionary People's Guerrilla Forces (IRPGF) to defend the revolution in Rojava and all those who find themselves under the heel of a boot. The comrades in the IRPGF are a mixture of anarchists who are committed to militant action to achieve revolutionary goals. Our group's ideological positions are supportive of revolutionary socialism, proletarian internationalism, proletarian revolution, insurrectionary anarchism, libertarian communism and libertarian Marxism. We are committed anti-fascists, anti-capitalists, anti-imperialists and against all forms of patriarchy and kyriarchy. We declare our support and alliance with the YPJ/YPG, the PKK, AIT and the International Freedom Battalion including its member organizations. We declare our open struggle with all imperialist, fascist and counterrevolutionary forces.



DARE TO STRUGGLE, DARE TO WIN!

ABOLISH BORDERS AND PRISON SOCIETY!

VICTORY TO THE REVOLUTION IN ROJAVA!

VICTORY TO THE BARRICADES, THE SOCIAL
INSURRECTION AND
THE COMMUNE!



International Revolutionary People's Guerrilla Forces (IRPGF)



*“Azadî, xweserî û rizgariya jin
Wek pîvan hêjatiyê gerek bîn parastin!”*



*To the comrades, revolutionaries, partisans & guerrillas who have
fought, struggled & died*

*To those who continue to fight and sacrifice for liberation and a
new world*

To our comrades held in the dungeons of the state & capital

To the ones who silently suffer under tyranny

To the unknown martyrs



**GLORY AND HONOR TO ALL THE HEROIC MARTYRS OF
ROJAVA!**

**VICTORY TO THE REVOLUTION IN ROJAVA AND
KURDISTAN!**

**MILITANT HORIZONTAL SELF-ORGANIZED
COLLECTIVES & COMMUNITIES**

FOR THE REVOLUTION AND ANARCHISM!





IRPGF

Who We Are...

The International Revolutionary People's Guerrilla Forces (IRPGF) is a militant armed self-organized and horizontal collective working to defend social revolutions around the world, to directly confront capital and the state, and advance the cause of anarchism. We recognize and affirm that principled action necessitates principled politics. We are not a political party or platform but rather an armed collective comprised of comrades with different anarchist positions. The IRPGF's collective unity manifests itself in the praxis of militant action which we consider a prerequisite for achieving liberation.

Our role is twofold; to be an armed force capable of defending liberatory social revolutions around the world while simultaneously being a force capable of insurrection and struggle against all kyriarchal forms of power wherever they exist. We do not enter conflict zones with intent to command but rather, while retaining our autonomy as a collective, to fight alongside other armed groups in solidarity with those who are oppressed, exploited and facing annihilation. The IRPGF believes collective action, solidarity and unity are necessary for struggle. International solidarity is the most powerful weapon of the oppressed.

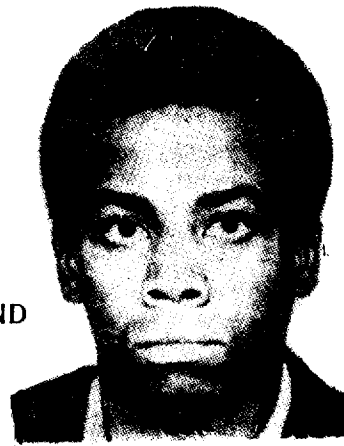
MESSAGE TO THE BLACK MOVEMENT

A POLITICAL STATEMENT FROM THE BLACK UNDERGROUND

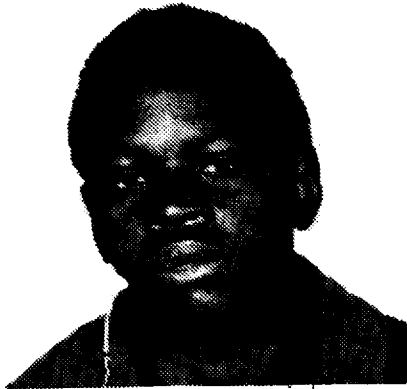
COORDINATING COMMITTEE : THE BLACK LIBERATION ARMY



MESSAGE TO THE BLACK MOVEMENT
A POLITICAL STATEMENT FROM THE BLACK - UNDERGROUND
SEASON OF STRUGGLE



BLACK LIBERATION ARMY



DEDICATED TO ALL THE COMRADES
KILLED, CAPTURED AND EXILED IN
THE STRUGGLE TO BUILD THE ARMED
URBAN GUERRILLA FRONT, AND TO
THOSE WHO SUPPORTED US WHEN ALL
OTHERS REFUSED TO FACE UP TO
REALITY
THE SEASON OF STRUGGLE IS OUR SEASON.





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INTRODUCTION

The following is a political overview and statement of general political positions. We have written these political positions from the perspective of the Armed Front because we feel that such a perspective is needed in the total revolutionary process for black liberation. We are general in our public statement because we are essentially a military and political front, therefore it would not do to speak in any other terms, for the actions of the armed front will address themselves to the specifics of our peoples national oppression. We do not wish the ENEMY to gain tactical insight in carrying out his repressive campaigns, while on the other hand we do desire that the Black Liberation Movement understand the correct role armed struggle plays in a peoples struggle and how this role is in motion for us here in North America.

The tool of analysis is for us a further development of the Historical Materialist method, the dialectical method. We will not even waste our time debating the values of Marxism with those who are emotionally hung up on white people, hung up to the point of ideological blindness. We understand the process of revolution, and fundamental to this understanding is this fact: Marxism is developed to a higher level when it is scientifically adapted to a peoples unique national condition, becoming a new ideology altogether. Thus was the case in China, Guinea Bissau, Vietnam, North Korea, the Peoples Republic of the Congo and many other Socialist nations. For Black people here in North America our struggle is not only unique, but it is the most sophisticated and advanced oppression of a racial national minority in the whole world. We are the true 20th century slaves, and the use of the dialectical method, class struggle and national liberation, will find its highest development as a result of us. This dialectic holds true not only for Marxism, but for revolutionary nationalism as well, it holds true for concepts of revolutionary Pan-Africanism, it is true of the theoretical basis in developing revolutionary Black culture. All of these ideological trends will find their highest expression as a result of our advanced oppression. Yet, we must be ever mindful that the same objective process is true for reactionary refinement as a result of our struggle. This is the unity of opposites in struggle with each other. To defeat our enemy and render his reactionary allies impotent we must have a truly revolutionary perspective informed by concepts of revolutionary class struggle, a movement without such a perspective will fail to defeat our common oppressor. We are not afraid of white people controlling our movement, for our formations, guns, and ideas are built with our own hands, efforts and blood. With this in mind we address ourselves to the Black Liberation struggle, its activist elements and organizations. Our call is for UNITY, for a NATIONAL BLACK LIBERATION FRONT. We must build to win!

NYURBA
BLACK LIBERATION ARMY



AN OVERVIEW

We will start with the basic fact that Capitalism and Imperialism as an economical system is in a deep crisis at home and abroad. The basis of this crisis is, of course, the exploitive relationships that capital must maintain in order to function. It is these economic, social and political relationships that signal the eventual doom of our oppressors and this system of oppression under which we all live.

This crisis of Capitalism is of a protracted nature, by this we mean it is a long process of deterioration that is spread over a considerable length of time. The seeming material wealth which we see all around us in no way contradict this fact of decay, deterioration or the fact of crisis. In fact, overproduction and uneven distribution have led time and time again to a bloated market, cutbacks in employment, and all the attendant ills of an economy based on private ownership of socially produced commodities. Inflation, soaring prices, and inadequate wages are all symptoms of an economy that is based primarily on class exploitation at home and national domination of the Third World's resources abroad.

The heightening of oppressed peoples struggles abroad have added to the crisis of the entire western world, and threaten to cut drastically its essential resources. We realize that the chief economical and military power in the western world and its ruling class, namely the United States of North America and its corporate-financial ruling circles, will never allow the demise of its empire without a desperate fight. We, as blacks in North America must realize, that to seek inclusion into the prevailing socio-economic system is suicide in the long run, for the prevailing system cannot withstand the irresistible world trend of history which is opposed to continued U.S. exploitation, racist domination and subjugation. To fool ourselves into believing that "equal opportunity", "justice", and social equality is the same as the capitalist system is a grave mistake with genocidal implications for every person of color. Our first obligation is to ourselves, this means our first obligation is to secure our total liberation from those forces that maintain our oppressive condition. Related to this self-obligation (not distinct from it) is our obligation to all oppressed peoples throughout the world, for in striving to liberate ourselves we must abolish a system that enslaves others throughout the world. This, in essence, is our historical duty, we can either carry it out or betray it, but we most certainly will be judged accordingly by the world's peoples.

The B.L.A. as a result of realizing the economical nature of the system under which we are forced to live maintains the following principles:

1. That we are anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, anti-racist and anti-sexist.
2. That we must of necessity strive for the abolishment of these systems and for the institution of Socialistic relationships in which Black people have total and absolute control over their own destiny as a people.
3. That in order to abolish our system of oppression we must utilize the science of class struggle, develop this science as it relates to our unique national condition.

related institutions in maintaining the illusion of North American democracy.

In a society such as exists here today, law is never impartial, never divorced from the economical relationships that brought it about. History clearly shows that in the course of the development of modern western society, the code of law is the code of the dominant and most powerful class, made into laws for everyone. It is implemented by establishing "special" armed organs, that are obliged to enforce the prevailing class laws. In this historical period of human social development such is the objective function of "law". Under such conditions of the most powerful economic and political classes. But, what about the law in a democracy, especially one that claims that all its citizens can elect their representatives who in turn can create new laws? First of all such a democracy does not exist in North America, bourgeoisie democracy is essentially the dictatorship of what used to be termed the "national bourgeoisie". There are a combination of reasons as to why this form of democracy as such is merely a means of political control that evinces a design to subjugate its people, all of these reasons flow from the necessity to maintain exploitive capitalist relationships. Thus, the influence of corporate wealth on the politics of bourgeois democracy is merely an extension of private property's traditional influence and control of the so-called democratic process. The Constant co-optation by ruling classes of the masses of working peoples, coupled with their complete control of technology and information, renders the so-called democratic process null and void. To a greater degree all social and political institutions in a class society are reflections of the class organization of that society of the reflection of a given technological-economical arrangement and its supporting value system. The political organization of the most powerful classes or economic groups in a class society has to be, and is, the control by these classes over the entire society and its political system. We have found the democratic process under capitalism to be merely a means by which capital controls the masses. It is a means of mass diversion, designed to keep the powerless classes politically impotent while at the same time fostering the illusion that real power can be gained through the electoral process. Black People should know better. In a nation based on the false principle of majority rule we are a marginal minority and therefore our right to self-determination cannot be won in the arena of our oppressor.

The rejection of reformism however, is much deeper than the above reasons. For if reformism is a rejection of any meaningful change, it is also a rejection of revolutionary violence, and therefore reformism is a functional ignorance of the dynamics of Black liberation. This is because the character of reformism is based on unprincipled class collaboration with our enemy. The ideals of class collaboration do not stand in opposition to our peoples oppression, but instead consistently seeks to reform the oppressive system. Reform of the oppressive system can never benefit its victims, in the final analysis the system of oppression was created to insure the rule of particular racist classes and sanctify their capital. To seek reform therefore inevitably leads to, or begins with, the recognition of the laws of our oppressor as being valid.

Those within the movement who condemn the revolutionary violence of anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, and revolutionary Black nationalist groups are in essence weakening themselves. These fools do not understand the inter-active need for revolutionary violence with other forms of struggle, and because they do not understand the real dynamics involved they seriously inhibit the development of the liberation movement as a whole. . . These reformists in liberationist garb should understand that unless the movement cultivates its capacity to fight the enemy on all fronts, no front will secure any real victories. It is abysmal ignorance that imagines our oppression in any other terms than undeclared war.

How will the movement as a whole be able to fight the oppressor in the future when all other "legal" methods are completely exhausted? How will we implement political struggle without the machinery and capacity for revolutionary violence—when it is abundantly clear that our oppressor maintains armed organs of violence for the enforcement of his rule? We as a movement will be unable to fight in the future if we do not develop the capacity for revolutionary violence in the present. But revolutionary violence is not an alternative to mass movement and organization, it is complementary to mass struggle, it is another front in the total liberation process. Those who put the question of revolutionary violence in "alternative" terms are guilty of crippled politics at best or reactionary politics at worst. Those involved in the total revolutionary process, yet claim not to "endorse" revolutionary violence when it occurs, are attempting to "legitimize" their existence at the expense of the entire struggle. The only "legitimacy" these people can possibly be seeking in such cases is bourgeoisie legitimacy. These type people further confuse the masses, for revolutionary

violence is not clarified and extended in order to undermine the psychological dependence black people still have on racist reactionary "legality". This is the vilest of sins, one for which everyone will pay during heightened repression.

We therefore do not view the "law" of our class enemies as valid, nor do we feel restricted in struggle to his laws. On the other hand, we understand the "tactical" value of using the law and consequently we understand the tactical value of reform in the liberation process. For example, school takeovers by community parents, rent strikes by tenants, labor union takeovers by dissident members, etc.; utilizing their systems and built-in safeguards to obtain certain goals that place the enemy at a temporary disadvantage. But we maintain there is only tactical value to reform when there exists other forms of revolutionary struggle against the whole of the capitalist structure. Reform as such is inherently reactionary and perpetuates psychological dependence on the enemy, while confusing the true class contradictions between ourselves and the enemy. Considering these factors, we maintain that reform can never be anything more than a tactic, never a complete strategy, never offering in itself any revolutionary change. While it may offer the Black bourgeoisie rewards, it can never be the road to self-determination for the entire black populace.

We also strongly condemn those who claim to be progressive, yet depreciate revolutionary violence of an oppressed peoples in their struggle for liberation. There can be no conditions on our fight for freedom except those set by the oppressed themselves. Those who claim that revolutionary violence gives the enemy the opportunity to repress the movement in general are profoundly mistaken if they think the reactionary government needs such excuses for repression, or that the government does not recognize the real danger in allowing a movement to develop the full blown capacity to wage armed struggle. The B.L.A. has undertaken the task of building just such a capacity, along with other comrades on the clandestine level. . .

WHY BUILD THE ARMED FRONT

We have chosen to build the armed front, the urban guerilla front, not as an alternative to organizing masses of Black people, but because the liberation movement as a whole must prepare armed formations at each stage in its struggle. A failure to build these armed formations can be fatal to both the struggle and Black people.

Our ultimate or strategic goal at this point in creating the apparatus of revolutionary violence is to weaken the enemy capitalist state, creating at the same time objective-subjective conditions that are ripe for the formation of a National Black Liberation Front composed of many progressive, revolutionary, and nationalist groupings, and in this same process create the nucleus of the armed clandestine organs which such a front would need in order to carry out its political tasks. These are the broad reasons for our devotion to armed struggle. The fact that no such national united front exists now, in no way precludes the fact that the creation of one will become necessary in the future (as the contradictions of capitalist society increase repression, racism and social deterioration). We are of the opinion that subjective conditions are not ripe for such unity.

Because of objective conditions, namely, enemy activity and the relative low degree of unity within the black struggle, we have decided to build the apparatus separate and distinct (organizationally) from all other mass type groups. This is a tactical necessity, but this tactical necessity does not contradict our strategic call for all groups in the Black Liberation movement to form a national united front, with the principle of armed action as one of many "legitimate" forms of political policy.

At present the contradictions that any B.L.A. activities may cause are not to be avoided. Every progressive should welcome the exposure and development of contradictions, for it is through the development of contradictions that we will all move forward. Every brother, every sister on the side of liberation should and must support the struggle on all fronts, and clarify to our people the acts of revolutionary violence committed against our common oppressors and class enemies of all colors. This means that revolutionary violence must be supported by those in the movement on all levels. While such support will be difficult at first, objective conditions and time will remove much of this difficulty which is primarily ideological

myopia to begin with. We know from experience that because of the class nature of our struggle and its racist aspect, many of our actions may very well be tactical actions or a purely military-psychological nature, and because of this clear political support may seem quite difficult. Nonetheless we intend to clarify all acts of revolutionary violence and accept responsibility for these acts. The important factor, however, is that the progressive movement, the liberation movement, and comrades on all levels of struggle understand that failure to support the armed urban guerilla front (materially, politically) is a failure to support the mass front, is a failure to support the "legal" thrusts of our struggle in "civil rights", and in the final analysis, an abdication of responsibility. Cowardice can be understood, but not opportunism and an abdication of commitment to our total liberation.

RACISM AND CLASS

Our recognition of the class nature of our struggle has led us to certain objective conclusions which have been borne out by actual conditions. We have for some time now observed how the influence of certain class values determine how one acts or reacts in society. We have observed the class differences among the majority white population in the United States, and the reflection of these differences among black people. As we have said years before this, the class differences among black people are differences in consciousness, attitudes, and behavior, but unlike these same class differences among whites, economic status or economic position is not the major determinant. The overwhelming majority of blacks (with the exception of very few) are essentially in the same economic class, and suffer essentially the same relationship to the productive forces of capital.

Despite this fact however, the differences in consciousness and in attitudes are real, and therefore must be dealt with as if these attitudes were economic class distinctions. The reality of our people tells us that not only are there black enemies of black people, but that these black enemies are first and foremost class enemies of our struggle for liberation. It is their class values, ideas, and class ideals that make them what they are, coupled with the fact that they are black, or of a so called "sub-culture". When this factor of culture is considered in proper perspective, we find that these enemies in black fact can hide among us, spreading their various reactionary liberal philosophies of gradualism, black capitalism, "integration", cultural nationalism, reformism, etc.

The reason why these black class enemies find acceptance are many. The first and foremost reason is our unique social psychology, or our emotional response to racism. This racist reflex has primed us to think in terms of color first (just as it has programmed whites to view color as a determinant factor) and when such thinking becomes culturally typical of us, we are vulnerable to class infiltration by black enemies of our struggle. We tend to blame the color and not the class values of our oppressor when we are betrayed or exploited by one of our own people. Thus when a black person betrays or hurts us we say, "niggahs ain't shit", (this also indicates self-hatred and/or self-pity), instead, what we should say is that "certain classes of niggahs ain't shit".

Why should we have such a class perspective, and maintain class vigilance for ruling class lackeys? The first reason is that in a class society such as the one that we suffer under, every brand of thought, every form of behavior, are stamped with the mark of a particular class. This has deep meaning for us, for the dominant classes in this country are white and their culture racist. We as blacks reflect in our thinking the values, and ideas of these dominant classes, as well as the defensive response to their social-cultural racism manifested in their system of rule. For these reasons we are vulnerable, we can easily be misled, abused and misused. We become easy targets for the racist ploys of our collective enemy. The enemy can use skin color to confuse us into thinking that if we attack another black we are necessarily attacking ourselves, when it may very well be the other way around—we are attacking him! It is to our advantage to have a clear principled class view. It is to the oppressors disadvantage if we are principled class conscious individuals, opposed to unprincipled class collaboration.

If we look at most of the organizations on the scene today, and their philosophies, leadership, and methods of struggle, we will see the reflection of certain class ideals, ideas and values. Overwhelmingly these groups each reflect the goals of a particular class of black folks. Without a revolutionary class perspective we who are striving to acquire total emancipation from the forces which enslave the whole of our people, will be unable to distinguish true friends from true enemies, those who are confused from those who are conscious tools of the oppressor, and we will not be able to win potential allies.

This brings us to the dialectical role of culture, for if we understand that as members of a class society (or victims) we all are influenced by the class perspectives of that society, and for black people this means the values, standards, etc., of the dominant racist classes, then we must understand the tool by which we are programmed into these perspectives of class. Culture is the tool. We view culture as the means by which a dominant class programs the whole of society into that classes ideals, values, and standards, thereby perpetuating its dominance.

This objective class function of "culture" should not lead us to the incorrect conclusion that if we adopt a "cultural" orientation in our fight for liberation that such would be sufficient. This is the essential view of the cultural nationalists who orient all around culture, such a view is incorrect. For it does not deal with the economic, class, and psychological basis of the struggle between two opposing cultural entities. The dominant reactionary culture must be destroyed before any revolutionary culture can truly manifest itself. In other words, it is in the active struggle of the two that the seeds of a revolutionary culture are laid. Not in the passive creation of an alternative "culture". Such could only be an alternative life style, allowed to exist at the will of the dominant capitalist culture. In this sense cultural nationalism is bourgeois nationalism because it does not propose the abolishment of the capitalist system and culture.

In dealing with the objective function of culture then, we understand its social role in maintaining certain class relationships. A racist culture does this and more. A racist culture programs not only the members of the dominant racial group into class ideals, standards, and values, but it also psychologically creates the necessary racist attitudes needed to maintain these class perspectives as a whole, against the targets of that racism. Thus the feelings of superiority, fear of blacks, and hostility toward the strivings of black people (and all third-world peoples in general) is deeply ingrained into the white psyche along with the class phobias and standards. Even more than this, the victims of the racist culture are programmed into feelings of self-hatred, inferiority, and impotency. Very often this creates a mental social state that views the prevailing system as eternal and everlasting. Coupled with the class values of the dominant culture, black folks are constantly torn between wanting what the oppressor defines as desirable, and the inability to get it. Or to get it and then realize that it was only a hoax, he is still as black as ever. All of this is crippling for the oppressed black man, for it ties his brain irrevocably to his oppressor for salvation, often leading to the clownish pursuit of all that is defined as "good" by his standards.

In order to break these psychological-class chains of 20th century enslavement, we must build a revolutionary culture. A culture that not only programs our minds out of oppression, but at the same time impels us against the enemy classes and culture. The B.L.A. contribution in building such a culture will be to strive to create an armed tradition of resistance to our oppression, and to create a socia-psychological frame of mind on both oppressed and oppressor alike that will lead to our eventual self-determination as a people.

We therefore make few distinctions based on the color of our enemies. The same treatment will be meted out to white ruling class enemies and their lackeys as will be meted out to black bootlickers and black class enemies of our struggle. Our only consideration is that our armed formations and leadership are of our own people.

DESTRUCTIVE SUB-CULTURE, CRIME AND PRISON

The Black communities of the United States are the tragic results of class/race subjugation, an oppressive situation created and exploited by the rich white capitalist class of this corrupt country, and systematically perpetuated and reinforced through their various institutions. The wretched conditions that are inherent within these ghettos continue to exist not because there are no means of erasing them, but rather because they have proven profitable to the class that created them.

The ruling class of the racist descendants of the chattel slave holders. They have amassed a vast portion of the world's wealth through their rapacious practice of profiting off the misery and discomfort of humanity in general, and Third World people in particular. They use this enormous concentration of wealth to buy, bribe, steal, influence, murder, enslave, blackmail, control, and repress any nation, organization, group, or individual that would speak out against, or offer any serious opposition to their self-imposed right to power.

In order to maintain the present mis-arrangement, the social imbalances, the bourgeois class continues to use repressive tactics in various forms. The effects of this repression becomes clearly evident upon examination of the destructive sub-culture (the black community) born out of American politics.

This sub-culture materialized out of the need of Black folks for security and a sense of belonging that had been denied them since their arrival in this country; an attempt by the rejected and dispossessed—a totally de-culturalized people—to integrate bourgeois society by imitating the life-style, and adopting the value system of their oppressors.

The destructive nature of this sub-culture manifests itself in the living reality of Black folks attitudinal and philosophical outlook on life. The self-preserving quality of unity is almost totally absent in the black community. In its place there is an unhealthy atmosphere of individuality which is detrimental, and inconsistent with the needs of our people; for it is precisely this thinking that has kept us divided and un-organized for so long.

It would seem that brothers and sisters would recognize the fact that by accepting and perpetuating the values of the class that oppresses us, that they are only aiding in their own genocide. They have all the physical evidence necessary to prove that the values that they now cherish so dearly are not complimentary to their best interests.

In our community we continuously come face-to-face with the reality of our situation: The delapidated, fire-hazard tenements; the black mother with her un-fed child; the brother overdoses from the C.I.A.'s right to free enterprise; the sister that sells herself to an abominable pleasure-seeking fool; the un-employed/unskilled/mis-educated remains of a once beautiful people.

It's sickening to listen to "negrows" talk about how much profit they've made from selling dope and pimping sisters; about the brand-name automobile they're driving, while their children are starving because they have ceased to be men; or to hear some bad-talking, chicken-hearted punk describe how he has ripped off some poor Black's life savings because he does not have the courage to take it from the criminals who oppress us.

We can't afford to continue as we have for the past one hundred years if we expect to ever be in the position to determine the quality of our own lives, and more important, the lives of our children. Already the influence of the negative images projected by some Black folks have filtered down to our offspring. In their attempts to emulate their elders, Black kids are beginning to take on the psychological posture of the street wise. They are being taught (through words and action) that the only way to get ahead in this world is to "get the money" and "go for self". Such values are mere reflections of a potentially destructive sub-culture organized within the social order of a modern technological society. What we must understand is

the institutional process that is constantly at work in our daily lives. Only with such an understanding can we begin to make the struggle for liberation a part of our peoples everyday life, uniting the large objective struggle for liberation with our peoples subjective struggle, and make them one continuous movement.

Every institution in this racist class society serves the intended or unintended purpose of maintaining the attitudes, mores, and relationships of our destructive sub-culture. Welfare, housing agencies, systems programs, courts, prisons and countless other ruling class institutions reinforce negative relationships among blacks. Our relationship and dependence on these enemy institutions is total, and only with their collapse can true alternative institutions prosper, but the process must begin now. We must not only build alternative social, economic, and political institutions, but we must intentionally sabotage, overload, and destroy existing ruling class institutions in the process.

Part of our socialization process is the reality of prison and "crime". Crime in a capitalist society has a class basis, and is punished in accordance with this class basis. The whole of capitalist society is predicated upon exploitive relations, and thus lower class crime is a reflection of ruling class criminal values and practices. In the black community the average inmate is exposed to, and preyed upon by these very criminal values. We knock each other in the head, rob each other, burglarize each other's apartments, sell dope as a means of "getting over" because we each want what the system of capital has defined as being of value, but has forbidden us to acquire in "legitimate" fashion. In a society that views a persons material things as determining his worth, we are the most hungry to be of "worth", crime is essentially illegitimate capitalism in such an arrangement. We are socialized into this distorted existence and can hardly see the root causes that make our community havens for dope sellers, mack men, and hustlers.

The reality of the Black experience in America has not only socialized us into living illegitimate lives (in terms of capitalist law) but it has programmed us to expect and look to the very institutions that created this socialization in the first place, for solutions to our plight. We ask for more police in our community, when it is the police that serve a repressive role in maintaining our oppression. We condone and glorify traitors and snitches, when in the future our very survival will depend on ideals contrary to such vile acts. We ask for stiffer jail sentences for those convicted as "criminals" when it is prisons that help maintain destructive social relations in our community. The fact that all of America is a prison escapes us. This reality has enabled black folk to adapt so readily to the transition from "street life" to life behind the walls. There is a dialectical and fundamental relationship between the two that reinforces the destructive aspect of black social relationships.

The weakening of the Black family, the socialization of exploitive male-female relationships, the basic fabric that supports cultural genocide can all be found in the social role that prisons and crime play in a destructive sub-culture. Hardly a black family, hardly a black person is without at least one relative or friend behind prison walls, or know of someone in human cold storage. Our social acceptance of this cold fact is in reality our cultural response to the effect of powerlessness as a people. We must begin to determine our lives by creating community institutions of revolutionary justice outside the structure of capitalist law. This means we must create armed political organs in our community to enforce our community interest, and create new values based on our peoples social interest. It will not do to forego this vital aspect of our struggle, we must build it now.

Why is the construction and maintenance of community based political armed cadres necessary? Because the enforcement of revolutionary justice in our communities is first a political question that cannot be answered by the existing oppressive system, but outside its control. Secondly, the very nature of corruption, crime in our communities, the negative class role of the courts, prisons, and other related institutions, must be combated with enforcement of our own laws, laws beneficial to our people and our struggle for liberation. Thirdly, if we construct our own agencies of revolutionary justice, arm them and politicize their ranks, we are creating the necessary machinery of survival, while actively repressing those values and elements in our community that prey on our people. Finally, we should realize that until our powerless, poor, and unconscious people can call someone else other than the oppressors storm troopers for protection, we are ineffective

as a revolutionary movement.

Complementary to creating our own social force of "law" enforcement is the struggle to take over, dismantle, and weaken the oppressors police apparatus in our community. This apparatus must be neutralized at the same time that our own apparatus is being built. The two are dialectically opposed to each other, yet there is a complementary aspect. Community control of police, residence of the police in the community in which they work are all reform issues that tactically are complementary to building our own system of community revolutionary justice. These reform issues should be the continued target of the mass front, while the creation of community-based armed cadres for the enforcement of revolutionary justice is the proper province of clandestine activity.

We maintain that in the social revolution for black liberation, it is a principled necessity that any creation of a national Black front must first and foremost deal with the social effects of a destructive sub-culture by creating and directing a system of revolutionary justice that will protect and defend our people against reactionary behavior. This is the social aspect of Black Liberation for the immediate future.



LEADERSHIP OF THE STRUGGLE

It is important that the leadership of our struggle come from among our own people, just as it is crucial that we build the necessary machinery that will develop this leadership. The problem of leadership has always been a vexing one for black people. We must break with the old style of leadership forced upon us by the prevailing class standards or we will fail in our struggle. Nonetheless, leadership is important, especially to black people, and without it we will never triumph in our struggle.

It is past time that black intellectuals, professionals, and so called black scholars assumed a more active role in the leadership of the liberation struggle, instead of laying back theorizing and writing essays in a vacuum, or in various black bourgeois publications.

We realize that many of our black scholars have their minds in pawn to the ruling class, we are not primarily addressing ourselves to these particular individuals, but to those brothers and sisters who have a relatively high level of awareness (political) and to those black intellectuals who are anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist, and pro-black liberation. It is these black intellectuals who must assume new positions of leadership in our struggle by helping to build the necessary revolutionary apparatus that will forge our total liberation.

On the armed front it is these intellectuals who must become the political leadership and work in creating a far reaching and effective apparatus. Our struggle for black liberation is a revolutionary struggle, for it implies the transformation of the whole of American society if it is to succeed, and black intellectuals have a clear obligation to this process. We have seen how the capitalist state uses its intellectuals and institutions of "higher education" in order to continue its exploitive policies, and we as a people must utilize our professionals and intellectuals in the total process of liberation and destruction of capitalistic society. Our principled call for a national Black revolutionary front will never become a reality without such leadership of Black intellectuals with concrete and clear revolutionary politics. The B.L.A. will never subordinate itself to such a front unless leadership of this caliber is evident. Our intellectuals must make a firm commitment to improving the quality of our struggle on all fronts, military, mass front, electoral politics, legal front, etc. For us the creation of a revolutionary front and its military arm are worthy tasks for our intellectuals to pursue in the revolutionary process. There can be no struggle without sacrifice, and our black intellectuals must begin to apply this principle to themselves as well as others.

It is clear to us that the so-called lumpen class cannot carry our liberation struggle forward on its own. This is because of their class nature: undisciplined, dogmatic, and easily prone to diversion. This class however will supply some of the most dedicated comrades to the struggle. But we must clarify our view of the lumpen class as a whole. The traditional concept of lumpen as a category of the lowest social strata in an industrialized society, unemployed, etc., is a description that fits not only brothers and sisters that hang out in the street all day long and survive in that fashion, but it also fits a great segment of black people who are marginally employed and who for various socio-economical reasons think essentially the same as the classical "lumpen". Therefore, we must make a clear distinction between the economic definition of lumpen (the relationship of that class to the means of production) and the attitudinal, behavioral definition which can readily apply to a larger proportion of our people. When we use the term lumpen we are using the broad definition.

The unemployment rate among black people is a little over twice that of the white population, placing it roughly at 20%. This to us is still a conservative estimate. But if we consider the population ratio of blacks to whites, such a high rate of unemployment represents a considerable number of the total amount of black people. Therefore, in strictly social terms, the lumpen class represents a very large segment of the black population, a segment who in our estimation will be the first to grasp the realities of capitalist repression. This as it may be, we still realize the limitations of this class in moving our struggle forward, their class tendencies make them ideal targets of the enemy, as agents, infiltrators as well as some of these same tendencies contribute to making the lumpen class staunch comrades in struggle. When we realize the real

limitations of this class, we as a movement will begin to create a more dynamic revolutionary process.

The black bourgeoisie (from which most black intellectuals, professionals come) cannot by themselves lead our struggle, not because they are incapable of leadership but because their class nature is more reactionary than revolutionary. The tendency to vacillate, compromise with the ruling class enemy, opportunism, and lack of commitment to any revolutionary principles are typical traits of this class. It is from this class that the enemy has drawn the majority of so called "endorsed" spokesmen, and it is this class from which the majority of poverty pimps spring forth.

But this class can supply the movement with some dynamic leadership as well as devoted comrades. Those truly progressive elements of the black bourgeoisie that can be won over to the side of the liberation struggle should be focused on by the movement and principally dealt with. The failure of the liberation movement to put the black bourgeoisie principally against the wall is inexcusable. For if people are to understand the impotency of our bourgeoisie, its opportunism, and the role they are made to play in maintaining our collective oppression, the movement as a whole must create conditions that will lead to such an understanding.

We have witnessed the ruling class crisis of watergate, and the division it has caused within the ruling circles. This division was essentially based on repairing the body politic of capitalist rule. The "crisis of confidence in government" was a crisis for the ruling economical circles, for they had to not only restore "faith" in their system of rule, (political system) but they also had to find a political front man upon which they all could agree, and in whom the masses would have some degree of confidence. Yet the revelations of watergate (which were essentially of a political nature dealing with the ruling class parties) had profound implications for our struggle. It hinted at the extent to which our movement has and is repressed by the reactionary government. An ideal opportunity existed for the movement as a whole to put our so-called "elected leaders" of the black bourgeoisie against the wall. But the movement never seized the opportunity presented. No consistent widespread call was put to black politicians to conduct a unilateral investigation into the government repression of the black liberation struggle, and into political espionage against the black movement. Such a demand could have revealed glaring repression (and thereby weaken the mental residual belief in our oppressors "fair" system) or as was more likely, the real impotency of our black elected officials would have been clearly revealed (thereby weakening the confidence in bourgeois electoral politics to effect change). Of course no such widespread call was made, and therefore no such result. It is this lack of practical class struggle that inhibits the growth of the mass front. The black bourgeoisie must be put into objective conditions that can benefit our struggle, or enhance the peoples awareness as to what they are truly about. Only in this way can those progressive elements within their ranks come to the fore.

The majority of black people are workers and as such suffer all the exploitation of the working class in a capitalist society. In addition to this, however, black workers suffer the vicious effect of institutionalized racism. Black workers are the lowest paid, the most marginally employed, and the most economically insecure. The impact of technology will further erode the employability of the black worker, for in the majority of cases the educational background of black workers are lower than their white counterparts. Education for blacks has always been another method of programming black people into the lowest strata of capitalist society, insuring generations of exploitable and marginal labor.

We view the black working class as the basis for the success of our struggle, not because of its political consciousness (which is still very low) and not because of its class nature (more disciplined, industrious) but because of its sheer numbers and because of its economic role in the black community. We do not think that black workers relationship to the productive forces of this society is essentially different from any other class of blacks due to racism. Although there are some differences there seem to be no essential differences. Black folks in total suffer the same relationship to capitalist productive forces, some more so than others, but all essentially the same.

Just as we have made a distinction between the purely economic definition of the lumpen and the

Interview with Nikos Maziotis, imprisoned member of Revolutionary Struggle (Greece)

**Some Questions and Answers with N. Maziotis, event at Karditsa self-managed space, June 2016
[excerpts]**

Q. How can the anarchist/antiauthoritarian space change from being reactive into a real revolutionary movement? In your opinion, what political characteristics should it have, and what kind of organization and aims?

A: It is a question of political positions. Anarchy, or Libertarian or antiauthoritarian communism is a social proposal and organization. The condition to create a truly revolutionary anarchist movement is the existence of political positions and proposals in order to make clear to the people, the masses and workers, what we believe and what aims we have as anarchists. This means that we must take positions on the burning problems and issues of our time that are the result of the capitalist crisis- such as debt, memoranda, the dilemma of staying in or leaving the European Union, and to make clear what is our goal as anarchists, which is none other than the overthrow and destruction of capital and the state and the creation of a stateless, classless society.

These are issues for which the masses of people, the people affected by the crisis and the policies for rescuing the system, have searched and still search answers, yet the anarchist/anti-authoritarian space had nothing different to offer them compared to the proposals of the mainstream parties (besides slogans perhaps). Also beyond the formulation of political positions and proposals it should be clear by whom or in what ways and means our struggle will promote and implement these political positions and proposals- in other words, how we will make Anarchy a reality.

So if we want to make revolution and overthrow capital and the state and to create a revolutionary movement aimed at this stateless and classless society, then we must necessarily have armed struggle in our practice as a means of struggle. Because as I said in my presentation it is obvious and a given that no revolutionary perspective is possible without armed struggle.

Of course a revolutionary movement must have diverse methods of struggle, it must have all the different methods as so many arrows in its quiver: propaganda, counter-information, demonstrations, self-organized structures, and there must be open and public, as well as illegal actions.

But all these actions must be part of a larger package that serves the same purpose, the overthrow of the regime. For this it is indispensable to have the greatest possible agreement among comrades on unified political positions and proposals, in a kind of political program. Otherwise we simply reproduce the characteristics of the current movement, which is a patchwork of groups and individuals, which is neither a unifying nor a united force and where all have different priorities, and therefore it remains a purely reactive political space, only for protest or at best insurrection, but it can not become a threat to the regime nor have a revolutionary perspective.

Regarding the organization that a revolutionary movement must have, it depends on the political positions and proposals we have. Since it seems today that nothing can be taken for granted, if we are

anarchists, we are supposed to aim for the immediate abolition of the state as a mechanism to administer societal affairs and the destruction of capital. If our positions and our goals are the destruction of capitalism, the market economy and the state, leading to the creation of a stateless and classless society- that is, a confederal organization where the societal units are the communities, communes and collectives where the decisions are taken by assemblies of the people who make up these social organizations- then the organization of the anarchist revolutionary movement is quite obviously federal.

Because our organizational set-up is our social proposal in miniature, it is Anarchy in miniature. In such a case, anarchists already within their organizations do act as a microcosm of what they profess and support. Inside the old is born the new, but not by reproducing the old hierarchical structures and values of the world and society we want to change. This is very important, because previous revolutions in fact failed in their objectives because they reproduced these hierarchical values and structures in a slightly different way.

True communism means a society without a state. The difference between Marxists and anarchists is that in the process leading to communism, Marxists believe that there should exist in the transition from capitalism to communism, the so-called “workers state” or “dictatorship of the proletariat” and that later, when the conditions have matured and the class enemy is defeated, the state will simply dissolve itself. Whereas, in contrast, anarchists believe that the state must be dissolved and destroyed immediately without any transition. Historical experience has shown that no state dissolves itself, various pretexts are given for its preservation, and that no privileged caste resigns its privileges and gives up its power in the management of human affairs.

As shown in the example of the Russian Revolution of 1917-21, instead of the assumed self-dissolution of the state, there was created the most authoritarian and totalitarian state, and this was a bad example for the labor movement and anti-imperialist struggles and revolutions in the Third World, which reproduced regimes that imposed full nationalization of the economy, along with the dictatorship of a bureaucracy that reproduced class divisions.

In the case of anarchists in the example of Spain, they proved what Saint-Just said in the French Revolution, that “those who make revolutions halfway only dig their own grave”. The Spanish anarchists- and they achieved major gains in terms of self-management in most of the Spanish territory where, thanks to their efforts, the Franco coup was suppressed- did not topple the two governments, both the local one of Catalonia and the central government in Madrid of the Popular Front, all in the name the anti-fascist struggle, with this resulting in constant concessions and repression of self-management by the Communist-controlled government.

Future revolutions must not repeat past mistakes, and must dissolve the State directly as a mechanism of class-rule. We must promote this today as anarchists and we must show our political positions as a movement.

In February comrade [Roupa](#) attempted to help your getaway from the prison of Korydallos by [\[hijacking a\] helicopter](#). Could you make a comment about this?

It was an action forming part of the framework of the continuation of action that Revolutionary Struggle has engaged in since 2009 at the beginning of the crisis, targeting the mechanisms and economic power structures that play a significant role in the crisis and its political representatives (Athens Stock Exchange, Eurobank, Citibank) and continued with the last attack of the organization in 2014 on the Directorate of the Bank of Greece and the IMF permanent representative office, for which

I was recently sentenced to life imprisonment.

This escape attempt was a response to repression against Revolutionary Struggle and against other armed fighters, and in this context included in the escape were members of the [CCF](#). Despite the failure of this attempt, it is of great political value and importance.

As Revolutionary Struggle, we have made choices that have brought us face to face with state repression, prison, and we have risked our lives in this combat. For us, prison is a terrain of struggle, not the end of the fight, and we have proved that it was not the end with the arrests in 2010. To defend with pride what we are, and to continue the armed struggle is a duty and right, and it is our especial duty towards Lambros Fountas, our comrade who was killed in action, it is a matter of course for us and negates the repression.

Such actions as comrade Pola Roupa attempted are exemplary because they give a strong political message that we are and remain consequent, despite successive repressive operations of the state against us, despite the arrests, heavy sentences, and murder of Lambros Fountas, we are unrepentant and we will not stop struggling, we will never throw in the towel, we will never give up the fight.

Also the fact that the escape would have included members of CCF demonstrates further that there is not so much importance in different positions about issues concerning the struggle, but that what matters is the common goal, the struggle against authority, the struggle for the overthrow of capital and the state.

Lately it is possible to observe a large deficit of solidarity towards all political prisoners. This was particularly illustrated by the massive political prisoners hunger strike of 2015. What do you think is the cause of this?

In my estimation, this is a result of the general political failure, or if you like, the political defeat of the anarchist/anti-authoritarian space over the last six years where, first of all, it was not up to the historic occasion, it could not intervene as a catalyst in the period after the inclusion of the country in the programs of international organizations of the Troika, and secondly, due to the fact that the terrorism of the state started to bite, with the waves of repeated arrests for armed action the 2009-2011 period, a result that brought into prison dozens of comrades who have been sentenced to many years of prison, and that there exists the perspective that they will remain fairly long years in prison.

On the issue of solidarity there were simultaneous problems of separations, with criteria as to why someone was accused and what attitude they held, that is if they were “guilty” or “innocent”, if they took responsibility for participation in an armed organization or invoked a judicial “fabrication”. There were criteria of “solidarity” based on personal or family relationships, or the criteria that, “anyone I disagree with, I am not in solidarity with.”

In recent years we have witnessed many such separations using various criteria. All these divisions have basically a political background behind them, such as the exclusion of armed action as part of the fight against state and capital.

So a piece of the anarchist space has proven to be easier to mobilize on issues of “human rights” since they are considered more popularizable, with the issue of judicial “fabrications”, “unjust persecutions”, “construction of cases”, all this rather than of course the armed struggle cases for which the vast majority of the political prisoners are in prison, and many of whom have accepted political

responsibility for their participation in armed groups.

But now there is a general indifference and a general deficit in solidarity towards all political prisoners, not just for one portion, and is irrespective of divisions and regardless of any controversy, and this is due to the political defeat of the anarchist/antiauthoritarian space in recent years. This defeat is the result of serious political shortcomings and incapacities, that it has no coherent political positions and proposals to the problems of our time, the crisis and policies to oppose it. So it could not intervene in the period of big mobilizations against the 1st Memorandum in 2010-12 and was unable to develop into a serious political pole, a revolutionary movement that would be a threat to the regime.

This general political defeat affects the overall activity of the movement and has led to the present resignation and fragmentation- particularly visible in the last rallies against the 3rd Memorandum- and of course this too affects the question of solidarity with political prisoners. Naturally, the movement is also influenced by the general social defeat, after the mobilizations against the memoranda and rescue programs implemented over the past six years have all been defeated. From 2012 there has been a decline in social resistance and a lessening of mobilizations made against the governments of Samaras and of SYRIZA.

The overall political failure and defeat of the anarchist/anti-authoritarian space to develop into a revolutionary movement that has the potential for subversion and revolution is the cause of the deficit in solidarity with all the political prisoners, and not just for those that might be said to have responsibilities for various confrontations between prisoners, and which in some degree are caused between views of “innocence” and “guilt” and the issue of assumption of political responsibility.

To sum up, the problem of the anarchist space is an existential political one. It has forgotten about the war against authority, and therefore has forgotten its own prisoners of war.

<https://325.nostate.net/2016/06/29/interview-with-nikos-maziotis-imprisoned-member-of-revolutionary-struggle-greece/>

Revolutionary Struggle trial

Statement to the terror court of Korydallos

Jean Weir

2012

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Athens, the Revolutionary Struggle trial: Statement of anarchist Jean Weir to the terror court of Korydallos

I wish to clarify right away that I stand here as an enemy of the State and society. Far from being a lively community sharing social well-being and the joy of life, what is referred to as society is no more than the dull organisation of inequality and exploitation through social roles and forbiddance. The law is the barbed wire that holds everything in place, and has been internalised to such an extent that it forms the unconscious basis of daily habit and routine even for those who apply it. The media form opinions to maintain consensus and the delegation of individual responsibility to that organ of institutionalised terror, the State. The State, which includes its subjects, is at the basis of every social relation at the present time, including the one here in this court today.

I have come to stand face to face with the enemy inside this bastion of State terror because I was invited by the three comrades of Revolutionary Struggle. I haven't come to enter into dialogue concerning these comrades or any others. My presence here is an act of solidarity and a continuation of my struggle as an anarchist. At least the present judicial proceeding has discarded every vestige of the democratic swindle, revealing the true essence of power. It's impossible to pass over the fact that this trial is taking place inside a prison, the greatest crime perpetrated by man over man, and the physical proximity of the judge and the gaoler is an unusual if unintentional declaration of truth. The judge is nothing without the gaoler. The gaoler is nothing without the judge. They are one and bear equal responsibility for their actions. Terrorists and criminals are the servants of the State and capital, not those struggling to survive or fighting against a world of strife, war, poverty and oppression.

It is in the context of this struggle that I first heard of the anarchist Nikos Maziotis. He was in the extreme and dangerous phase of a hunger strike to enforce his refusal to wear a uniform and become a killer in the pay of the State. At the time many anarchists in Italy where I was living had also refused to do military service, choosing to go to prison rather than join the armed force that keeps humanity divided into classes and intervenes violently to extinguish any attempt at liberation. But also and above all because military service is one of the State's weapons for building model citizens devoid of personality, individuality and their own way of thinking against which it is necessary to rebel and refuse.

I was already aware of the anarchist struggle, of the importance of the anarchist struggle in Greece alongside the exploited, the students, the bus drivers, schoolteachers, the people of the villages of Halkidiki, etc and had read inspiring reports of their actions and also about the State repression against them. But it was Nikos Maziotis, who without knowing it, was to be the propulsive element in my coming to Greece in person. It was on the occasion of his trial in 1999 that I came to Athens for the first time, to attend the court in solidarity with him. It was then that I discovered the wild beauty of the Greek anarchist comrades, their passion for freedom that found immediate expression in a thousand ways and never ceases to grow and intensify, inspiring and igniting free spirits all over the planet.

Two things in particular impressed me on that occasion. First and foremost the unmitigated courage and dignity of Nikos Maziotis as he faced the perpetrators of power and privilege. His statement to the court, his affirmations as a man, an individual, a revolutionary, an anarchist, were made looking into the barrel of the gun of judgement without any concern for the consequences in terms of the years he was facing locked up in a cell. What he said that day is a classic of anarchist theory concerning the need for violent attack on the class enemy in first person and I personally have contributed to spreading it in the English language (the text, I mean, hopefully also the attacks). It has inspired comrades and rebels all over the world. What also impressed me and has affected my life ever since was the immediacy of so many comrades' action in solidarity, without mediation, without the taboos about so-called violence that put a brake on the just anger of the exploited. They expressed solidarity in its only authentic manifestation, by continuing the struggle, the conscious attack on the profits of the bosses and the instruments of repression, even and above all when the class enemy was out in all its force to protect the property and arrogance of the rulers of the planet. Each with their own means, each with their own responsibility.

Armed struggle is on trial. Anarchists also. For any struggle to be worthy of the name it must be armed and self-organised, far from any delegation to the self-proclaimed representatives of the workers movement who have shamelessly betrayed the latter and collaborated with the bosses by reigning in the bad passions of those who have nothing to lose but their chains. Anarchists are against hierarchy and this also applies to the weapons used in the struggle. The weaponry of the anarchist combines the idea, the concept of freedom and the need to destroy not only inequality and poverty but also and at the same time, authority, hierarchy and obedience. They have the capacity to organise themselves and go to the attack without leaders or led, and push others to do the same. Words, stones, pistols, fire, dynamite, Molotov cocktails, graffiti, sledgehammers, hacksaws, theory, analysis, identification of the class enemy as it changes in order to stay the same, machine-guns, spray cans, bazookas are some of the weapons for the self-management of the attack.. (I forgot the catapult, la fionda..) All combine in destructive playful alchemy far from the deathlike logic of judgement. Even when a class enemy is struck down, it is just something to be done and let's get it over with.

Anarchists abhor the blind institutionalised violence of the State with its arsenal of uniformed robots, tasers, tanks, drones, poisonous gases, flash grenades, truncheons, jackboots, armoured vehicles, cctv cameras, helicopters flying over our heads, courts, prisons, concentration camps, bomber planes, missiles, institutionalised religion, the media, the manipulation of people's minds, etc. Only the State has the power to send men to their death or to kill, always with the blessing of the priest, after instilling them with patriotism and xenophobia from birth. Greece was the first country to use napalm against the guerrilla in the mountains. Now, irony of history, it uses nerve gas imported from the Israeli State which, after evicting millions of Palestinians from their homes to survive in camps, claims its legitimacy from the gassing of 6 million Jews by another State over half a century ago.

Anarchists are against prisons even for their enemies and know well that when the present setup of the means of production is destroyed and social wealth belongs to everyone, to each according to their needs, from each according to their desires, there will be little cause for strife. The State will do anything to obstruct the struggle for freedom in whatever form it takes, whatever instrument it uses. Since the beginning of the anarchist movement around the middle of the nineteenth century the organs of power have always reacted particularly violently against anarchists because the State, any State, be it red, black or the multicoloured version of social democracy, cannot tolerate freedom, be it in the form of ideas or in the self-organised action of the exploited. I could give many examples but I think we are short of time and I'll carry on. And of course not only anarchists have been massacred

by the State but the exploited in any attempt they have made to self organise their attack against oppression, and we saw this the other day in South Africa when 27 miners were gunned down in a demonstration against the conditions in the mine.

In the space of a century and a half the number of anarchists who have been imprisoned, exiled, guillotined, garrotted, electrocuted, tortured, gunned down in action, shot by firing squads, beaten to a pulp in the street and left to die in a cell, pushed out of police station windows or killed in traffic 'accidents', add up to thousands, and often the written word of the anarchist revolutionary has been as severely punished as the bullet. Far from showing signs of penitence or begging for mercy these proud fighters faced death as they had faced life, fearlessly, with a proud cry of Long live anarchy! Long live freedom! That is why the exterminatory delirium of the State is a battle lost before it begins. For every anarchist and rebel slain by the State thousands more spring up out of the nowhere of the uncertain, and the undecided. And that was visible in 2008 in this country, something which inspired people all over the world. Every second an anarchist spends in prison his spirit strengthens, expands beyond the walls and nourishes the solidarity that he or she inspires.

The anarchist struggle is qualitative not quantitative. Its aim is not to control and lead the masses into battle or act in their place but to push the exploited and excluded to act in first person to attack the class enemy and its structures. Sometimes it's the other way around, a mass explosion of rage erupts after some exalted lackey of the State takes the law into his own hands and guns down a schoolboy, a rioter, a respected elder in the ghetto or a kid in the banlieu. When anarchists put themselves alongside the exploited it is not as their saviours but to fight together with them to extend and widen their attack, to turn riots into insurrections. Sometimes reality acts the other way, the rebels surpassing the anarchists in their destructive fury. In recent years in Greece and in many parts of the world there has been a proliferation of direct attacks on the structures of capital and the State by small groups or individuals. Unlike the seventies and eighties when capitalism was undergoing ferocious restructuring that was responded to in part, not only, by highly structured marxist-leninist armed struggle groups, from the nineties the attack has taken a more flexible form by anarchist groups based on affinity, often with no name or acronym. The workerist element of the struggle more or less disappeared along with the industrial working class due to the introduction of robotisation and real time operations thanks to information technology and capital's resulting ability to exploit starvation wages on the other side of the planet.

The armed group Revolutionary Struggle appeared in 2003 at a time when there was an anti-terrorist frenzy globally, which in Greece coincided with the capture of the 17th of November group followed by true media delirium. At first their targets were symbols of authority and the State – police, the American Embassy, the Ministry of Finance and Labour, and also an attempt on the minister for Public Order who had been responsible for upgrading the repression. They acted directly without needing the alibi of the masses in order to strike the common enemy, for their own dignity and coherence. When in 2008 the so-called financial crisis became official along with the responsibility of the State and the banking corporations, their actions turned to financially-related targets such as the Stock Exchange, Citibank, Eurobank, etc.

During the whole period the group published extensive analyses which were combined with their actions and contained a strong class position, exhorting the class of exploited to rise and attack those responsible. They are a part of this new complex reality of the struggle against capital and the State, one that is pushing towards a self-organised revolutionary outlet. Their choice of armed struggle in the specific sense is not presented as an end in itself but simply as a tool to bring the revolutionary

perspective to the fore and present the hypothesis of the need for immediate attack in an unequivocal discourse addressed both to the anarchist movement and the wider movement of the exploited.

The comrades who have claimed responsibility for this organisation are individuals who have been active fighters in the struggles of the anarchist movement in Greece in its many forms for decades and are well known in the movement and beyond. In the face of the media outrage and scaremongering following their arrests they came out and proudly claimed the organisation, decriminalising it in the face of the terroristic attack of the media on the minds of the population in order to prepare the terrain for consensus and support for their political and physical annihilation at the hands of the repressive organs of the State. They have written volumes explaining the reasons for the attacks and the need for social rebellion particularly at this moment where, as in many other parts of Europe and the world, the organised crime of State, bosses and banks has led to further extortion from the dispossessed who are now at breaking point. Their message is that of the need for direct attack, that the structures of capital and the State are not invincible.

The words and the actions of the Revolutionary Solidarity group [eh, you mean the Revolutionary Struggle? interpretor] of the Revolutionary Struggle group, (yes... it's the same thing... solidarity is the struggle and the struggle is solidarity...) have been translated into many languages in the dimension of the continuation and intensification of revolutionary solidarity in the dimension of attack. This has led to multiform actions, from banner-hanging, sabotage, incendiary attacks on banks and the structures of repression, discussions, international meetings, publications, posters, etc. and have been one of the recent sources of inspiration to anarchists everywhere.

At a time when life has been mortgaged to Capital and become little more than a question of accountancy where every day people are bombarded by the media with figures in billions while they are struggling to stay alive and feed their children, Revolutionary Struggle has had considerable impact on those who see the crisis not as something that has to be readdressed and corrected, but faced head on and destroyed, along with work and the whole economy. Poverty will never be eliminated until we destroy work because it is the condition that forces people to spend their lives doing soul-destroying jobs at starvation wages.

Millions of young people all over the planet are made to feel useless and without hope due to spreading unemployment. It's time to destroy work as a very concept and take back our lives. Work is a crime, an ideological and physical imposition on the great mass of human beings, animals, and the earth itself, for the benefit of a small percentage of glitterati, but believed in and defended by the whole social set-up, exploiters and exploited alike. In the words of Herman J. Schuurman one of the founders of the Mokergroep, a group of young proletarians in 1923 wrote this: We want to create as free people, not work as slaves; therefore we will destroy the system of slavery. Capitalism only exists because of the work of the workers, thus we will sabotage it and put an end to it. If we are not working towards the destruction of capital, we are working towards the destruction of humanity! We do not want to be destroyed by capitalism, so capitalism will have to be destroyed by us.

I don't know if the Revolutionary Struggle comrades are advocating the destruction of work, but that is where the totality of the struggle for the destruction of the existent takes us, without compromise or half measures.

A short background on the Revolutionary Struggle case by guerrillanews.wordpress.com

On March 10th, 2010, anarchist comrade Lambros Foundas was murdered after an armed scuffle with police forces. Those were the days when Greece was first subjected to the stifling scrutiny of the IMF/ECB/EU Troika, those were the days when Lambros Foundas, member of the Revolutionary Struggle group, lost his life in a shootout with the police during a preparatory action aimed against the political and economic elite that ravages the planet, and plunders and exsanguinates social wealth globally, relegating human life to rock bottom.

After a month and amid a climate of terror-hysteria, in April 2010 the police made preemptive detentions in order to dismantle the Revolutionary Struggle group, and also arrested and imprisoned anarchists Kostas Gournas, Nikos Maziotis and Pola Roupas, who took political responsibility for their participation in the organization.

Simultaneously, anarchists Vaggelis Stathopoulos, Christoforos Kortesis and Sarantos Nikitopoulos were caught and sent to prison. The latter three categorically deny any participation in the organization ever since their arrest, stating that their prosecution concerns their years-long involvement in subversive projects, their political affiliation to the anarchist/anti-authoritarian space and their comradely relationships.

Kostas Katsenos is also charged with participation in the group, and ever since the period of these pretrial incarcerations an arrest warrant was pending against him, too.

The system wanted to deliver a decisive blow to the organization, deeming Revolutionary Struggle as a threat; therefore, it expanded its offensive through the aforementioned arrests so as to crush a wider part of the subversive movement.

After six months, in the context of this expansion of the repressive offensive, dozens of comrades from the anarchist/anti-authoritarian milieu were called to testify and underwent interrogations, along with friends and relatives of the six imprisoned anarchists.

The vindictiveness of repression mechanisms was proved once again, when the State went as far as to charge Marie Beraha — spouse of Kostas Gournas — with participation in the group. This prosecution is a purely vindictive act against Kostas Gournas, in an effort to curb his combatant stance.

On October 5th, 2011, the RS case trial got underway in the special court of Koridallou prisons, in a closed room, with complete absence of any publicity. While the mass media always seemed eager to aid the repressive offensive and state propaganda, nowadays they keep silent—in a provocative way and under a political mandate—about anything related to the court proceeding of the RS case.

On the one hand, the regime is conducting a trial against its political adversaries and wants to gag any message of struggle and to distort its meaning. On the other hand, the three comrades, who took political responsibility for their participation in the organization, have defended its actions and political plan. At the same, with their statements in court, all defendants in this case have converted the trial sessions into a harsh reproach upon the political-economic system of wretchedness and exploita-

tion, unveiling the nature of laws and specific treatments that are enforced against those who have the strength to resist.

It must be emphasized that none of the accused comrades is currently imprisoned. Vaggelis Stathopoulos, Sarantos Nikitopoulos and Chistoforos Kortesis were ordered released after 12 months of pretrial incarceration. Kostas Katsenos presented himself to the authorities at the beginning of the trial, and was held imprisoned for six months before being released.

Revolutionary Struggle members Kostas Gournas, Nikos Maziotis and Pola Roupa were released from prison after 18 months, when the maximum period of pretrial detention expired.

Today, Nikos Maziotis and Pola Roupa are at large (!) and no longer attend the court proceeding.

As we write these lines, the trial is at the stage of defense witnesses' testimonies. Already, the witnesses in defense of Revolutionary Struggle members K.Gournas, N.Maziotis and P.Roupa gave their statements in court. In particular, comrades from Greece and abroad argued the significance of the Revolutionary Struggle group in political and historical terms, and defended armed struggle as well as the entirety and breadth of revolutionary ventures. In the upcoming days, the court will hear witnesses' testimonies for the defense of V.Stathopoulos, K.Katsenos, S.Nikitopoulos, Ch.Kortesis and M.Beraha, who deny their participation in the organization, nevertheless demonstrate the importance of struggle and the need to resist.

During the days of this international appeal, in late November, it is estimated that the trial will likely be nearing the defendants' statements. It is thus considered as very important to receive messages of solidarity and resistance from comrades all over the world, who can show in their own way that the accused comrades are not alone, that the struggle for the overthrow of this world is always timely.

Revolutionary Struggle trial

On April 3rd, 2013 the judgment on the Revolutionary Struggle case was a slight improvement of the prosecutor's proposal. The court's decision on the Revolutionary Struggle case:

Defendants who have denied participation in the organization

- Acquittal of Marie Beraha, Sarantos Nikitopoulos and Kostas Katsenos of all charges (on benefit of doubt).

- Conviction of Vaggelis Stathopoulos and Christoforos Kortesis for alleged participation in the organization.

Admitted members of Revolutionary Struggle

- Acquittal of Nikos Maziotis, Pola Roupa and Kostas Gournas of the accusation of 'directing a terrorist organization.'

- Conviction of Nikos Maziotis, Pola Roupa and Kostas Gournas for 'simple synergy' with the actions of Revolutionary Struggle (without a shred of evidence concerning their involvement in specific actions, but rather applying the Nazi principle of joint liability).

To sum up, Revolutionary Struggle member Nikos Maziotis was sentenced to 86 years' imprisonment; his sentence was merged into 50 years. Revolutionary Struggle members Pola Roupa and Kostas Gournas were both sentenced to 87 years; each sentence was merged into 50 years and 6 months. For all three of them, the maximum prison term is 25 years (which are typically served either as a full sentence or by day wages in prisons, or after the completion of 3/5 of the prison term, when a prisoner can be granted conditional release under specific conditions).

Vaggelis Stathopoulos and Christoforos Kortesis were sentenced to 8 and 7 years' imprisonment, respectively. The sentence against Vaggelis Stathopoulos was merged into 7 years and 6 months.

In addition, for all five convicted anarchists, the judges' decision provided for deprivation of their political rights (5 years for the three admitted members of Revolutionary Struggle, and 3 years for the other two anarchists), as well as non-suspensive effect of appeal.

While Nikos Maziotis and Pola Roupa are on the run, Kostas Gournas, Vaggelis Stathopoulos and Christoforos Kortesis were immediately taken to prison. The militant slogans of the audience and the clenched fists of the three anarchist fighters were the last moments of the trial.

Solidarity with all anarchists imprisoned or persecuted by the Greek State! The battle for freedom is far from over. Long live Revolutionary Struggle!

The Anarchist Library
Anti-Copyright



Jean Weir
Revolutionary Struggle trial
Statement to the terror court of Korydallos
2012

Retrieved on April 17, 2013 from guerrillanews.wordpress.com

theanarchistlibrary.org

PACIFISM as PATHOLOGY

Reflections on the Role of
Armed Struggle in North America

Ward Churchill

with Mike Ryan



Winnipeg

28 Pacifism as Pathology

The corresponding rate by which common people are *disempowered* is obvious.

8. Bertram Gross, *Friendly Fascism: The Face of Power in America* (Boston: South End, 1982).

9. It should be noted that, having pronounced the positions taken in "Pacifism as Pathology" to be "absurd," more than a dozen leading proponents of nonviolence committed themselves at various times between 1986 and 1991 to producing point-by-point written rebuttals for publication. Not one delivered. Instead, apparently unable to come up with convincing arguments of their own, they've uniformly sought to squelch the advancing of alternatives wherever possible.

Pacifism as Pathology: Notes on an American Psuedopraxis

Ward Churchill

It is the obligation of every person who claims to oppose oppression to resist the oppressor by every means at his or her disposal. Not to engage in physical resistance, armed resistance to oppression, is to serve the interests of the oppressor; no more, no less. There are no exceptions to the rule, no easy out. . .

- Assata Shakur, 1984

Pacifism, the ideology of nonviolent political action, has become axiomatic and all but universal among the more progressive elements of contemporary mainstream North America. With a jargon ranging from a peculiar mishmash of borrowed or fabricated

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pseudospiritualism to "Gramscian" notions of prefigurative socialization, pacifism appears as the common denominator linking otherwise disparate "white dissident" groupings. Always, it promises that the harsh realities of state power can be transcended via good feelings and purity of purpose rather than by self-defense and resort to combat.

Pacifists, with seemingly endless repetition, pronounce that the negativity of the modern corporate-fascist state will atrophy through defection and neglect once there is a sufficiently positive social vision to take its place ("What if they gave a war and nobody came?"). Known in the Middle Ages as alchemy, such insistence on the repetition of insubstantial themes and failed experiments to obtain a desired result has long been consigned to the realm of fantasy, discarded by all but the most wishful or cynical (who use it to manipulate people).¹

I don't deny the obviously admirable emotional content of the pacifist perspective. Surely we can all agree that the world should become a place of cooperation, peace, and harmony. Indeed, it *would* be nice if everything would just get better while nobody got hurt, including the oppressor who (temporarily and misguidedly) makes everything bad. Emotional niceties, however, do not render a viable politics. As with most delusions designed to avoid rather than confront unpleasant truths (Lenin's premise that the sort of state he created would wither away under "correct conditions" comes to mind),² the pacifist fantasy is inevitably doomed to failure by cir-

cumstance.

Even the most casual review of twentieth-century history reveals the graphic contradictions of the pacifist posture, the costs of its continued practice and its fundamental ineffectiveness in accomplishing its purported transformative mission.³ Nonetheless, we are currently beset by "nonviolent revolutionary leaders" who habitually revise historical fact as a means of offsetting their doctrine's glaring practical deficiencies, and by the spectacle of expressly pacifist organizations claiming (apparently in all seriousness) to be standing "in solidarity" with practitioners of armed resistance in Central America, Africa, and elsewhere.⁴

Despite its inability to avert a revitalized militarism in the United States, the regeneration of overt racism, and a general rise in native fascism, pacifism — the stuff of the spent mass movements of the '60s — not only continues as the normative form of "American activism," but seems to have recently experienced a serious resurgence.⁵ The purpose here is to examine the pacifist phenomenon briefly in both its political and psychological dimensions, with an eye toward identifying the relationship between a successful reactionary order on the one hand, and a pacifist domestic opposition on the other.

Like Lambs to the Slaughter

I have never been able to bring myself to trust anyone who claims to have saved a Jew from the SS. The fact is that the Jews were not saved

. . . no one took the steps necessary to save them, even themselves.

— Simon Weisenthal, 1967

Pacifism possesses a sublime arrogance in its implicit assumption that its adherents can somehow dictate the terms of struggle in any contest with the state.⁶ Such a supposition seems unaccountable in view of the actual record of passive/nonviolent resistance to state power. Although a number of examples can be mustered with which to illustrate this point — including Buddhist resistance to U.S. policies in Indochina, and the sustained efforts made to terminate white supremacist rule in southern Africa — none seems more appropriate than the Jewish experience in Hitlerian Germany (and later in the whole of occupied Europe).

The record is quite clear that, while a range of pacifist forms of countering the implications of nazism occurred within the German Jewish community during the 1930s, they offered virtually no physical opposition to the consolidation of the nazi state.⁷ To the contrary, there is strong evidence that orthodox Jewish leaders counseled "social responsibility" as the best antidote to nazism, while crucial political formulations such as the Zionist *Hagana* and *Mossad elAliyah Bet* actually seem to have attempted to co-opt the nazi agenda for their own purposes, entering into cooperative relations with the SS Jewish Affairs Bureau, and trying to use forced immigration of Jews as

a pretext for establishing a "Jewish homeland" in Palestine.⁸

All of this was apparently done in an effort to manipulate the political climate in Germany - by "not exacerbating conditions" and "not alienating the German people any further" - in a manner more favorable to Jews than the nazis were calling for.⁹ In the end, of course, the nazis imposed the "final solution to the Jewish question," but by then the dynamics of passive resistance were so entrenched in the Jewish *Zeitgeist* (the nazis having been in power a full decade) that a sort of passive accommodation prevailed. Jewish leaders took their people, quietly and nonviolently, first into the ghettos, and then onto trains "evacuating" them to the east. Armed resistance was still widely held to be "irresponsible."¹⁰

Eventually, the SS could count upon the brunt of the nazi liquidation policy being carried out by the *Sonderkommandos*, which were composed of the Jews themselves. It was largely Jews who dragged the gassed bodies of their exterminated people to the crematoria in death camps such as Auschwitz/Birkenau, each motivated by the desire to prolong his own life. Even this became rationalized as "resistance"; the very act of surviving was viewed as "defeating" the nazi program.¹¹ By 1945, Jewish passivity and nonviolence in the face of the *Weltanschauung der untermenschen* had done nothing to prevent the loss of millions of lives.¹²

The phenomenon sketched above must lead to the obvious question: "[How could] millions of men [*sic*] like us walk to their death without resistance?"¹³ In turn, the

mere asking of the obvious has spawned a veritable cottage industry among Jewish intellectuals, each explaining how it was that "the process" had left the Jewish people "no choice" but to go along, to remain passive, to proceed in accordance with their aversion to violence right up to the doors of the crematoria - and beyond.¹⁴ From this perspective, there was nothing truly lacking in the Jewish performance; the Jews were simply and solely blameless victims of a genocidal system over which it was quite impossible for them to extend any measure of control.¹⁵

The Jews having suffered horribly under nazi rule,¹⁶ it has come to be considered in exceedingly poor taste - "antisemitic," according to the logic of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai Brith - to suggest that there was indeed something very wrong with the nature of the Jewish response to nazism, that the mainly pacifist forms of resistance exhibited by the Jewish community played directly into the hands of their executioners.¹⁷ Objectively, there *were* alternatives, and one need not look to the utterances of some "lunatic fringe" to find them articulated.

Even such a staid and conservative political commentator as Bruno Bettelheim, a former concentration camp inmate, has offered astute analysis of the role of passivity and nonviolence in amplifying the magnitude of the Holocaust. Regarding the single known instance in which inmates physically revolted at Auschwitz, he observes that:

In the single revolt of the twelfth *Sonderkommando*, seventy SS were killed, including one commissioned officer and seventeen non-commissioned officers; one of the crematoria was totally destroyed and another severely damaged. True, all eight hundred and fifty-three of the *kommando* died. But . . . the one *Sonderkommando* which revolted and took such a heavy toll of the enemy did not die much differently than all the other *Sonderkommandos*.¹⁸

Aside from pointing out that the Jews had literally nothing to lose (and quite a lot to gain in terms of human dignity) by engaging in open revolt against the SS, Bettelheim goes much further, noting that such actions both in and outside the death camps stood a reasonable prospect of greatly impeding the extermination process.¹⁹ He states flatly that even individualized armed resistance could have made the Final Solution a cost-prohibitive proposition for the nazis:

There is little doubt that the [Jews], who were able to provide themselves with so much, could have provided themselves with a gun or two had they wished. They could have shot down one or two of the SS men who came for them. The loss of an SS with every Jew arrested would have noticeably hindered the functioning of the police state.²⁰

Returning to the revolt of the twelfth *Sonderkommando*, Bettelheim observes that:

They did only what we should expect all human beings to do; to use their death, if they could not

save their lives, to weaken or hinder the enemy as much as possible; to use even their doomed selves for making extermination harder, or maybe impossible, not a smooth-running process ... If they could do it, so could others. Why didn't they? Why did they throw their lives away instead of making things hard for the enemy? Why did they make a present of their very being to the SS instead of to their families, their friends, even to their fellow prisoners[?]²¹

"Rebellion could only have saved either the life they were going to lose anyway, or the lives of others. . . . Inertia it was that led millions of Jews into the ghettos the SS had created for them. It was inertia that made hundreds of thousands of Jews sit home, waiting for their executioners."²²

Bettelheim describes this inertia, which he considers the basis for Jewish passivity in the face of genocide, as being grounded in a profound desire for "business as usual," the following of rules, the need to not accept reality or to act upon it. Manifested in the irrational belief that in remaining "reasonable and responsible," unobtrusively resisting by continuing "normal" day-to-day activities proscribed by the nazis through the Nuremberg Laws and other infamous legislation, and "not alienating anyone," this attitude implied that a more-or-less humane Jewish policy might be morally imposed upon the nazi state by Jewish pacifism itself.²³

Thus, Bettelheim continues:

The persecution of the Jews was aggravated, slow step by slow step, when no violent fighting back occurred. It may have been Jewish acceptance, without retaliatory fight, of ever harsher discrimination and degradation that first gave the SS the idea that they could be gotten to the point where they would walk into the gas chambers on their own ... [I]n the deepest sense, the walk to the gas chamber was only the last consequence of the philosophy of business as usual.²⁴

Given this, Bettelheim can do little else but conclude (correctly) that the post-war rationalization and apologia for the Jewish response to nazism serves to "stress how much we all wish to subscribe to this business as usual philosophy, and forget that it hastens our own destruction ... to glorify the attitude of going on with business as usual, even in a holocaust."²⁵

An Essential Contradiction

*I have no intention of being a good Jew, led
into the ovens like some sheep . . .*

- Abbie Hoffman, 1969

The example of the Jews under nazism is, to be sure, extreme. History affords us few comparable models by which to assess the effectiveness of nonviolent opposition to state policies, at least in terms of the scale and rapidity with which consequences were visited upon the

passive. Yet it is precisely this extremity which makes the example useful; the Jewish experience reveals with stark clarity the basic illogic at the very core of pacifist conceptions of morality and political action.²⁶

Proponents of nonviolent political "praxis" are inherently placed in the position of claiming to meet the armed might of the state via an asserted moral superiority attached to the renunciation of arms and physical violence altogether. It follows that the state has demonstrated, *apriori*, its fundamental immorality/illegitimacy by arming itself in the first place. A certain psychological correlation is typically offered wherein the "good" and "positive" social vision (*Eros*) held by the pacifist opposition is posed against the "bad" or "negative" realities (*Thanatos*) evidenced by the state. The correlation lends itself readily to "good versus evil" dichotomies, fostering a view of social conflict as a morality play.²⁷

There can be no question but that there is a superficial logic to the analytical equation thus established. The Jews in their disarmed and passive resistance to German oppression during the '30s and '40s were certainly "good"; the nazis - as well-armed as any group in history up to that point - might undoubtedly be assessed as a force of unmitigated "evil."²⁸ Such binary correlations might also be extended to describe other sets of historical forces: Gandhi's Indian Union (good) versus troops of the British Empire (evil) and Martin Luther King's nonviolent Civil Rights Movement (good) versus a host of Klansmen and Southern cracker police (evil) offer ready examples.

In each case, the difference between them can be (and often is) attributed to the relative willingness/unwillingness of the opposing sides to engage in violence. And, in each case, it can be (and has been) argued that good ultimately overcame the evil it confronted, achieving political gains and at least temporarily dissipating a form of social violence. To the extent that Eichmann was eventually tried in Jerusalem for his part in the genocide of the Jewish people, that India has passed from the control of England, and that Mississippi blacks can now register to vote with comparative ease, it may be (and is) contended that there is a legacy of nonviolent political success informing the praxis of contemporary pacifism.²⁹

It becomes quite possible for sensitive, refined, and morally developed individuals to engage in socially transformative political action while rejecting violence (*per se*) as a means or method containing a positive as well as negative utility. The ideological assumption here is that a sort of "negation of the negation" is involved, that the "power of nonviolence" can in itself be used to supplant the offending societal violence represented in the formation of state power. The key to the whole is that *it has been done*, as the survival of at least some of the Jews, the decolonization of India, and the enfranchisement of Southern American blacks demonstrate.³⁰

This tidy scheme, pleasing as it may be on an emotional level, brings up more questions than it answers. An obvious question is that if nonviolence is to be taken as the emblem of Jewish goodness in the face of nazi evil,

how is one to account for the revolt of the twelfth *Sonderkommando* mentioned by Bettelheim, or scattered incidents of the same type which occurred at other death camps such as Sobibor and Treblinka.³¹ What of the several thousand participants in the sole mass uprising of Jews outside the camps, the armed revolt of the Warsaw Ghetto during April and May 1943?³² May it rightly be suggested that those who took up arms against their executioners crossed the same symbolic line demarcating good and evil, becoming "the same" as the SS?³³

One may assume for the moment that such a gross distortion of reality is hardly the intent of even the hardest pacifist polemicists, although it may well be an intrinsic aspect of their position. Worse than this is the inconsistency of nonviolent premises. For instance, it has been abundantly documented that nazi policy toward the Jews, from 1941 onward, was bound up in the notion that extermination would proceed until such time as the entire Jewish population within German occupied territory was liquidated.³⁴ There is no indication whatsoever that nonviolent intervention/mediation from any quarter held the least prospect of halting, or even delaying, the genocidal process. To the contrary, there is evidence that efforts by neutral parties such as the Red Cross had the effect of *speeding up* the slaughter.³⁵

That the Final Solution was halted at a point short of its full realization was due solely to the massive application of armed force against Germany (albeit for reasons other than the salvation of the Jews). Left to a

pacifist prescription for the altering of offensive state policies, and the effecting of positive social change, "World Jewry" - at least in its Eurasian variants - would have suffered total extermination by mid-1946 at the latest. Even the highly symbolic trial of SS Colonel Adolph Eichmann could not be accomplished by nonviolent means, but required armed action by an Israeli paramilitary unit fifteen years after the last death camp was closed by Russian tanks.³⁶ There is every indication that adherence to pacifist principles would have resulted in Eichmann's permanent avoidance of justice, living out his life in reasonable comfort until - to paraphrase his own assessment — he leapt into the grave laughing at the thought of having killed six million Jews.³⁷ With reference to the Jewish experience, nonviolence was a catastrophic failure, and only the most extremely violent intervention by others saved Europe's Jews at the last moment from slipping over the brink of utter extinction. Small wonder that the survivors insist, "Never again!"

While other examples are less crystalline in their implications, they are instructive. The vaunted career of Gandhi exhibits characteristics of a calculated strategy of nonviolence salvaged only by the existence of violent peripheral processes.³⁸ While it is true that the great Indian leader never deviated from his stance of passive resistance to British colonization, and that in the end England found it cost-prohibitive to continue its effort to assert control in the face of his opposition, it is equally true that the Gandhian success must be viewed in the

context of a general decline in British power brought about by two world wars within a thirty-year period.³⁹

Prior to the decimation of British troop strength and the virtual bankruptcy of the Imperial treasury during World War II, Gandhi's movement showed little likelihood of forcing England's abandonment of India. Without the global violence that destroyed the Empire's ability to forcibly control its colonial territories (and passive populations), India might have continued indefinitely in the pattern of minority rule marking the majority of South Africa's modern history, the first locale in which the Gandhian recipe for liberation struck the reef of reality.⁴⁰ Hence, while the Mahatma and his followers were able to remain "pure," their victory was contingent upon others physically gutting their opponents for them.

Similarly, the limited success attained by Martin Luther King and his disciples in the United States during the 1960s, using a strategy consciously guided by Gandhian principles of nonviolence, owes a considerable debt to the existence of less pacifist circumstances. King's movement had attracted considerable celebrity, but precious little in the way of tangible political gains prior to the emergence of a trend signaled in 1967 by the redesignation of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC; more or less the campus arm of King's Civil Rights Movement) as the Student *National* Coordinating Committee.⁴¹

The SNCC's action (precipitated by non-pacifists such as Stokely Carmichael and H. Rap Brown) occurred

in the context of armed self-defense tactics being employed for the first time by rural black leaders such as Robert Williams, and the eruption of black urban enclaves in Detroit, Newark, Watts, Harlem, and elsewhere. It also coincided with the increasing need of the American state for internal stability due to the unexpectedly intense and effective armed resistance mounted by the Vietnamese against U.S. aggression in Southeast Asia.⁴²

Suddenly King, previously stonewalled and rebaited by the establishment, his roster of civil rights demands evaded or dismissed as being "too radical" and "premature," found himself viewed as the lesser of evils by the state.⁴³ He was duly anointed *the* "responsible black leader" in the media, and his cherished civil rights agenda was largely incorporated into law during 1968 (along with appropriate riders designed to neutralize "Black Power Militants" such as Carmichael, Brown, and Williams.)⁴⁴ Without the spectre, real or perceived, of a violent black revolution at large in America during a time of war, King's nonviolent strategy was basically impotent in concrete terms. As one of his Northern organizers, William Jackson, put it to me in 1969:

There are a lot of reasons why I can't get behind fomenting violent actions like riots, and *none* of 'em are religious. It's all pragmatic politics. But I'll tell you what: I *never* let a riot slide by. I'm always the first one down at city hall and testifying before Congress, tellin' 'em, "See? If you guys'd been dealing with *us* all along, this never would have hap-

pened." It gets results, man. Like nothin' else, y'know? The thing is that Rap Brown and the Black Panthers are just about the best things that ever happened to the Civil Rights Movement.

Jackson's exceedingly honest, if more than passingly cynical, outlook was tacitly shared by King.⁴⁵ The essential contradiction inherent to pacifist praxis is that, for survival itself, any nonviolent confrontation of state power must ultimately depend either on the state refraining from unleashing some real measure of its potential violence, or the active presence of some counterbalancing violence of precisely the sort pacifism professes to reject as a political option.

Absurdity clearly abounds when suggesting that the state will refrain from using all necessary physical force to protect against undesired forms of change and threats to its safety. Nonviolent tacticians imply (perhaps unwittingly) that the "immoral state" which they seek to transform will somehow exhibit exactly the same sort of *superior* morality they claim for themselves (i.e., at least a relative degree of nonviolence). The fallacy of such a proposition is best demonstrated by the nazi state's removal of its "Jewish threat."⁴⁶

Violent intervention by others divides itself naturally into the two parts represented by Gandhi's unsolicited "windfall" of massive violence directed against his opponents and King's rather more conscious and deliberate utilization of incipient antistate violence as a means of advancing his own pacifist agenda. History is replete

with variations on these two subthemes, but variations do little to alter the crux of the situation: there simply has never been a revolution, or even a substantial social reorganization, brought into being on the basis of the principles of pacifism.⁴⁷ In every instance, violence has been an integral *requirement of the* process of transforming the state.

Pacifist praxis (or, more appropriately, pseudo-praxis), if followed to its logical conclusions, leaves its adherents with but two possible outcomes to their line of action:

1. To render themselves perpetually ineffectual (and consequently unthreatening) in the face of state power, in which case they will likely be largely ignored by the status quo and self-eliminating in terms of revolutionary potential; or,
2. To make themselves a clear and apparent danger to the state, in which case they are subject to physical liquidation by the status quo and are self-eliminating in terms of revolutionary potential.

In either event - mere ineffectuality or suicide - the objective conditions leading to the necessity for social revolution remain unlikely to be altered by purely pacifist strategies. As these conditions typically include war, the induced starvation of whole populations and the like, pacifism and its attendant sacrifice of life cannot even be rightly said to have substantially impacted the level of evident societal violence. The mass suffering that revolu-

tion is intended to alleviate will continue as the revolution strangles itself on the altar of "nonviolence."

The Comfort Zone

*Don't speak to me of revolution until you're
ready to eat rats to survive. . .*

- The Last Poets, 1972

Regardless of the shortcomings of pacifism as a methodological approach to revolution, there is nothing inherent in its basic impulse which prevents real practitioners from experiencing the revolutionary ethos. Rather, as already noted, the emotional content of the principle of nonviolence is tantamount to a gut-level rejection of much, or even all, that the present social order stands for — an intrinsically revolutionary perspective. The question is not the motivations of real pacifists, but instead the nature of a strategy by which the revolution may be won, at a minimum sacrifice to all concerned.

This assumes that sacrifice is being made by *all* concerned. Here, it becomes relatively easy to separate the wheat from the chaff among America's proponents of "nonviolent opposition." While the premise of pacifism necessarily precludes engaging in violent acts directed at others, even for reasons of self-defense, it does not prevent its adherents from themselves incurring physical punishment in pursuit of social justice. In other words,

there is nothing of a doctrinal nature barring real pacifists from running real risks.

And indeed they do. Since at least the early Christians, devout pacifists have been sacrificing themselves while standing up for what they believe in against the armed might of those they consider wrong. Gandhi's followers perished by the thousands, allowed themselves to be beaten and maimed *en masse*, and clogged India's penal system in their campaign to end British rule.⁴⁸ King's field organizers showed incredible bravery in confronting the racist thugs of the South, and many paid with their lives on lonely back roads.⁴⁹

Another type of pacifist action which became a symbol for the nonviolent antiwar movement was that of a Buddhist monk, Thich Quang Duc, who immolated himself on a Saigon street on June 11, 1963. Due's protest against growing U.S. involvement in his country was quickly followed by similar actions by other Vietnamese bonzes and, on November 2, 1965, by an American Quaker, Norman Morrison, who burned himself in front of the Pentagon to protest increasing levels of U.S. troop commitment in Indochina.⁵⁰ Whatever the strategic value one may place upon the actions of Morrison and the Buddhists — and it must be acknowledged that the U.S. grip on Vietnam rapidly *tightened after* the self-immolations began,⁵¹ while U.S. troop strength in Southeast Asia spiraled from some 125,000 at the time of Morrison's suicide to more than 525,000 barely two years later — they were unquestionably courageous people, entirely

willing to face the absolute certainty of the most excruciating death in pursuit of their professed ideals. Although the effectiveness of their tactics is open to question, their courage and integrity certainly are not.

In a less severe fashion, there are many other examples of American pacifists putting themselves on the line for their beliefs. The Berrigan brothers, Phillip and Daniel, clearly qualify in this regard, as do a number of others who took direct action against the Selective Service System and certain U.S. military targets during the late '60s and early '70s.⁵² Cadres of Witness for Peace placed their bodies between CIA-sponsored contra guerrillas and their intended civilian victims along the Nicaragua/Honduras border during the '80s.⁵³ Members of Greenpeace, Earth First!, and Friends of the Earth have been known to take considerable chances with their own well-being in their advocacy of a range of environmental issues.⁵⁴

The list of principled and self-sacrificing pacifists and pacifist acts could undoubtedly be extended and, ineffectual or not, these people are admirable in their own right. Unfortunately, they represent the exception rather than the rule of pacifist performance in the United States. For every example of serious and committed pacifist activism emerging from the normative mass of American nonviolent movements since 1965, one could cite scores of countering instances in which only lip service was paid to the ideals of action and self-sacrifice.

The question central to the emergence and maintenance of nonviolence as the oppositional foundation

of American activism has not been the truly pacifist formulation, "How can we forge a revolutionary politics within which we can avoid inflicting violence on others?" On the contrary, a more accurate guiding question has been, "What sort of politics might I engage in which will both allow me to posture as a progressive *and allow* me to avoid incurring harm to *myself*?" Hence, the trappings of pacifism have been subverted to establish a sort of "politics of the comfort zone," not only akin to what Bettelheim termed "the philosophy of business as usual" and devoid of perceived risk to its advocates, but minus any conceivable revolutionary impetus as well.⁵⁵ The intended revolutionary content of true pacifist activism — the sort practiced by the Gandhian movement, the Berrigans, and Norman Morrison — is thus isolated and subsumed in the United States, even among the ranks of self-professing participants.

Such a situation must abort whatever limited utility pacifist tactics might have, absent other and concurrent forms of struggle, as a socially transformative method. Yet the history of the American Left over the past decade shows too clearly that the more diluted the substance embodied in "pacifist practice," the louder the insistence of its subscribers that nonviolence is the *only* mode of action "appropriate and acceptable within the context of North America," and the greater the effort to ostracize, or even stifle divergent types of actions.⁵⁶ Such strategic hegemony exerted by proponents of this truncated range of tactical options has done much to foreclose on what-

ever revolutionary potential may be said to exist in modern America.

Is such an assessment too harsh? One need only attend a mass demonstration (ostensibly directed against the policies of the state) in any U.S. city to discover the answer. One will find hundreds, sometimes thousands, assembled in orderly fashion, listening to selected speakers calling for an end to this or that aspect of lethal state activity, carrying signs "demanding" the same thing, welcoming singers who enunciate lyrically on the worthiness of the demonstrators' agenda as well as the plight of the various victims they are there to "defend," and - typically - the whole thing is quietly disbanded with exhortations to the assembled to "keep working" on the matter and to please sign a petition and/or write letters to congresspeople requesting that they alter or abandon offending undertakings.

Throughout the whole charade it will be noticed that the state is represented by a uniformed police presence keeping a discreet distance and not interfering with the activities. And why should they? The organizers of the demonstration will have gone through "proper channels" to obtain permits *required by the state* and instructions as to where they will be allowed to assemble, how long they will be allowed to stay and, should a march be involved in the demonstration, along which routes they will be allowed to walk.

Surrounding the larger mass of demonstrators can be seen others — an elite. Adorned with green (or white,

or powder blue) armbands, their function is to ensure that demonstrators remain "responsible," not deviating from the state-sanctioned plan of protest. Individuals or small groups who attempt to spin off from the main body, entering areas to which the state has denied access (or some other unapproved activity) are headed off by these armbanded "marshals" who argue — pointing to the nearby police - that "troublemaking" will only "exacerbate an already tense situation" and "provoke violence," thereby "alienating those we are attempting to reach."⁵⁷ In some ways, the voice of the "good Jews" can be heard to echo plainly over the years.

At this juncture, the confluence of interests between the state and the mass nonviolent movement could not be clearer. The role of the police, whose function is to support state policy by minimizing disruption of its procedures, should be in natural conflict with that of a movement purporting to challenge these same policies and, indeed, to transform the state itself.⁵⁸ However, with apparent perverseness, the police find themselves serving as mere backups (or props) to *self*-policing (now euphemistically termed "peace-keeping" rather than the more accurate "marshaling") efforts of the alleged opposition's own membership. Both sides of the "contestation" concur that the smooth functioning of state processes must not be physically disturbed, at least not in any significant way.⁵⁹

All of this is within the letter and spirit of cooptive forms of sophisticated self-preservation appearing as an

integral aspect of the later phases of bourgeois democracy.⁶⁰ It dovetails well with more shopworn methods such as the electoral process and has been used by the state as an innovative means of conducting public opinion polls, which better hide rather than eliminate controversial policies.⁶¹ Even the movement's own sloganeering tends to bear this out from time to time, as when Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) coined the catch-phrase of its alternative to the polling place: "Vote with your feet, vote in the street."⁶²

Of course, any movement seeking to project a credible self-image as something other than just one more variation of accommodation to state power must ultimately establish its "militant" oppositional credentials through the media in a manner more compelling than rhetorical speechifying and the holding of impolite placards ("Fuck the War" was always a good one) at rallies.⁶³ Here, the time-honored pacifist notion of "civil disobedience" is given a new twist by the adherents of nonviolence in America. Rather than pursuing Gandhi's (or, to a much lesser extent, King's) method of using passive bodies to literally clog the functioning of the state apparatus — regardless of the cost to those doing the clogging — the American nonviolent movement has increasingly opted for "symbolic actions."⁶⁴

The centerpiece of such activity usually involves an arrest, either of a token figurehead of the movement (or a small, selected group of them) or a mass arrest of some sort. In the latter event, "arrest training" is gener-

ally provided - and lately has become "required" by movement organizers - by the same marshals who will later ensure that crowd control police units will be left with little or nothing to do. This is to ensure that "no one gets hurt" in the process of being arrested, and that the police are not inconvenienced by disorganized arrest procedures.⁶⁵

The event which activates the arrests is typically preplanned, well-publicized in advance, and, more often than not, literally coordinated with the police - often including estimates by organizers concerning how many arrestees will likely be involved. Generally speaking, such "extreme statements" will be scheduled to coincide with larger-scale peaceful demonstrations so that a considerable audience of "committed" bystanders (and, hopefully, NBC/CBS/ABC/CNN) will be on hand to applaud the bravery and sacrifice of those arrested; most of the bystanders will, of course, have considered reasons why they themselves are unprepared to "go so far" as to be arrested.⁶⁶ The specific sort of action designed to precipitate the arrests themselves usually involves one of the following: (a) sitting down in a restricted area and refusing to leave when ordered; (b) stepping across an imaginary line drawn on the ground by a police representative; (c) refusing to disperse at the appointed time; or (d) chaining or padlocking the doors to a public building. When things *really* get heavy, those seeking to be arrested may pour blood (real or ersatz) on something of "symbolic value."⁶⁷

As a rule, those arrested are cooperative in the ex-

treme, meekly allowing police to lead them to waiting vans or buses for transportation to whatever station house or temporary facility has been designated as the processing point. In especially "militant" actions, arrestees go limp, undoubtedly severely taxing the states repressive resources by forcing the police to carry them bodily to the vans or buses (monitored all the while by volunteer attorneys who are there to ensure that such "police brutality" as pushing, shoving, or dropping an arrestee does not occur). In either event, the arrestees sit quietly in their assigned vehicles - or sing "We Shall Overcome" and other favourites - as they are driven away for booking. The typical charges levied will be trespassing, creating a public disturbance, or being a public nuisance. In the heavy instances, the charge may be escalated to malicious mischief or even destruction of public property. Either way, other than in exceptional circumstances, everyone will be assigned an arraignment date and released on personal recognizance or a small cash bond, home in time for dinner⁶⁸ (and to review their exploits on the six o'clock news).

In the unlikely event that charges are not dismissed prior to arraignment (the state having responded to symbolic actions by engaging largely in symbolic selective prosecutions), the arrestee will appear on the appointed date in a room resembling a traffic court where s/he will be allowed to plead guilty, pay a minimal fine, and go home. Repeat offenders may be "sentenced" to pay a somewhat larger fine (which, of course, goes into state

accounts underwriting the very policies the arrestees ostensibly oppose) or even to perform a specific number of "public service hours" (promoting police/community relations, for example).⁶⁹ It is almost unheard of for arrestees to be sentenced to jail time for the simple reason that most jails are already overflowing with less principled individuals, most of them rather unpacifist in nature, and many of whom have caused the state a considerably greater degree of displeasure than the nonviolent movement, which claims to seek its radical alteration.⁷⁰

For those arrestees who opt to plead not-guilty to the charges they themselves literally arranged to incur, a trial date will be set. They will thereby accrue another symbolic advantage by exercising their right to explain why they did whatever they did before a judge and jury. They may then loftily contend that it is the state, rather than themselves, that is really criminal. Their rights satisfied, they will then generally be sentenced to exactly the same penalty which would have been levied had they pleaded guilty at their arraignment (plus court costs), and go home. A few will be sentenced to a day or two in jail as an incentive not to waste court time with such pettiness in the future. A few less will refuse to pay whatever fine is imposed, and receive as much as thirty days in jail (usually on work release) as an alternative; a number of these have opted to pen "prison letters" during the period of their brief confinement, underscoring the sense of symbolic (rather than literal) self-sacrifice which is sought. '

The trivial nature of this level of activity does not come fully into focus until it is juxtaposed to the sorts of state activity which the nonviolent movement claims to be "working on." A brief sampling of prominent issues addressed by the American opposition since 1965 will suffice for purposes of illustration: the U.S. escalation of the ground war in Southeast Asia to a level where more than a million lives were lost, the saturation bombing of Vietnam (another one to two million killed), the expansion of the Vietnam war into all of Indochina (costing perhaps another two to three million lives when the intentional destruction of Cambodia's farmland and resultant mass starvation are considered), U.S. sponsorship of the Pinochet coup in Chile (at least another 10,000 dead), U.S. underwriting of the Salvadoran oligarchy (50,000 lives at a minimum), U.S. support of the Guatemalan junta (perhaps 200,000 killed since 1954), and efforts to destabilize the Sandinista government in Nicaragua (at least 20,000 dead).⁷² A far broader sample of comparably lethal activities has gone unopposed altogether.⁷³

While the human costs of continuing American business as usual have registered well into the seven-digit range (and possibly higher), the nonviolent "opposition" in the United States has not only restricted its tactics almost exclusively to the symbolic arena denoted above, but has actively endeavored to prevent others from going further. The methods employed to this end have generally been restricted to the deliberate stigmatizing, isolation, and minimization of other potentials - as a means

of neutralizing, or at least containing them — although at times it seems to have crossed over into collaboration with state efforts to bring about their outright liquidation.⁷⁴

The usual approach has been a consistent *a priori* dismissal of any one person or group attempting to move beyond the level of symbolic action as "abandoning the original spirit [of North American oppositional politics] and taking the counterproductive path of small-scale violence now and organizing for serious armed struggle later."⁷⁵ This is persistently coupled with attempts to diminish the importance of actions aimed at concrete rather than symbolic effects, epitomized in the question framed by Sam Brown, a primary organizer of the November 1969 Moratorium to End the War in Vietnam (when perhaps 5,000 broke free of a carefully orchestrated schedule of passive activities): "What's more important, that a bunch of scruffy people charged the Justice Department, or that [500,000 people] were in the same place at one time to sing?"⁷⁶

Not only was such "violence" as destroying property and scuffling with police proscribed in the view of the Moratorium organizers, but also any tendency to utilize the incredible mass of assembled humanity in any way which might tangibly interfere with the smooth physical functioning of the governing apparatus in the nation's capital (e.g., nonviolent civil disobedience on the order of, say, systematic traffic blockages and huge sit-ins).⁷⁷

Unsurprisingly, this same mentality manifested itself even more clearly a year and a half later with the open boycott by pacifism's "responsible leadership" (and most of their committed followers) of the Indochina Peace Campaign's planned "May Day Demonstration" in Washington. Despite the fact that in some ways the war had escalated (e.g., increasingly heavy bombing) since the largest symbolic protest in American history - the Moratorium fielded approximately *one million* passive demonstrators, nationwide - it was still held that May Day organizer Rennie Davis' intent to "show the government that it will no longer be able to control its own society unless it ends the war NOW!" was "going too far." It was opined that although the May Day plan did not itself call for violent acts, its disruption of business as usual was likely to "provoke a violent response from officials."⁷⁸

Even more predictably, advocates of nonviolence felt compelled to counter such emergent trends as the SDS Revolutionary Youth Movement, Youth Against War and Fascism, and Weatherman.⁷⁹ Calling for non-attendance at the demonstrations of "irresponsible" organizations attempting to build a "fighting movement among white radicals," and wittily coining derogatory phrases to describe them, the oppositional mainstream did its utmost to thwart possible positive developments coming from such unpacifist quarters. In the end, the stigmatized organizations themselves institutionalized this imposed isolation, their frustration with attempting to break the inertia of symbolic opposition to the status quo con-

verted into a "politics of despair" relying solely on violent actions undertaken by a network of tiny underground cells.⁸⁰

The *real* anathema to the nonviolent mass, however, turned out not to be white splinter groups such as Weatherman. Rather, it came from a militant black nationalism embodied in the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense. After nearly a decade of proclaiming its "absolute solidarity" with the liberatory efforts of American blacks, pacifism found itself confronted during the late '60s with the appearance of a cohesive organization that consciously linked the oppression of the black community to the exploitation of people the world over, and *programmatically* asserted the same right to armed self-defense acknowledged as the due of liberation movements abroad.⁸¹

As the Panthers evidenced signs of making significant headway, organizing first in their home community of Oakland and then nationally, the state perceived something more threatening than yet another series of candlelight vigils. It reacted accordingly, targeting the Panthers for physical elimination. When Party cadres responded (as promised) by meeting the violence of repression with armed resistance, the bulk of their "principled" white support evaporated. This horrifying retreat rapidly isolated the Party from any possible mediating or buffering from the full force of state terror and left its members nakedly exposed to "surgical termination" by special police units.⁸²

To cover this default on true pacifist principles - which call upon adherents not to run for safety but, in the manner of Witness for Peace, to interpose their bodies as a means of alleviating violence - it became fashionable to observe that the Panthers were "as bad as the cops" in that they had resorted to arms (a view which should give pause when one recalls the twelfth *Sonderkommando*); they had "brought this on themselves" when they "provoked violence" by refusing the state an uncontested right to maintain the lethal business as usual it had visited upon black America since the inception of the Republic.⁸³

In deciphering the meaning of this pattern of response to groups such as the Panthers, Weatherman, and others who have attempted to go beyond a more symbolic protest of, say, genocide, it is important to look behind the clichés customarily used to explain the American pacifist posture (however revealing these may be in themselves). More to the point than concerns that the groups such as the Panthers "bring this [violent repression] on themselves" is the sentiment voiced by Irv Kurki, a prominent Illinois anti-draft organizer during the winter of 1969-70:

This idea of armed struggle or armed self-defense or whatever you want to call it . . . practiced by the Black Panther Party, the Weathermen and a few other groups is a very bad scene, a really dangerous thing for all of us. This isn't Algeria or Vietnam, it's the United States . . . these tactics are not only coun-

terproductive in that they alienate people who are otherwise very sympathetic to us . . . and lead to the sort of thing which just happened in Chicago . . . but *they run the very real risk of bringing the same sort of violent repression down on all of us* (emphasis added).⁸⁴

Precisely. The preoccupation with avoiding actions which might "provoke violence" is thus not based on a sincere belief that violence will, or even can, truly be avoided. Pacifists, no less than their unpacifist counterparts, are quite aware that violence *already* exists as an integral component in the execution of state policies and requires no provocation; this is a formative basis of their doctrine. What is at issue then cannot be a valid attempt to stave off or even minimize violence *per se*. Instead, it can only be a conscious effort not to refocus state violence in such a way that it would directly impact American pacifists *themselves*. This is true even when it can be shown that the tactics which could trigger such a refocusing might in themselves alleviate a real measure of the much more massive state-inflicted violence occurring elsewhere; better that another 100,000 Indochinese peasants perish under a hail of cluster bombs and napalm than America's principled progressives suffer real physical pain while rendering their government's actions impracticable.⁸⁵

Such conscientious avoidance of personal sacrifice (i.e., dodging the experience of being on the receiving end of violence, *not* the inflicting of it) has nothing to do

with the lofty ideals and integrity by which American pacifists claim to inform their practice. But it does explain the real nature of such curious phenomena as movement marshals, steadfast refusals to attempt to bring the seat of government to a standstill even when a million people are on hand to accomplish the task, and the consistently convoluted victim-blaming engaged in with regard to domestic groups such as the Black Panther Party.⁸⁶ Massive and unrelenting violence in the colonies is appalling to right-thinking people but ultimately acceptable when compared with the unthinkable alternative that any degree of real violence might be redirected against "mother country radicals."⁸⁷

Viewed in this light, a great many things make sense. For instance, the persistent use of the term "responsible leadership" in describing the normative non-violent sector of North American dissent - always somewhat mysterious when applied to supposed radicals (or German Jews) — is clarified as signifying nothing substantially different from the accommodation of the status quo it implies in more conventional settings.⁸⁸ The "rules of the game" have long been established and tacitly agreed to by both sides of the ostensible "oppositional equation": demonstrations of "resistance" to state policies will be allowed so long as they do nothing to materially interfere with the implementation of those policies.⁸⁹

The responsibility of the oppositional leadership in such a trade-off is to ensure that state processes are not threatened by substantial physical disruption; the recip-

rocal responsibility of the government is to guarantee the general safety of those who play according to the rules.⁹⁰ This comfortable scenario is enhanced by the mutual understanding that certain levels of "appropriate" (symbolic) protest of given policies will result in the "oppositional victory" of their modification (i.e., really a "tuning" of policy by which it may be rendered more functional and efficient, *never* an abandonment of fundamental policy thrusts), while efforts to move beyond this metaphorical medium of dissent will be squelched "by any means necessary" and by *all* parties concerned.⁹¹ Meanwhile, the entire unspoken arrangement is larded with a layer of stridently abusive rhetoric directed by each side against the other.

We are left with a husk of opposition, a ritual form capable of affording a sentimentalistic "I'm OK, you're OK" satisfaction to its subscribers at a psychic level but utterly useless in terms of transforming the power relations perpetuating systemic global violence. Such a defect can, however, be readily sublimated within the aggregate comfort zone produced by the continuation of North American business as usual; those who remain within the parameters of nondisruptive dissent allowed by the state, their symbolic duty to the victims of U.S. policy done (and with the bases of state power wholly unchallenged), can devote themselves to the prefiguration of the revolutionary future society with which they proclaim they will replace the present social order (having, no doubt, persuaded the state to overthrow itself

through the moral force of their arguments).⁹² Here, concrete activities such as sexual experimentation, refinement of musical/artistic tastes, development of various meat-free diets, getting in touch with one's "id" through meditation and ingestion of hallucinogens, alteration of sex-based distribution of household chores, and waging campaigns against such "bourgeois vices" as smoking tobacco become the signifiers of "correct politics" or even "revolutionary practice." This is *as opposed to* the active and effective confrontation of state power.⁹³

Small wonder that North America's ghetto, barrio, and reservation populations, along with the bulk of the white working class - people who are by and large structurally denied access to the comfort zone (both in material terms and in a corresponding inability to avoid the imposition of a relatively high degree of systemic violence) — tend either to stand aside in bemused incomprehension of such politics or to react with outright hostility. Their apprehension of the need for revolutionary change and their conception of revolutionary dynamics are necessarily at radical odds with this notion of "struggle."⁹⁴ The American nonviolent movement, which has laboured so long and so hard to isolate all divergent oppositional tendencies, is in the end isolating itself, becoming ever more demographically white, middle-class, and "respectable." Eventually, unless there is a marked change in its obstinate insistence that it holds a "moral right" to absolute tactical monopoly, American pacifism will be left to "feel good about itself" while the

revolution goes on without it.⁹⁵

Let's Pretend

Are you listening Nixon? Johnson refused to hear us, and you know what happened to that ol' boy . . .

- Benjamin Spock, 1969

American pacifism seeks to project itself as a revolutionary alternative to the status quo.⁹⁶ Of course, such a movement or perspective can hardly acknowledge that its track record in forcing substantive change upon the state has been an approximate zero. A chronicle of significant success must be offered, even where none exists. Equally, should such a movement or perspective seek hegemony of its particular vision - again, as American pacifism has been shown to do since 1965 - a certain mythological complex is required to support its contentions. Generally speaking, both needs can be accommodated within a single unified propaganda structure.⁹⁷

For proponents of the hegemony of nonviolent political action within the American opposition, time-honored fables such as the success of Gandhi's methods (in and of themselves) and even the legacy of Martin Luther King no longer retain the freshness and vitality required to achieve the necessary result. As this has become increasingly apparent, and as the potential to bring

a number of emergently dissident elements (e.g., "freezers," antinukers, environmentalists, opponents to saber-rattling in Central America and the Mideast, and so on) into some sort of centralized mass movement became greater in the mid-80s, a freshly packaged pacifist "history" of its role in opposing the Vietnam war began to be peddled with escalating frequency and insistence.⁹⁸ It is instructive to examine several salient claims still extended by pacifist organizers.

The nonviolent mass movement against the war forced Lyndon Johnson from office when he failed to withdraw from Vietnam (picking up a theme topical to the antiwar movement itself). Actually, as has been conclusively demonstrated, it was "Hawks" rather than "Doves" who toppled Johnson.⁹⁹ This was due to the perceived ineffectiveness with which he prosecuted the war, brought about not by pacifist parades in American streets, but by the effectiveness of *Vietnamese armed resistance* to the U.S. military. The catalyst was the Vietnamese Tet Offensive in January 1968 after U.S. Commanding General William Westmoreland announced he had "broken their ability to fight," and the general's resultant request for another 206,000 troops to augment the more than one-half million men already at his disposal.¹⁰⁰ At this point, the *right wing* decided that the war was lost and to begin a process of cutting losses, thereby forcing Johnson out.

To discern where the balance of power lay and begin to unravel who did what to whom, one need only look at the fact that the antiwar candidate of the 1968

campaign (Eugene McCarthy) was never in serious contention as Johnson's replacement, and that it was the choice of the right (Richard Nixon) who became the successor.¹⁰¹

The self-sacrifice of such nonviolent oppositional tactics as draft resistance seriously impaired the functioning of the U.S. military machine (picking up another topical theme). Actually, there was not much self-sacrifice or risk involved. Of the estimated one million American males who committed draft offenses during the Vietnam era, only 25,000 (2.5 percent) were indicted, and a total of 3,250 (0.3 percent) went to prison. As many as 80,000 went into voluntary exile in Canada where they noted the penalty of "being lonely."¹⁰² The other 91.5 percent of these self-sacrificing individuals apparently paid no price at all, remaining in the comfort zone relative to both the military and the supposed consequences of evading it.

It may be that draft resistance on this scale somehow affected the *reserve* manpower of the military but not its main force units. What *did* affect the functioning of the military was the rapid disintegration of morale among U.S. combat troops after 1968 as a result of the effectiveness of Vietnamese *armed* resistance. The degeneration of effectiveness within the U.S. military, which eventually neutralized it in the field, included mass refusal to fight (approved, undoubtedly, by pacifists), spiraling substance abuse (ditto), and, most effectively, the assassination of commissioned and noncommissioned

officers (well, that's going too far).¹⁰³

The most effective tactic the nonviolent movement could have engaged in to impair the U.S. military was therefore the one thing it was most unprepared to consider: making the individual personal sacrifice of going *into* the military in a massive way in order to quickly subvert it.

The nonviolent mass antiwar movement's solidarity with the Vietnamese undercut the political ability of the U.S. government to continue and forced the war to an early close (a stated objective of the movement of the late '60s). This claim is obviously closely akin to the contention concerning Johnson, although it should be recalled that even U.S. ground forces remained in Vietnam for another four years after that "victory." Actually, there was no mass antiwar movement in the United States, nonviolent or otherwise, by the time the war ended in 1975. It had begun to dissipate rapidly during the summer of 1970 in the wake of sustaining its first and only real casualties - a total of four dead at Kent State University in Ohio that spring.¹⁰⁴ By the time the last U.S. ground troops were withdrawn in 1973, Nixinger had suspended the draft, and with the element of their personal jeopardy thus eliminated, the "principled" opposition fueling the mass movement evaporated altogether while the war did not.

That the war then continued for another three years with U.S. technological and economic support at the cost of hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese lives but absent

even a symbolic mass American opposition worthy of the name says volumes about the nature of the nonviolent movement's "solidarity with the Vietnamese."¹⁰⁵ And, as always, it was the armed struggle waged by the Vietnamese themselves - without the pretense of systematic support from the American pacifists - which finally forced the war to a close.¹⁰⁶

It is evident even from this brief exposition of fact versus fantasy - and the analysis could be extended to much greater length with the same results - that a certain consistency is involved. As with earlier-developed mythologies concerning Gandhi and King (i.e., that their accomplishments were achieved through application of nonviolent principles alone), the current pacifist propaganda line concerning the Vietnam war reveals a truly remarkable propensity to lay claim to progress attained only through the most bitter forms of armed struggle undertaken by others (all the while blandly insisting that the "resort to violence" was/is "inappropriate" to the context of North America).¹⁰⁷

This already-noted cynical mindwarp holds little appeal to those residing outside the socioeconomic limits of the American comfort zone, and can hardly be expected to recruit them into adhering to nonviolence. However, this *in itself* explains much about American pacifism's real (perhaps subconscious) agenda and reconciles a range of apparent contradictions in the postures of American pacifist strategists.

The Buck Is Passed

*We support the just struggles of the NLF in
Vietnam . . .*

- David Dellinger, 1969

It is immediately perplexing to confront the fact that many of North America's most outspoken advocates of absolute domestic nonviolence when challenging state power have consistently aligned themselves with the most powerful expressions of armed resistance to the exercise of U.S. power *abroad*. Any roster of pacifist luminaries fitting this description would include not only David Dellinger but Joan Baez, Benjamin Spock, A. J. Muste, Holly Near, Staughton Lynd, and Noam Chomsky as well. The situation is all the more problematic when one considers that these leaders, each in his/her own way, also advocate their followers' perpetual diversion into activities prefiguring the nature of a revolutionary society, the basis for which cannot be reasonably expected to appear through nonviolent tactics alone.¹⁰⁸

This apparent paradox erodes a line of reasoning that, although it has probably never been precisely formulated within the North American nonviolent movement, seems likely to have informed the thinking of its more astute leadership. Its logical contours can be sketched as follows.

Since at least as early as 1916, the importance of

colonial and later neocolonial exploitation of the nonindustrialized world in maintaining modern capitalist states has been increasingly well understood by the revolutionary opposition within those states.¹⁰⁹ Today, it is widely held that removal of neocolonial sources of material and super profits would irrevocably undercut the viability of late capitalist states.¹¹⁰

Beginning in the late 1940s with the emergence of both decolonization mandates in international law¹¹¹ and the proliferation of armed liberation movements throughout what became known as the "Third World," it became obvious to the opposition within developed states - of which the U.S. had by then assumed hegemonic status — that precisely such an undercutting removal of profits and raw materials was occurring.¹¹²

It required/requires no particularly sophisticated analysis to perceive that the imposition of colonial/neocolonial forms of exploitation upon Third World populations entailed/entails a degree of systemic violence sufficient to ensure the permanence of their revolt until it succeeds.¹¹³ Similarly, it was/is understandable that Third World revolution would continue of its own volition *whether or not* it was accompanied by overt revolutionary activity within the "mother countries" (advanced capitalist states).¹¹⁴

These understandings are readily coupled with the knowledge that the types of warfare evidenced in decolonization struggles were unlikely, under normal circumstances, to trigger superpower confrontations of the

type which would threaten mother country populations (including their internal oppositions).¹¹⁵ Instead, the existence of armed Third World liberation movements would necessitate a continuing range of (token) concessions by the advanced industrial states to their own populations as a means of securing the internal security required for the permanent prosecution of "brush fire wars."

It follows that it is possible for the resident opposition to the advanced industrial states to rely upon the armed efforts of those in the colonies to diminish the relative power of the "mutual enemy," all the while awaiting the "right moment" to take up arms themselves, "completing the world revolution" by bringing down the state. The question then becomes one of when to "seize the time," and who - precisely - it is who will be responsible for "picking up the gun" within the mother country itself.¹¹⁷

From here it is possible to extrapolate that when state power has been sufficiently weakened by the liberation struggles of those in the colonies (read: nonwhites), the most oppressed sectors of the mother country population itself (again read nonwhites, often and accurately described as constituting internal colonies) - which are guided by motivations similar to those in the Third World - will be in a position to wage successful armed struggles from within.¹¹⁸ Such dissolution of the state will mark the ushering in of the postrevolutionary era.

It is possible then to visualize a world revolution-

ary process in which the necessity of armed participation (and attendant physical suffering) by white radicals is marginalized or dispensed with altogether. Their role in this scenario becomes that of utilizing their already attained economic and social advantages to prefigure, both intellectually and more literally, the shape of the good life to be shared by all in the postrevolutionary context; it is presumed that they will become a (perhaps *the*) crucial social element, having used the "space" (comfort zone) achieved through state concessions generated by the armed pressure exerted by others to the "constructive rather than destructive purpose" of developing a "superior" model of societal relations.¹¹⁹

The function of "responsible" oppositional leadership in the mother country - as opposed to the "irresponsible" variety that might precipitate some measure of armed resistance from within before the Third World has bled itself in diminishing state power from without (and who might even go so far as to suggest whites could directly participate) - is first and foremost to link the mother country movement's inaction *symbolically and rhetorically* to Third World liberation struggles. The blatant accommodation to state power involved in this is rationalized (both to the Third Worlders *and to* the movement rank-and-file) by professions of personal and principled pacifism, as well as in the need for "working models" of nonviolent behavior in postrevolutionary society.¹²⁰

From there, the nonviolent American movement (by now overwhelmingly composed of white

"progressives") can be steered into exactly the same symbolic and rhetorical "solidarity" with an emerging nonwhite armed revolution within the United States and - voila! - positive social transformation has not only been painlessly achieved (for whites), but they (being the prefigurative nonviolent "experts" on building postrevolutionary society) have maneuvered themselves into leading roles in the aftermath.¹²¹

All of this, of course, is predicated on the assumption that the colonized, both within and without, will ultimately prove equal to their part, and that revolutionary transformation will actually occur. In the event that the colonizing state ultimately proves the stronger of parties in such a contest, the nonviolent movement — having restricted its concrete activities to limits sanctioned by that same state - will have a natural fall-back position, being as it were only a variant of "the loyal opposition."¹²² The result of the carefully-constructed balance (between professed solidarity with armed Third World insurgents on the one hand, and tacit accommodation to the very state power against which they fight on the other) is that North American adherents to nonviolence are intended to win regardless of the outcome; the comfort zone of "white skin privilege" is to be continued in either event.¹²³

Or this is the outcome that fence-sitting is expected to accomplish. The range of tremendous ethical, moral, and political problems inherent in this attitude are mostly so self-evident as to require no further explanation or

consideration here. Before turning to the purely pathological characteristics associated with such monumental (attempted) buck-passing, there is one other primarily political potentiality which bears at least passing discussion. It is a possibility typically omitted or ignored within discussions of "the praxis of nonviolence" in the United States, largely because its very existence would tend to render pacifism's pleasant (to its beneficiaries) prospectus rather less rosy (read: less appealing to its intended mass of subscribers). Undoubtedly, the oversight is also bound up in pacifism's earlier-mentioned arrogance in presuming it holds some power of superior morality to determine that the nonviolence of its relations to the state will necessarily be reciprocated (even to a relative degree) in the state's relations with pacifists.¹²⁴ Whatever the basis for generalized silence in this regard, due consideration must be given to the likelihood that the state, at some point along its anticipated trajectory of strategic losses in the hinterlands, will experience the need to reconstitute its credibility internally, to bring about the psychic consolidation of its faithful ("morale building" on the grand scale) by means of a "cleansing of national life" from within.

Such a transition from liberalistic and cooptive policies to much more overtly reactionary forms is certainly not without precedent when states perceive their international power positions eroding, or simply undergoing substantial external threat.¹²⁵ Invariably, such circumstances entail the identification (i.e., manufacture),

targeting, and elimination of some internal entity as the "subversive" element undercutting the "national will" and purpose. At such times the state needs no, indeed can tolerate no hint of, domestic opposition; those who are "tainted" by a history of even the milder forms of "anti-social" behavior can be assured of being selected as the scapegoats required for this fascist sort of consensus building.¹²⁶

While the precise form which might be assumed by the scapegoating involved in a consolidation of North American fascism remains unknown, it is clear that the posture of the mass nonviolent movement closely approximates that of the Jews in Germany during the 1930s. The notion that "it can't happen here" is merely a parallel to the Jewish perception that it wouldn't happen *there*; insistence on inhabiting a comfort zone even while thousands upon thousands of Third World peasants are cremated beneath canisters of American napalm is only a manifestation of "the attitude of going on with business as usual, even in a holocaust."¹²⁷ Ultimately, as Bettelheim observed, it is the dynamic of attempting to restrict opposition to state terror to symbolic and nonviolent responses which gives the state "the idea that [its victims can] be gotten to the point where they [will] walk into the gas chambers on their own."¹²⁸ And, as the Jewish experience has shown for anyone who cares to look the matter in the face, the very inertia of pacifist principles prevents any effective conversion to armed self-defense once adherents are targeted for systematic elimination by the state.

Profile of a Pathology

I just came home from Vietnam where I spent twelve months of my life trying to pacify the population. We couldn't do it; their resistance was amazing. And it was wrong; the process made me sick. So I came home to join the resistance in my own country, and I find you guys have pacified yourselves. That too amazes me; that too makes me sick . . .

— Vietnam Veteran Against the War, 1970

A number of logical contradictions and fundamental misunderstandings of political reality present themselves within the doctrinal corpus of American pacifist premises and practices (both as concerns real pacifism and relative to the modern American "comfort zone" variety). Matters of this sort are usually remediable, at least to a significant extent, through processes of philosophical/political dialogue, factual correction, and the like.¹²⁹ Subscribers to the notion of pacifism, however, have proven themselves so resistant as to be immune to conventional critique and suasion, hunkering down instead behind a wall of "principles," *especially when* these can be demonstrated to be lacking both logically and practically in terms of validity, viability, and utility.¹³⁰

The "blind faith" obstinacy inherent in this position is thus not immediately open to pragmatic, or even

empirical, consideration. It might be more properly categorized within the sphere of theological inquiry (particularly as regards the fundamentalist and occult religious doctrines) - and, indeed, many variants of pacifist dogma acknowledge strong links to an array of sects and denominations - were it not that pacifism asserts itself (generically) not only as a functional aspect of "the real world," but as a praxis capable of engendering revolutionary social transformation.¹³¹ Its basic irrationalities must therefore be taken, on their face, as seriously intended to supplant reality itself.

Codification of essentially religious symbology and mythology as the basis for political ideology (or the pseudoideology *Weltanschauung*) is not lacking in precedent and has been effectively analyzed elsewhere.¹³² Although a number of interesting aspects present themselves in the study of any specific fusion of spiritualist impetus with political articulation/practice, the common factor from one example to the next is a central belief that objective conditions (i.e., reality) can be altered by an act of "will" (individual or collective). This is often accompanied by extremely antisocial characteristics, manifested either consciously or subconsciously.¹³³ The political expression of pacifism confronts us with what may be analogously described as a (mass) pathology.

As with any pathology, pacifism may be said to exhibit a characteristic symptomology by which it can be diagnosed. Salient examples of the complex of factors making up the pathology may be described as follows:

Pacifism is delusional. This symptom is marked by a range of indicators, for example, insistence that reform or adjustment of given state policies constitutes a "revolutionary agenda," insistence that holding candlelight vigils and walking down the street constitute "acts of solidarity" with those engaged in armed struggle, or - despite facts to the contrary - that such things as "the nonviolent decolonization of India" or "the antiwar movement's forcing the Vietnam war to end" actually occurred.

At another level - and again despite clear facts to the contrary - insisting that certain tactics avoid "provoking violence" (when it is already massive) or that by remaining nonviolent pacifism can "morally compel" the state to respond in kind must be considered as deep-seated and persistent delusions.¹³⁴

Finally, it must be pointed out that many supposed "deeply principled" adherents are systematically deluding themselves that they are really pacifists at all. This facet of the symptoms is marked by a consistent avoidance of personal physical risk, an overweening attitude of personal superiority *vis-a-vis* those who "fail" to make overt professions of nonviolence, and sporadic lapses into rather unpacifist modes of conduct in interpersonal contexts (as opposed to relations with the state).¹³⁵

Pacifism is racist. In displacing massive state violence onto people of colour both outside and inside the mother country, rather than absorbing any real measure of it themselves (even when their physical intervention might undercut the state's ability to inflict violence on

nonwhites), pacifists can only be viewed as being objectively racist.

Racism itself has been accurately defined as a pathology.¹³⁶ Within the context of pacifism, the basic strain must be considered as complicated by an extremely convoluted process of victim-blaming under the guise of "antiracism" (a matter linking back to the above-mentioned delusional characteristics of the pathology of pacifism).

Finally, both displacement of violence and victim-blaming intertwine in their establishment of a comfort zone for whites who utilize it (perhaps entirely subconsciously) as a basis for "prefiguring" a complex of future "revolutionary" social relations which could serve to largely replicate the present privileged social position of whites, *vis-a-vis* nonwhites, as a cultural/intellectual "elite."¹³⁷

The cluster of subparts encompassed by this overall aspect of the pacifist pathology is usually marked by a pronounced tendency on the part of those suffering the illness to react emotionally and with considerable defensiveness to any discussion (in some cases, mere mention) of the nature of racist behaviors. The behavior is typically manifested in agitated assertions - usually with no accusatory finger having been pointed — to the effect that "I have nothing to be ashamed of" or "I have no reason to feel guilty." As with any pathology, this is the proverbial telltale clue indicating s/he is subliminally aware that s/he has much to be ashamed of and is experiencing con-

siderable guilt as a result. Such avoidance may, in extreme cases, merge once again with delusional characteristics of the pathology.¹³⁸

Pacifism is suicidal. In its core impulse to prostrate itself before the obvious reality of the violence inherent in state power, pacifism not only inverts Emiliano Zapata's famous dictum that "It is better to die on one's feet than to live on one's knees"; it actually posits the proposition that is it *best* to die on one's knees and seeks to achieve this result as a matter of *principle*. Pacifist *Eros* is thus transmuted into *Thanatos*.¹³⁹

While it seems certain that at least a portion of pacifism's propensity toward suicide is born of the earlier-mentioned delusion that it can impel nonviolence on the part of the state (and is therefore simply erroneous), there is a likelihood that one of two other factors is at work in many cases:

1. A sublimated death wish manifesting itself in a rather commonly remarked "gambler's neurosis" (i.e., "Can I risk everything and win?").
2. A desublimated death wish manifesting itself in a "political" equivalent of walking out in front of a bus ("Will it hit me or not?").

In any event, this suicidal pathology may be assumed to follow the contours of other such impulses, centering on repressed guilt neuroses and associated feelings of personal inadequacy (in all probability linked to

the above-mentioned subliminal racism) and severely complicated by a delusional insistence that the death wish itself constitutes a "pro-life" impetus. It is interesting to note that the latter claim has been advanced relative to European Jews during the 1940s.¹⁴⁰

From even this scanty profile, it is easy enough to discern that pacifism - far from being a praxis adequate to impel revolutionary change - assumes the configuration of a pathological illness when advanced as a political methodology. Given its deep-seated, superficially self-serving, and socially approved nature, it is likely to be an exceedingly difficult pathology to treat and a long term barrier to the formation of revolutionary consciousness/action in the North America. Yet it is a barrier which must be overcome if revolutionary change is to occur, and for this reason, we turn to the questions of the nature of the role of nonviolent political action within a viable American transformative praxis, as well as preliminary formulation of a therapeutic approach to the pathology of pacifism.

Toward a Liberatory Praxis

The variegated canvas of the world is before me; I stand over and against it; by my theoretical attitude to it I overcome its opposition to me and make its contents my own. I am at home in the world when I know it, still more

so when I have understood it.

- G.W.R Hegel

While standard definitions tend to restrict the meaning of the term "praxis" to being more or less a sophisticated substitute for the words "action" or "practice," within the tradition of revolutionary theory it yields a more precise quality.¹⁴¹ August von Cieszkowski long ago observed, "Practical philosophy, or more exactly stated, the Philosophy of Praxis, which could influence life and social relationships, the development of truth in concrete activity—this is the overriding destiny of philosophy."¹⁴² For Marx, the essence of praxis lay in the prospect that the ongoing process of changing circumstances (i.e., material conditions) could coincide with a human self-consciousness which he described as rationally conceived "self-changing" or "revolutionary praxis."¹⁴³ In a dialectical sense, this entailed a process of qualitative transformation at the level of totality, from practice (relatively unconscious world-making activity) to praxis (less determined, more conscious world-constituting activity); the distinction between practice and praxis Marx defined as being between something "in-itself" and something "for-itself."¹⁴⁴

Thus, as Richard Kilminster has noted, for Marx:

The famous 'cunning of Reason' in Hegel's *The Philosophy of History*¹⁴⁵ 'sets of passions' of individuals and the collective aspirations of nations 'to work

for itself in the process of historical self-realization of what it essentially is, as comprehended and exemplified by Reason at its later stages. Strong teleological overtones are present in this conception as they are also in what we might analogously term Marx's implicit notion of a cunning of praxis, through which he discerned history had a consciously appropriable meaning in the blindly developing but ultimately self-rationalizing development of its successive social structures.¹⁴⁶

In other words, praxis might be accurately defined as action consciously and intentionally guided by theory while simultaneously guiding the evolution of theoretical elaboration. It follows that any liberatory transformation of society is dependent upon the development/articulation of an adequate praxis by which revolutionary struggle may be carried out.¹⁴⁷

There are a vast range of implications to the praxical symbiosis of theory and practice in prerevolutionary society, most especially within an advanced capitalist context such as that of the United States. To a significant extent, these implications are intellectual/analytical in nature, and the great weight of praxical consideration has correspondingly focused itself in this direction. Insofar as such concerns might rightly be viewed as "strategic," this emphasis is undoubtedly necessary. This is not to say, however, that such preoccupations should be allowed to assume an exclusivist dominance over other matters of legitimate praxical interest. In this regard, the short shrift afforded the more pragmatic or "tactical" aspects of praxis

in contemporary dissident theory is, to say the least, disturbing.¹⁴⁸ Such uneven development of praxis is extremely problematic in terms of actualizing revolutionary potential.

A clear example of this tendency may be found in the paucity of recent literature attempting to explore the appropriate *physical* relationship between the repressive/defensive forces of the late capitalist state on the one hand, and those avowedly pursuing its liberatory transformation on the other. Little intellectual or practical effort has gone into examining the precise nature of revolutionary (as opposed to ritual) confrontation or the literal requirements of revolutionary struggle within fully industrialized nations. Consequently, a theoretical - hence, praxical - vacuum has appeared in this connection. And, as with any vacuum of this sort, the analytical default has been filled with the most convenient and readily accessible set of operant assumptions available, in this case with pacifism, the doctrine of "revolutionary nonviolence."

Predictably (for reasons already elaborated), the same situation does not prevail with regard to liberatory struggles in the Third World. In terms of both historiography and mythology, it is considered axiomatic that revolution in nonindustrialized areas all but *inherently* entails resort to armed struggle and violence.¹⁴⁹ This remains true whether one is considering the Bolshevik revolution, the Chinese revolution, the Vietnamese revolution, the Cuban revolution, the Algerian revolution, decolonization struggles in Africa during the 1950s, the

Nicaraguan revolution, the Zimbabwean revolution, or any other.¹⁵⁰ The same principle also holds with regard to Third World liberation movements such as the ANC in South Africa, SWAPO in Namibia, the Tupamaros in Uruguay, the Prestes Column in Brazil, Shining Path in Peru, and so on.¹⁵¹ In each case, the fundamental physical relationship between armed struggle/violence and liberatory posture is clear.

As a matter of praxis, this relationship has been clarified (even codified) by theorists as diverse as Frantz Fanon, Che Guevara, Mao Tsetung, and Vo Nguyen Giap, to name but a few.¹⁵² The accuracy of their articulations is so compelling that even such a devout (and principled) North American pacifist as Blase Bonpane has observed that, in the Third World, armed struggle is required because "passivity can coexist nicely with repression, injustice, and fascism."¹⁵³ Bonpane goes on:

Unfortunately, we have been brought up on parlor games, where the participants discuss whether or not they are "for" or "against" violence. Can you picture a similar discussion on whether we are for or against disease? Violence, class struggle, and disease are all real. They do not go away through mystification . . . those who deny the reality of violence and class struggle - like those who deny the reality of disease - are not dealing with the real world.¹⁵⁴

The "real world" of Third World liberatory praxis thus *necessarily* incorporates revolutionary violence as an

integral element of itself. The principle is also extended to cover certain situations within the less industrialized sectors of the "First World," as is clearly the situation relative to the Spanish Civil War, Irish resistance to British colonial rule, resistance to the Greek Junta during the '60s and 70s, and - to a certain extent at least - within the context of revolutionary struggle in Italy.¹⁵⁵ Hence, only within the most advanced — and privileged — sectors of industrial society is armed struggle/violence consigned to the "praxical" realm of "counterproductivity," as when the pacifist left queues up to condemn the Black Panther Party, Weatherman, the Baader-Meinhof Group, or its offshoot, the Red Army Faction.¹⁵⁶

Aside from the obvious moral hypocrisy implicit in this contradiction, the question must be posed as to whether it offers any particular revolutionary advantage to those espousing it. Given the availability of self-preserving physical force in the hands of the state, within advanced capitalist contexts no less — or even more - than in colonial/neocolonial situations, the question presents itself "at the bottom line" as an essentially military one.

Within this analytical paradigm, three cardinal tenets and an axiom must be observed. The tenets are: (1) the Napoleonic credo that "victory goes to the side fielding the biggest battalions" (i.e., those exercising the most muscle tend to win contests of force); (2) that sheer scale of force can often be offset through utilization of the element of surprise; and (3) even more than surprise, tactical flexibility (i.e., concentration of force at weak points)

can often compensate for lack of strength or numbers (this is a prime point of *ju jitsu*). The axiom at issue has been adopted as the motto of the British Special Air Service: "Who dares, wins."¹⁵⁷

The first tenet is, to be sure, a hopeless proposition at the outset of virtually any revolutionary struggle. The "big battalions" — and balance of physical power — inevitably rest with the state's police, paramilitary, and military apparatus, at least through the initial and intermediate stages of the liberatory process. Consequently, Third World revolutionary tacticians have compensated by emphasizing tenets two and three (surprise and flexibility), developing the art of guerrilla warfare to a very high degree.¹⁵⁸ Within the more industrialized contexts of Europe and North America, this has assumed forms typically referred to as "terrorism."¹⁵⁹ In either event, the method has proven increasingly successful in befuddling more orthodox military thinking throughout the twentieth century, has led to a familiar series of fallen dictators and dismantled colonial regimes, and has substantially borne out the thrust of the "dare to struggle, dare to win" axiom.¹⁶⁰

The hegemony of pacifist activity and thought within the late capitalist states, on the other hand, not only bows before the balance of power that rests with the status quo in any head-on contest by force, but also gives up the second and third tenets. With activities self-restricted to a relatively narrow band of ritual forms, pacifist tacticians automatically sacrifice much of their

(potential) flexibility in confronting the state; within this narrow band, actions become entirely predictable rather than offering the utility of surprise. The bottom-line balance of physical power thus inevitably rests with the state on an essentially permanent basis, and the possibility of liberal social transformation is correspondingly diminished to a point of nonexistence. The British Special Air Force motto is again borne out, this time via a converse formulation: "Who fails to dare, loses . . . perpetually."

It is evident that whatever the attributes of pacifist doctrine, "revolutionary nonviolence" is a complete misnomer, that pacifism itself offers no coherent praxis for liberatory social transformation. At best, it might be said to yield certain aspects of a viable liberatory praxis, thus assuming the status of a sort of "quasi-praxis." More appropriately, it should be viewed more at the level of ideology termed by Louis Althusser as constituting "Generalities I."¹⁶¹ As a low level of ideological consciousness (i.e., dogma) rather than the manifestation of a truly praxical outlook, pacifism dovetails neatly with Ernest Gellner's observation that ideological "patterns of legitimacy ... are first and foremost sets of collectively held beliefs about validity. The psychological ground of legitimacy is in fact the recognition of the validity of a given social norm."¹⁶² Or, to take the matter further, we might turn to the conclusion of J. G. Merquoir:

[A]s far as belief is concerned, ideological legitimacy is chiefly, though not exclusively, for internal consumption. Its function is really to act as a catalyst for the

mind of the group whose interest it sublimates into a justificatory set of ideals. Outside the interest-bound class circle, ideology consists primarily of unchallenged, normally tacit, value-orientations which, once translated into the language of purpose, amounts to the 'manipulation of bias' in favour of privileged groups. (emphasis in original)¹⁶³

This perception of pacifism as a self-justifying ideological preemption of proper praxical consideration, subliminally intended to perpetuate the privileged status of a given "progressive" elite, is helpful in determining what is necessary to arrive at a true liberatory praxis within advanced capitalist contexts. The all but unquestioned legitimacy accruing to the principles of pacifist practice must be continuously and comprehensively subjected to the test of whether they, *in themselves*, are capable of delivering the bottom-line transformation of state-dominated social relations which alone constitutes the revolutionary/liberatory process.¹⁶⁴ Where they are found to be incapable of such delivery, the principles must be broadened or transcended altogether as a means of achieving an adequate praxis.

By this, it is not being suggested that nonviolent forms of struggle are or should be abandoned, nor that armed struggle should be the normative standard of revolutionary performance, either practically or conceptually. Rather, it is to follow the line of thinking recently articulated by Kwame Ture (Stokely Carmichael) when he noted:

If we are to consider ourselves as revolutionaries, we must acknowledge that we have an obligation to succeed in pursuing revolution. Here, we must acknowledge not only the power of our enemies, but our own power as well. Realizing the nature of our power, we must not deny ourselves the exercise of the options available to us; we must utilize surprise, cunning and flexibility; we must use the strength of our enemy to undo him, keeping him confused and off-balance. We must organize with perfect clarity to be utterly unpredictable. When our enemies expect us to respond to provocation with violence, we must react calmly and peacefully; just as they anticipate our passivity, we must throw a grenade.¹⁶⁵

What is at issue is not therefore the replacement of hegemonic pacifism with some "cult of terror." Instead, it is the realization that, in order to be effective and ultimately successful, any revolutionary movement within advanced capitalist nations must develop the broadest possible range of thinking/action by which to confront the state. This should be conceived not as an array of component forms of struggle but as a continuum of activity stretching from petitions/letter writing and so forth through mass mobilization/demonstrations, onward into the arena of armed self-defense, and still onward through the realm of "offensive" military operations (e.g., elimination of critical state facilities, targeting of key individuals within the governmental/corporate apparatus, etc.).¹⁶⁶ All of this must be apprehended as a holism, as an inter-

nally consistent liberatory process applicable at this generally-formulated level to the late capitalist context no less than to the Third World. From the basis of this fundamental understanding - and, it may be asserted, *only* from this basis - can a viable liberatory praxis for North America emerge.

It should by now be self-evident that, while a substantial - even preponderant - measure of nonviolent activity is encompassed within any revolutionary praxis, there is no place for the profession of "principled pacifism" to preclude — much less condemn — the utilization of violence as a legitimate and necessary method of achieving liberation.¹⁶⁷ The dismantling of the false consciousness inherent in the ideology of "nonviolent revolution" is therefore of primary importance in attaining an adequate liberatory praxis.

A Therapeutic Approach to Pacifism

A reversal of perspective is produced vis-a-vis adult consciousness: the historical becoming which prepared it was not before it, it is only for it; the time during which it progressed is no longer the time of its constitution, but a time which it constitutes . . . such is the reply of critical thought to psychologism, sociologism and historicism.

- Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 1947

The pervasiveness of "pacifism" within the ostensibly oppositional sectors of American society appear grounded more in a tightly intertwined complex of pathological characteristics than in some well thought through matrix of consciously held philosophical tenets. To the extent that this is true, the extrapolation of pacifist ideological propositions serves to obfuscate rather than clarify matters of praxical concern, to retard rather than further liberatory revolutionary potentials within the United States. Such a situation lends itself more readily to the emergence of a fascist societal construct than to liberatory transformation.¹⁶⁸ Thus, the need to overcome the hegemony of pacifist thinking is clear.

However, as with any pathologically-based manifestation, hegemonic pacifism in advanced capitalist contexts proves itself supremely resistant - indeed, virtually impervious — to mere logic and moral suasion. The standard accoutrements (such as intelligent theoretical dialogue) of political consciousness raising/movement building have proven relatively useless when confronted within the cynically self-congratulatory obstinacy with which the ideologues of pacifist absolutism defend their faith. What is therefore required as a means of getting beyond the smug exercise of knee-jerk pacifist "superiority," and into the arena of effective liberatory praxis, is a therapeutic rather than dialogic approach to the phenomenon.

What follows, then, is a sketch of a strategy by which radical therapists might begin to work through the pacifist problematic in both individual and group

settings.¹⁶⁹ It should be noted that the suggested method of approach is contingent upon the therapist's own freedom from contamination with pacifist predilections (it has been my experience that a number of supposed radical therapists are themselves in acute need of therapy in this area).¹⁷⁰ It should also be noted that, in the process of elaboration, a number of terms from present psychological jargon (e.g., "reality therapy") are simply appropriated for their use value rather than through any formal adherence to the precepts which led to their initial currency. Such instances should be self-explanatory.

Therapy may be perceived as progressing either through a series of related and overlapping stages or phases of indeterminate length.

Values Clarification. During this initial portion of the therapeutic process, participants will be led through discussion/consideration of the bases of need for revolutionary social transformation, both objective and subjective. Differentiations between objectively observed and subjectively felt/experienced needs will be examined in depth, with particular attention paid to contradictions - real or perceived - between the two. The outcome of this portion of the process is to assist each participant in arriving at a realistic determination of whether s/he truly holds values consistent with revolutionary aspirations, or whether s/he is not more psychically inclined toward some variant of reforming/modifying the *status quo*.

The role of the therapist in this setting is to be both extremely conversant with objective factors, and to lead

subjective responses of participants to an honest correlation in each discursive moment of process. Although this portion of therapy is quite hypothetical/theoretical in nature, it must be anticipated that a significant portion of participants who began defining themselves as pacifists will ultimately adopt a clarified set of personal values of a nonrevolutionary type, that is, acknowledging that they personally wish to pursue a course of action leading to some outcome other than the total transformation of the state/liberation of the most objectively oppressed social sectors.

It would be possible at this point to posit a procedure for attempting the alteration of nonrevolutionary values. However, the purpose of a radical (as opposed to bourgeois) therapy is not to induce accommodation to principles and values other than their own. In the sense that the term is used here, "values clarification" is merely an expedient to calling things by their right names and to strip away superficial/rhetorical layers of delusion.

Reality Therapy. Those - including self-defined pacifists - who in the initial phase of the process have coherently articulated their self-concept as being revolutionary will be led into a concrete integration with the physical reality of the objective bases for revolution, as well as application(s) of the revolutionary response to these conditions. This phase is quite multifaceted and contains a broad range of optional approaches.

In short, this second phase of the therapeutic process will include direct and extended exposure to the con-

ditions of life among at least one (and preferably more) of the most objectively oppressed communities in North America, for example, inner-city black ghettos, Mexican and Puerto Rican barrios, American Indian reservations or urban enclaves, southern rural black communities, and so on. It is expected that participants will not merely "visit," but remain in these communities for extended periods, eating the food, living in comparable facilities and getting by on the average annual income. Arguments that such an undertaking is unreasonable because it would be dangerous and participants would be unwanted in such communities are not credible; these are the most fundamental reasons *for* going - the reality of existing in perpetual physical jeopardy (and/or of being physically abused in an extreme fashion) precisely *because* of being unwanted (especially on racial grounds), while living in the most squalid of conditions, is precisely what must be understood by self-proclaimed revolutionaries, pacifist or otherwise. Avoiding direct encounters with these circumstances as well as knowledge of them is to avoid revolutionary reality in favor of the comfort zone.

This experience should be followed by a similar sort of exposure to conditions among the oppressed within one or more of the many Third World nations undergoing revolutionary struggle. When at all possible, a part of this process should include linking up directly with one or more of the revolutionary groups operating in that country, a matter which is likely to take time and be dangerous (as will, say, living in an Indian village in Guate-

mala or Peru). But, again, this is precisely the point; the participant will obtain a clear knowledge of the realities of state repression and armed resistance which cannot be gained in any way other than through direct exposure.

Finally, either during or after the above processes, each participant should engage in some direct and consciously risk-inducing confrontation with state power. This can be done in a myriad of ways, either individually or in a group, but cannot include prior arrangements with police in order to minimize their involvement. Nor can it include obedience to police department demands for "order" once the action begins; participants must adopt a posture of absolute noncooperation with the state while remaining true to their own declared values (e.g., for pacifists, refraining from violent acts themselves).

The role of the therapist - who should already have such grounding in revolutionary reality him/herself - during this phase of therapy is to facilitate the discussion of the process in both individual and group settings. The therapist must be conversant with the realities being experienced by participants to be able to assist them in establishing and apprehending a proper context in each instance.

Evaluation. For those who complete phase two (and a substantial degree of attrition must be anticipated in association with reality therapy, especially among those who began by espousing nonviolent "alternatives" to armed struggle), there must come a period of independent and guided reflection upon their observations and experiences

"in the real world." This can be done on a purely individual basis, but generally speaking, a group setting is best for the guided portion of evaluation. A certain recapitulation/reformulation of the outcomes of the values clarification phase is in order, as is considerable philosophical/situational discussion and analysis coupled to readings; role-play has proven quite effective in many instances.

The point of this portion of the therapeutic process is to achieve a preliminary reconciliation of personal, subjective values with concrete realities. A tangible outcome is obtainable in each participant's formal articulation of precisely how he/she sees his/her values coinciding with the demonstrable physical requirements of revolutionary social action. Again, it should be anticipated that during evaluation a segment of participants will arrive at the autonomous decision that their aspirations/commitments are to something other than revolutionary social transformation.

The role of the therapist during this phase is to serve as a consultant to participant self-evaluation, recommend readings as appropriate to participant concerns/confusions, facilitate role-play and other group dynamics, and assist participants in keeping their reconciliations free of contradictions in logic.

Demystification. It has been my experience that, by this point in the therapeutic process, there are few (if any) remaining participants seeking to extend the principles of pacifist absolutism. And among remaining partici-

pants — especially among those who began with such absolutist notions — there often remains a profound lack of practical insight into the technologies and techniques common to both physical repression and physical resistance.

A typical psychological manifestation of such ignorance is the mystification of both the tools at issue and those individuals known to be skilled in their use. For example, a "fear of guns" is intrinsic to the pacifist left, as is sheer irrational terror at the very idea of directly confronting such mythologized characters as members of SWAT teams, Special Forces ("Green Berets"), Rangers, and members of right-wing vigilante organizations. The outcomes of such mystification tend to congeal into feelings of helplessness and inadequacy, rationalization, and avoidance. Sublimated, these feelings reemerge in the form of compensatory rhetoric, attempting to convert low self-confidence into a signification of transcendent virtue (i.e., "make the world go away").

Hence, while few participants will at this juncture be prepared to honestly deny that armed struggle is and must be an integral aspect of the revolutionary interest which they profess to share, a number will still contend that they are "philosophically" unable to directly participate in it. Clarification is obtainable in this connection by bringing out the obvious: knowing how, at some practical level, to engage in armed struggle and then choosing not to is a much different proposition than refraining from such engagement due to ignorance of the

means and methods involved.

Here, "hands-on" training and experience is of the essence. The basic technologies at issue — rifles, assault rifles, handguns, shotguns, explosives, and the like, as well as the rudiments of their proper application and deployment — must be explored. This practical training sequence should be augmented and enhanced by selected readings, and continual individual and group discussions of the meaning(s) of this new range of skills acquisition.¹⁷¹

It should be noted clearly that this phase of therapy is *not* designed or intended to create "commandos" or to form guerrilla units. Rather, it will serve only to acquaint each participant with the fact that s/he has the same general information/skills base as those who deter him/her through physical intimidation or repression and is at least potentially capable of the same degree of proficiency in these formerly esoteric areas as their most "elite" opponents. At this point, nonviolence *can* become a philosophical choice or tactical expedient rather than a necessity born of psychological default.

The role of the therapist during this phase is unlikely to be that of trainer (although it is possible, given that he/she should have already undergone such training). Rather, it is likely to be that of suggesting the appropriate trainers and literature, and serving as discussion/group facilitator for participants.

Reevaluation. In this final phase of therapy, remaining participants will be led into articulation of their overall perspective on the nature and process of revolutionary

social transformation (i.e., their understanding of liberatory praxis), including their individual perceptions of their own specific roles within this process. The role of the therapist is to draw each participant out into a full and noncontradictory elaboration, as well as to facilitate the emergence of a potential for future, ongoing reevaluation and development of revolutionary consciousness.

The internal composition of each phase of this therapeutic approach in resolving the problem of hegemonic (pathological) pacifism is open to almost infinite variation on the part of the therapists and participants involved in each instance of application. Even the ordering of phases may be beneficially altered; for example, what has been termed "reality therapy" may have independently preceded and triggered the perceived need for values clarification on the part of some (or many) participants. Or, independently undertaken evaluations may lead some participants to enter values clarification and then proceed to reality therapy. The key for therapists is to retain a sense of flexibility of approach when applying the model, picking up participants at their own points of entry and adapting the model accordingly, rather than attempting some more-or-less rigid progression.

In sum, it is suggested that the appropriate application of the broad therapeutic model described in this section can have the effect of radically diminishing much of the delusion, the aroma of racism and the sense of privilege which mark the covert self-defeatism accompa-

nying the practice of mainstream dissident politics in contemporary America. At another level - if widely adopted - the model will be of assistance in allowing the construction of a true liberatory praxis, a real "strategy to win," for the first time within advanced industrial society. This potentiality, for those who would claim the mantle of being revolutionary, can only be seen as a positive step.

Conclusion

In the contradiction lies the hope.

- Bertholt Brecht

This essay is far from definitive. Its composition and emphasis have been dictated largely by the nature of the dialogue and debate prevailing within the circle of the American opposition today. The main weight of its exposition has gone to critique pacifist thinking and practice; its thrust has been more to debunk the principles of hegemonic nonviolence rather than to posit fully articulated alternatives. In the main, this has been brought about by the degree of resistance customarily thrown up, *apriori*, to any challenge extended to the assumption of ontological goodness pacifism accords itself. The examples it raises are intended to at least give pause to those whose answers have been far too pat and whose "purity of purpose" has gone unquestioned for far too long.

A consequence of this has been that the conceptualization of other options, both within this essay and in the society beyond, have suffered. As concerns society, this is an obviously unacceptable situation. As to the essay, it may be asserted that it is to the good. The author is neither vain nor arrogant enough to hold that his single foray could be sufficient to offset the magnitude of problematic issues raised. Instead, it is to be hoped that the emphasis of "Pacifism as Pathology" will cause sufficient anger and controversy that others - many others - will endeavor to seriously address the matters at hand. Within such open and volatile forums, matters of therapeutic and praxical concerns can hopefully advance.

In concluding, I would at last like to state the essential premise of this essay clearly: the desire for a non-violent and cooperative world is the healthiest of all psychological manifestations. *This* is the overarching principle of liberation and revolution.¹⁷² Undoubtedly, it seems the highest order of contradiction that, in order to achieve nonviolence, we must first break with it in overcoming its root causes. Therein, however, lies our only hope.

Interview with Nikos Maziotis, imprisoned member of Revolutionary Struggle (Greece)

**Some Questions and Answers with N. Maziotis, event at Karditsa self-managed space, June 2016
[excerpts]**

Q. How can the anarchist/antiauthoritarian space change from being reactive into a real revolutionary movement? In your opinion, what political characteristics should it have, and what kind of organization and aims?

A: It is a question of political positions. Anarchy, or Libertarian or antiauthoritarian communism is a social proposal and organization. The condition to create a truly revolutionary anarchist movement is the existence of political positions and proposals in order to make clear to the people, the masses and workers, what we believe and what aims we have as anarchists. This means that we must take positions on the burning problems and issues of our time that are the result of the capitalist crisis- such as debt, memoranda, the dilemma of staying in or leaving the European Union, and to make clear what is our goal as anarchists, which is none other than the overthrow and destruction of capital and the state and the creation of a stateless, classless society.

These are issues for which the masses of people, the people affected by the crisis and the policies for rescuing the system, have searched and still search answers, yet the anarchist/anti-authoritarian space had nothing different to offer them compared to the proposals of the mainstream parties (besides slogans perhaps). Also beyond the formulation of political positions and proposals it should be clear by whom or in what ways and means our struggle will promote and implement these political positions and proposals- in other words, how we will make Anarchy a reality.

So if we want to make revolution and overthrow capital and the state and to create a revolutionary movement aimed at this stateless and classless society, then we must necessarily have armed struggle in our practice as a means of struggle. Because as I said in my presentation it is obvious and a given that no revolutionary perspective is possible without armed struggle.

Of course a revolutionary movement must have diverse methods of struggle, it must have all the different methods as so many arrows in its quiver: propaganda, counter-information, demonstrations, self-organized structures, and there must be open and public, as well as illegal actions.

But all these actions must be part of a larger package that serves the same purpose, the overthrow of the regime. For this it is indispensable to have the greatest possible agreement among comrades on unified political positions and proposals, in a kind of political program. Otherwise we simply reproduce the characteristics of the current movement, which is a patchwork of groups and individuals, which is neither a unifying nor a united force and where all have different priorities, and therefore it remains a purely reactive political space, only for protest or at best insurrection, but it can not become a threat to the regime nor have a revolutionary perspective.

Regarding the organization that a revolutionary movement must have, it depends on the political positions and proposals we have. Since it seems today that nothing can be taken for granted, if we are

anarchists, we are supposed to aim for the immediate abolition of the state as a mechanism to administer societal affairs and the destruction of capital. If our positions and our goals are the destruction of capitalism, the market economy and the state, leading to the creation of a stateless and classless society- that is, a confederal organization where the societal units are the communities, communes and collectives where the decisions are taken by assemblies of the people who make up these social organizations- then the organization of the anarchist revolutionary movement is quite obviously federal.

Because our organizational set-up is our social proposal in miniature, it is Anarchy in miniature. In such a case, anarchists already within their organizations do act as a microcosm of what they profess and support. Inside the old is born the new, but not by reproducing the old hierarchical structures and values of the world and society we want to change. This is very important, because previous revolutions in fact failed in their objectives because they reproduced these hierarchical values and structures in a slightly different way.

True communism means a society without a state. The difference between Marxists and anarchists is that in the process leading to communism, Marxists believe that there should exist in the transition from capitalism to communism, the so-called “workers state” or “dictatorship of the proletariat” and that later, when the conditions have matured and the class enemy is defeated, the state will simply dissolve itself. Whereas, in contrast, anarchists believe that the state must be dissolved and destroyed immediately without any transition. Historical experience has shown that no state dissolves itself, various pretexts are given for its preservation, and that no privileged caste resigns its privileges and gives up its power in the management of human affairs.

As shown in the example of the Russian Revolution of 1917-21, instead of the assumed self-dissolution of the state, there was created the most authoritarian and totalitarian state, and this was a bad example for the labor movement and anti-imperialist struggles and revolutions in the Third World, which reproduced regimes that imposed full nationalization of the economy, along with the dictatorship of a bureaucracy that reproduced class divisions.

In the case of anarchists in the example of Spain, they proved what Saint-Just said in the French Revolution, that “those who make revolutions halfway only dig their own grave”. The Spanish anarchists- and they achieved major gains in terms of self-management in most of the Spanish territory where, thanks to their efforts, the Franco coup was suppressed- did not topple the two governments, both the local one of Catalonia and the central government in Madrid of the Popular Front, all in the name the anti-fascist struggle, with this resulting in constant concessions and repression of self-management by the Communist-controlled government.

Future revolutions must not repeat past mistakes, and must dissolve the State directly as a mechanism of class-rule. We must promote this today as anarchists and we must show our political positions as a movement.

In February comrade [Roupa](#) attempted to help your getaway from the prison of Korydallos by [\[hijacking a\] helicopter](#). Could you make a comment about this?

It was an action forming part of the framework of the continuation of action that Revolutionary Struggle has engaged in since 2009 at the beginning of the crisis, targeting the mechanisms and economic power structures that play a significant role in the crisis and its political representatives (Athens Stock Exchange, Eurobank, Citibank) and continued with the last attack of the organization in 2014 on the Directorate of the Bank of Greece and the IMF permanent representative office, for which

I was recently sentenced to life imprisonment.

This escape attempt was a response to repression against Revolutionary Struggle and against other armed fighters, and in this context included in the escape were members of the [CCF](#). Despite the failure of this attempt, it is of great political value and importance.

As Revolutionary Struggle, we have made choices that have brought us face to face with state repression, prison, and we have risked our lives in this combat. For us, prison is a terrain of struggle, not the end of the fight, and we have proved that it was not the end with the arrests in 2010. To defend with pride what we are, and to continue the armed struggle is a duty and right, and it is our especial duty towards Lambros Fountas, our comrade who was killed in action, it is a matter of course for us and negates the repression.

Such actions as comrade Pola Roupa attempted are exemplary because they give a strong political message that we are and remain consequent, despite successive repressive operations of the state against us, despite the arrests, heavy sentences, and murder of Lambros Fountas, we are unrepentant and we will not stop struggling, we will never throw in the towel, we will never give up the fight.

Also the fact that the escape would have included members of CCF demonstrates further that there is not so much importance in different positions about issues concerning the struggle, but that what matters is the common goal, the struggle against authority, the struggle for the overthrow of capital and the state.

Lately it is possible to observe a large deficit of solidarity towards all political prisoners. This was particularly illustrated by the massive political prisoners hunger strike of 2015. What do you think is the cause of this?

In my estimation, this is a result of the general political failure, or if you like, the political defeat of the anarchist/anti-authoritarian space over the last six years where, first of all, it was not up to the historic occasion, it could not intervene as a catalyst in the period after the inclusion of the country in the programs of international organizations of the Troika, and secondly, due to the fact that the terrorism of the state started to bite, with the waves of repeated arrests for armed action the 2009-2011 period, a result that brought into prison dozens of comrades who have been sentenced to many years of prison, and that there exists the perspective that they will remain fairly long years in prison.

On the issue of solidarity there were simultaneous problems of separations, with criteria as to why someone was accused and what attitude they held, that is if they were “guilty” or “innocent”, if they took responsibility for participation in an armed organization or invoked a judicial “fabrication”. There were criteria of “solidarity” based on personal or family relationships, or the criteria that, “anyone I disagree with, I am not in solidarity with.”

In recent years we have witnessed many such separations using various criteria. All these divisions have basically a political background behind them, such as the exclusion of armed action as part of the fight against state and capital.

So a piece of the anarchist space has proven to be easier to mobilize on issues of “human rights” since they are considered more popularizable, with the issue of judicial “fabrications”, “unjust persecutions”, “construction of cases”, all this rather than of course the armed struggle cases for which the vast majority of the political prisoners are in prison, and many of whom have accepted political

responsibility for their participation in armed groups.

But now there is a general indifference and a general deficit in solidarity towards all political prisoners, not just for one portion, and is irrespective of divisions and regardless of any controversy, and this is due to the political defeat of the anarchist/antiauthoritarian space in recent years. This defeat is the result of serious political shortcomings and incapacities, that it has no coherent political positions and proposals to the problems of our time, the crisis and policies to oppose it. So it could not intervene in the period of big mobilizations against the 1st Memorandum in 2010-12 and was unable to develop into a serious political pole, a revolutionary movement that would be a threat to the regime.

This general political defeat affects the overall activity of the movement and has led to the present resignation and fragmentation- particularly visible in the last rallies against the 3rd Memorandum- and of course this too affects the question of solidarity with political prisoners. Naturally, the movement is also influenced by the general social defeat, after the mobilizations against the memoranda and rescue programs implemented over the past six years have all been defeated. From 2012 there has been a decline in social resistance and a lessening of mobilizations made against the governments of Samaras and of SYRIZA.

The overall political failure and defeat of the anarchist/anti-authoritarian space to develop into a revolutionary movement that has the potential for subversion and revolution is the cause of the deficit in solidarity with all the political prisoners, and not just for those that might be said to have responsibilities for various confrontations between prisoners, and which in some degree are caused between views of “innocence” and “guilt” and the issue of assumption of political responsibility.

To sum up, the problem of the anarchist space is an existential political one. It has forgotten about the war against authority, and therefore has forgotten its own prisoners of war.

<https://325.nostate.net/2016/06/29/interview-with-nikos-maziotis-imprisoned-member-of-revolutionary-struggle-greece/>

Rojava

Kongreya Star

About the work and ideas of Kongreya Star,
the Women's Movement in Rojava.

The Committee of Diplomacy of Kongreya Star, August 2016

KONGREYA STAR

Kongreya Star is a confederation of women's movements throughout the region of Rojava, a predominantly Kurdish area of northern Syria, also referred to as West-Kurdistan. While Kurds make up the majority of Rojava and most of the population is Muslim, the area is home to many different peoples, including Arabs, Assyrians and Ezidis, as well as a large Christian minority and many other smaller groups. One year after the Syrian Civil War began, Rojava declared its autonomy from both the Assad regime and the various other armed organisations active in the war.

The women's movement in Rojava was founded in 2005 and originally called Yekîtiya Star. Under the fierce oppression of Bashar Al-Assad's Ba'ath regime, women in towns and villages across the northern areas of Syria began to come together and organise themselves, creating a strong basis for the confederated women's movement.

Because of their ethnicity, the majority Kurdish population of northern Syria suffered especially strong neglect and oppression under the Assad regime. Kurdish women, feeling this repression doubly as both women and Kurds, took the lead in organising and guiding the earliest years of the women's movement. They learned from the experiences of the Kurdish Women's Movement in other parts of Kurdistan (Bakur or southeast Turkey, Bashur or northern Iraq and Rojhilat or northwest Iran), active for thirty years before the founding of the women's movement in Rojava.

When the democratic revolution in Rojava began on the nineteenth of July 2012, the women's movement played an active role and ensured that women's liberation remained a central point to the revolution. With the fall of Assad and liberation of Rojava, Yekîtiya Star was able to continue its work out in the open, becoming one of the main movements in the region. Over the following years, the organisation has

grown to include more and more women of all ethnicities and religions. To reflect this increasingly inclusive reality, we decided in 2016 to change our name to Kongreya Star (Star Congress).

Since the revolution, our scope of activities has risen significantly as our capacity has grown. As the overall umbrella of women's movements within Rojava, Kongreya Star plays an active role in organising women across all areas of life: education, culture and arts, economics, self-defence, social affairs, problem-solving and justice, politics, local government, ecology, press and media and international relations. It organises these areas of the society in the form of ten committees. These committees stem from the conviction that women need to organise themselves autonomously, as only a strong association of women can form the self-defence system necessary to confront the existing male-dominated institutions. Only when women are able to organise themselves, we believe, will they be able to challenge the current patriarchal structures and mentalities in order to build viable, sustainable alternatives. Without the liberation of women, a truly free society is impossible.

The strength and dedication shown by the women of Rojava throughout the conflict has led to this war being known as a women's revolution. In both the heroic military defence against ISIS as well as in the building up of a new society that breaks with patriarchal traditions, women have embraced and championed an active role in every aspect of society. Kongreya Star views self-defence as a fundamental principle of defending, developing and improving the values of this ethical and democratic society. Self-defence therefore includes all spheres of life, not only the military aspects. As women have historically been the first group dominated in any society, we believe that women's liberation is a central pillar in tackling all structures of oppression. While we fight for the liberation of women, we also address all other forms of oppression, albeit based on grounds of gender, ethnicity, class, or religion.

Faced with the threat of ISIS, we believe that our greatest victory would be to build a society free from all oppression, in which those of different ethnicities and religions can live together in peace and democ-

racy. This cannot be achieved through the continuation of the existing structures of nation-states, patriarchy and capitalism, which led to this crisis in the first place. Instead, we are establishing an alternative to the existing systems, a 'third way'. This third way is called democratic confederalism.

Democratic confederalism is based on the paradigms of a society built upon democracy, ecology and women's liberation; a peaceful coexistence of all ethnicities and religions. It is a democratic model for direct and radical democracy, organised by the people from a grassroots level in communes and assemblies. This model, with its reliance on self-administration rather than a centralised, mono-cultural nation state, was developed by Abdullah Öcalan, the founder of the Kurdish liberation movement. This system guarantees that all people are involved in the organisation of society and that the society is organised according to the peoples' wishes and needs.

In order to establish this new society, Kongreya Star and the women's movement work closely with other social movements, including youth groups and political parties. Together, we have created communes in every town and neighbourhood and established the democratic self-administration that organises social and political life in Rojava. The Movement for a Democratic Society (Tevgera Civaka Demokratik, TEV-DEM) is the mixed gender umbrella movement for all civil society organisations developing in Rojava and has also played an important role as a parallel organisation of Kongreya Star.

This brochure focuses on five fields of Kongreya Star: the organisation of the communes; establishing a communal economic system; providing education; the organisation of self-defence; and the development of the women's science, called Jineology, along with the furthering of art and culture. Each of these fields is interconnected and in all of its activities, Kongreya Star adheres to the bottom-up principle of democratic organisation. Kongreya Star also follows the principle of plurality, including women of all ethnicities and religions. Together, we aim for equal participation and representation of women in all spheres of life, fusing

the foundation of a democratic nation with the ideology of women's liberation.

Working throughout Rojava and Syria, Kongreya Star aims to be an example for the entire Middle East and to realise the women's liberation revolution across the entire region. Struggling against patriarchy and the accompanying family structure, we aim for the free-union of woman and man and a democratic family structure based on mutual will. Building from there, our goal is to overcome all forms of domination, power, ownership and sexism to establish a truly free society.



Communes and assemblies

Since the revolution, people in Rojava are building up a system of democratic confederalism in the three cantons, Afrîn, Kobanê and Cizîre. Democratic Confederalism is a system based on a network of small, local communes and assemblies in which people come together to self-organise their neighbourhoods and towns and to decide on their collective needs and concerns. This system is not based on the paradigm of the nation-state with its centralised, state organised democracy, but is rather a bottom-up, direct form of democracy. Communes and assemblies are the building blocks of this society, enabling the formation of a bottom-up democracy which represents everybody and places the needs of the people first.

Every neighbourhood and town in Rojava is organised in a commune. Depending on the size of the village or town, the communes in Rojava range from communes of seven to two hundred persons. In the canton Cizîre there are approximately six-hundred and twenty communes. In the canton Afrin there are five hundred and thirty communes and for Kobanê there are unfortunately no statistics available. The building-up of the communes is still in a starting-phase, because of the war. In Qamishlo, the largest town of the canton Cizîre there are ninety-eight communes. The number of communes continues to rise as more neighbourhoods and villages organise themselves in this way.

The communes come together on a regular basis to discuss and decide on collective matters such as the distribution of water and energy, solving social problems and the use of public space. The communes also organise training and education, such as first aid classes and reading and writing courses for adults. Every commune has an elected administration of at least three people that have a two-year term.

When problems in society arise, the commune is the first place where these problems are discussed and the members try to solve them collectively. Only when issues cannot be solved at the commune level, such as larger scale infrastructure, they are relegated to another level

of the self-administration, such as the city assembly or even the canton assembly. These assemblies consist of elected representatives from the communes. These representatives gain their legitimacy from the commune, guaranteeing the bottom-up nature of democracy.

Women's Communes

There are two networks of communes: one in which both men and women are represented, organised under the umbrella of the Society for a Democratic Society, (Tev-Dem) and another which represents the women of Rojava. This network of women's communes is the basis of Kongreya Star.

Within the women's communes, women are - often for the first time - encouraged to formulate their needs and desires and to collectively find solutions for them. In a society with a long tradition of patriarchy, where culture and religion have led both men and women to believe that women are not capable of taking any role or responsibility outside of the sphere of the home and the family, the creation of women's communes has played a fundamental role in the emancipation of women. Now women play an active role in public life, with participation rates in the communes averaging between fifty% and seventy% and in some neighbourhoods reaching hundred%.

There are five committees present in every commune, namely:

1. Education committee, tasked with providing practical and ideological training and education to all members of every commune. Besides the ideological training on the working and meaning of democratic confederalism, practical education, such as language classes, is also provided.

2. Health committee, which coordinates between the health services and the commune, but also provides education on first-aid, natural medicine and prenatal care. Through the work of the communes, sever-

al specialised women's health care centres have also been established.

3. Economy committee, strengthening the communal economy by supporting the commune's cooperatives, such as those that, use the common agricultural lands.

4. Problem-solving committee, which specialises in mediation in cases of conflicts, such as those between neighbours or in the family. It works on the principles of reconciliation, compensation and mutual agreement. In the women's communes these committees work together closely with the House of Women, an institute which is present in every large town or city, providing advanced conflict solution and juridical assistance to women in all types of conflict, including domestic violence..

5. Self-Defence committee, which is organised at the commune level by the People's Protection Units (HPC). These units consist of members, both men and women, of the commune that receive specialised training for this task. They provide security for their neighbourhoods in times of heightened conflict and coordinate closely with the security forces.

Communes form both the foundation and the safeguard of true democracy. They ensure that the needs of every community are met through collective decision making and they enable communities to organise collectively in whichever manner best fits their lifestyle. Based on the principle of self-sufficiency, communes play an essential role in building the basis of an ethical society, just as the women's communes form the building blocks of the women's organisation.



Education

After decades of suppression, the Rojava Revolution aims to rebuild society on the basis of an equal, democratic, bottom-up model of democratic confederalism. Educational institutions and academies are a vital component of this, as they allow society to acquire a basis of knowledge about its own history, culture, philosophy and social development. Education allows people to reflect on their perspectives and needs as they learn how to organise themselves in a democratic way.

The education committees of Kongreya Star are responsible for the organisation of the education of the women in the communes and assemblies as well as the organisation of the Star Academy. The goal of the education committees is threefold, namely, furthering the education of women, spreading awareness of women's topics in society at large and transforming existing structures of education. The larger objective of the committee of education is to make women wise again, in order to shed the attitudes towards men and women that serve patriarchy. When women regain their wisdom, they are able to play an active, positive role for the society and family.

Kongreya Star places particular importance on education, as it believes emancipation can only occur when one knows oneself and one's history. For decades, the Kurdish and other minority identities have been suppressed; under the Ba'ath regime Kurdish history and language courses were forbidden. Women are facing a similar suppression of their role in history, as history is too often written by and from the perspective of men. By focussing on the role of women, both historically and in present society, we aim to overcome the mentality that women are less capable and less knowledgeable than men. When one does not know oneself and has no confidence in oneself, one will always be subjected to the will of others. Education is an important means of self-defence against ideologies of dominance and an essential step towards achieving freedom.

Systems based on dominance like capitalism and patriarchy has

very deep personal and societal consequences. One example is the emphasis of capitalism on individualism, shaping the way people interact with each other, leading to competition and alienation instead of democratic cooperation. Without a deep analysis of how these systems influence individuals and society, we will not be able to overcome this hierarchy and dominance and build up an alternative understanding based on a democratic mentality. For the transformation of a system based on dominance to a society based on democracy and equality, education is essential. Changing perspectives, mentalities and ways of thinking are essential for gaining democracy and freedom. Despite being one of the hardest parts it is also one of the most essential parts of the Rojava revolution.

To date, nine central committees of education have been formed, in nine different towns, consisting of representatives of all the communes of these towns. These representatives receive education and training and in turn educate the women in their respective communes. The educational committees organise education and training for all women at the communal level, based on the proposals and wishes of these communes themselves. This education consists of language classes to promote literacy in the Kurdish language, history classes, education on the model of democratic confederalism, women's rights and societal sexism and other specialised courses. A broad range of topics are discussed during these classes, as well as the daily experiences of the participants, with the aim of finding collective improvements and solutions. The goal is not only to educate women, but also to empower them in their societal role and personal development.

In addition, Kongreya Star has opened the Star Academy, a women's academy, in Rimelan, where commune and assembly representatives as well as the women in the administration of Kongreya Star receive courses based on the specific needs and wishes of the group. The courses that are offered at the moment are:

- History of the Middle East
- History of Kurdistan
- Women's History
- Jineology
- Economy
- Law and Justice
- Diplomacy
- Gender-Equality,
- Philosophy,
- Philosophy of Abdullah Öcalan,
- Sexism within Society,
- Equality in Relationships,
- Regimes of Truth,
- Concepts and Analysis.

The programs last from 25 days to two and a half months. Besides this specialised women's academy, Kongreya Star provides courses within existing academies and universities on the topics of gender-equality, societal sexism, women's history, women's liberation and Jineology (science of women).

Within their courses, Kongreya Star places a strong emphasis on history. In particular, they focus on the analysis of how systems of dominance came into being and how societies before them, during the Neolithic, Mesolithic and Palaeolithic eras, were structured. We believe that the societies which existed before patriarchal and hierarchical systems

became predominant were centred on women. Analysing these topics is incredibly important, as a better understanding of history will lead to a better understanding of the contemporary.

The aim of Kongreya Star is not merely to include women in the existing framework of knowledge, but rather to question and reshape this framework all together; to overcome the hierarchy of knowledge and to change the nature of science and education. For example, when we speak about the role of women in the formation of language, it is not sufficient to merely add a few women to the list of language specialists. Rather, we aim to understand the mechanisms that lay at the basis of the dominance of men's language and of the exclusion of women from the history of this field by understanding the politics of power and truth regimes. In addition, we emphasize alternative ways of understanding language development, for example by focussing on oral history and the role that women (in particular mothers) play in the formation of language by storytelling and song.

Theoretical analysis is not the only focus within the education organised by Kongreya Star. In addition, it aims to encourage people's natural curiosity and to foster free thinking, breaking with a mentality of dominance, cultivating a historical consciousness and a continuous exchange between practice and theory. Within the courses provided by Kongreya Star, freedom and education are understood as collective processes. All education unfolds on the basis of participation, meaning that there is a focus on discussion, self-reflection and gaining a mutual understanding. All participants are encouraged to learn to express themselves and share their views and experiences.

Education is not only important for women, it is important for the whole of the society, including men. Under the patriarchal mentality, men too have lost parts of their freedom and autonomy. They have, for example, lost the freedom of emotional expression, as this is not considered masculine. They have not been taught how to do housework, or how to take care of themselves, of the children, of the elderly or the ill. When women's roles in society change, naturally the roles of men must

change as well. It is necessary to provide men with the tools to deal with this change and the tools to be able to participate in the new society.

Furthermore, education is an important means of self-defence. To know oneself, one's culture and language and to be able to discuss ethics and politics, to gain self-consciousness and develop one's personality are important weapons to be able to struggle against systems of dominance – especially in a region where languages and cultures have long been suppressed. Education also promotes resilience against the capitalist mentality of exploitation, which alienates people from their culture and society. Through education, people learn critical reflection and are able to come up with ideas and solutions for problems in society. This way, people recognise their own power to organise and take responsibility for society, which is fundamental for a democratic, self-organised and ethically just society. Providing men and women with education is the first step towards achieving freedom.



Economy

The water of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers makes Rojava the breadbasket of Syria. Rojava is incredibly fertile and rich in resources such as oils. There has always been agriculture and mining in the region; however, under the Assad regime local people were not allowed to process the raw resources themselves. The centrally planned economy led to a monoculture in agriculture and the disappearance of industry, breaking down the production chain of the local economy. Currently, the on-going war and international embargo from neighbouring countries limits the possibilities to import vitally needed products, as well as to export goods and develop Rojava's economy.

In this difficult situation, there are however many initiatives to rebuild the economy on a just basis, providing for the daily needs of the population. These initiatives are based on the need to build an ethical, ecological economy based on self-sustainability and community in line with the overall model of democratic confederalism. The economy that is being built up is a communal economy, based on the bottom-up organisation of society in communes and democratic assemblies. A communal economy puts the needs of the society first. Kongreya Star supports the foundations of a communal economy that is organised according to the collective needs of the people by supporting the creation of women's cooperatives. Building up a local, self-sufficient economy as well as a system of subsistence agriculture makes it possible to tackle unemployment and poverty and evade famine.

For Rojava, which is a historically agricultural society, a communal economy isn't a foreign concept. There is a history and culture that supports organising the economy in this way. Thus, the process of building up a cooperative economy is rather a revitalisation than a building process. A communal economy is different from a capitalist economy, in which the needs of and profits for a small group of individuals are more important than the needs of the society as a whole. In a capitalist economy, the profits and the power to organise the laws of trade and production lie in the hands of a small elite and this creates inequality

and promotes competition instead of cooperation. A capitalist economy leads to the exploitation of both nature and people, to poverty and even to war. As long as the economy is not in the hands of the people, democracy will not be possible. Therefore, the economy is a field of special significance for Kongreya Star.

Women's Cooperatives

For Kongreya Star, the organisation of an economy that includes women and their perspectives is of vital importance. Historically, women have been an integral part within the economy. For thousands of years, women have organised society and economics based on the needs of their families and their communities. They have played a fundamental role in reproductive and productive work, in particular in agriculture. Yet with the advent of capitalism and class society, their role has been limited and unacknowledged and the economy regarded as the sphere of men. In order to break this dominance of the few over the many, of men over women, we need a different type of economy: a communal economy. This will lead to both the emancipation of women as they retake their roles within the economy and of the emancipation of the society as a whole as it must focus on the needs of the community.

At the moment, Kongreya Star supports the building up of women's cooperatives in three fields: agriculture, animal husbandry and production and sales. We have thus far realised nine agricultural cooperatives, two animal husbandry cooperatives and a vast variety of cooperatives in the field of production and sales including three tailor cooperatives, two second-hand clothes shops, three bakeries, a restaurant, a cheese-maker, a general store and a cooperative that pickles vegetables. There are also cooperatives planting fruit trees, a practise which was forbidden under the Ba'ath regime. The cooperatives vary in size depending on the nature of the activity, with the smallest involving only four women and the largest two hundred. Within the Canton Cîzîre only, the women's cooperatives provide more than thousand women (and their families) with a steady livelihood and this number is constantly growing.

The cooperatives supported by the economic committees of Kongreya Star are women's cooperatives, but mixed gender cooperatives exist as well. They are supported by Tev-Dem and in these too the participation of women on all levels is an essential value. The women working in both types of cooperatives are workers as well as owners. Together they are responsible for the organisation and decision-making process of the cooperative and all members participate in decisions. Working and living together, sharing and supporting each other are all essential values of the cooperatives.

It is important that in the communal economy, production meets the geographical, material and cultural needs of the society. The organisation of cooperatives lies in the hands of the communes and therefore they work to produce in a manner that does not harm the environment of the commune or the health of the people. In a communal economy there is no oppression or exploitation. The people work together to tackle the needs of the society as discussed in the communes on a basis of mutual respect, friendship, effort and democracy. That everybody can equally participate in the collective life and work are important values for an ethical and just society. These are the values that lie at the basis of both democratic society and communal economy.

The cooperatives also promote self-confidence, as women realise their own capacities and abilities, carry responsibility and solve problems together. For many women who have not worked outside of the family structure this is an incredibly empowering experience, increasing their self-confidence and thereby changing the structure of society. Kongreya Star therefore promotes the education of women and aids them in setting up women's cooperatives, gaining the experiences that are important not only for the economy, but for building up a communal, collective life at the basis of an ethical, politically just and democratic society.



Self-defence

One of the most well-known images of Rojava is that of the women in the Women's Defence Units (YPJ) bravely defending the people of Rojava against continuous attacks by ISIS. Self-defence is one of the cornerstones of the Rojava Revolution and the model of Democratic Confederalism. Kongreya Star regards self-defence not merely in military terms, but as a holistic practice that includes the autonomous organisation of women and the build-up of democracy.

Self-defence is a natural characteristic of all life. A flower protects itself with thorns; a chameleon changes colour according to its environment; a turtle can retract inside its shell. Societies have always adapted and changed in order to defend themselves against attacks. However, with the emergence of the nation-state, self-defence has become part of the monopoly of the state. This monopoly of self-defence includes both military and society. The state has taken on the responsibility of defending its citizens against famine, sickness, poverty and war, but often fails in these duties. Even worse, the state itself is often the main perpetuator of violence against its citizens, as the Kurdish people have experienced over decades of oppression and persecution.

The destruction of the ability to defend one's self marks the start of oppression. This becomes very clear in the example of Kurdistan: the oppression and persecution of the people in Kurdistan reached the current level of mass oppression after the genocides in the twenties of the last century. Concurrent with the application of policies of assimilation and displacement, laws forbidding weapons came into force. The Kurdish society was stripped of its ability to defend itself, which opened the way for hard oppression.

Self-defence is crucial to women in particular, as historically they have endured the most violence. They are faced with rape, (domestic) violence, honour killings and murder. These forms of violence are closely tied to an ideology of sexism which creates a broader culture of violence that includes psychological violence, structural economic discrimination

against women, capitalist objectification of women and political under-representation. The assault women face both on their physical, mental, psychological integrity as well on the ability to develop her and develop her own thoughts, feelings and will are enormous. When faced with systemic sexism under the patriarchal and capitalist nation-state, women need to self-organise in order to fight all systems of oppression. The ideology of societal sexism and the system of patriarchy are based on the destruction of the ability to self-defence. Therefore the reconstruction of the ability to defence oneself is essential in building up a society based on democracy and the freedom of women.

In the holistic approach of self-defence of Kongreya Star, organising, the education of women, cultural self-determination, promoting the role of women in the economy, the inclusion of women's rights in law, equal representation in all political levels and the promotion of women's perspectives in all fields of society are considered crucial components of self-defence.

There are three protection forces of women active in Rojava: the military women's self-defence forces - the Women's Defence Units (YPJ), the women's security-forces (Asayish a Jin) and the women civil self-defence forces connected to the communes, the HPC. All of these women are trained in the use of various weapons - a very real neces-



sity as Rojava is still under the constant threat of ISIS and other jihadist organisations. Both the security-forces and the communal self-defence forces of the HPC assist the YPJ in times of increased military activity. For example, the HPC may take over tasks such as operating city check points while security forces are engaged in heavier military activity. They also provide support to the YPJ at the frontlines against ISIS. We believe that every member of society should be able to defend him or herself in cases of attacks. The genocide of the Ezidis in Şengal at the hands of ISIS served as a painfully clear reminder of this necessity. The state military forces were unable to prevent this genocide, and this failure now functions as a stark warning for the women of Rojava, who have organised themselves in order to educate and support themselves in self-defence and military tactics.

In each commune there is a self-defence committee, tasked with ideological education, psychological training of defensibility, and the practical training of the HPC. The HPC is made up of members of the commune, usually parents and grandparents. Therefore, they are aware of what happens in the communes and are generally the first force to intervene in local issues. The HPC focuses on providing neighbourhood security and guarding events such as commemorations or celebrations.



They also work closely with local security forces (Asayish a Jin). The main objective of the women of HPC is to restore the mentality of self-defence.

Like the women of the YPJ and the police forces, the women of the HPC form their own autonomous groups. They in particular are tasked with intervening in events of mistreatment or violence against women, as well as setting up mechanisms for the prevention of such violence. The core of preventing violence against women is the education of all members of the commune, from ideology to literacy and strengthening the role of women through including them in the structures of the communes.

In cases of violations of the Women's Law of 2014 which, among others, forbids underage and forced marriages, physical violence against women and the tradition of dowry, the HPC aims to resolve conflicts through discussions and peaceful means. However, when this is impossible, the HPC works together with the security forces to make arrests to stop the violence. They also work closely with the House of Women, an institution present in every larger town. The House of Women provides training to men and women on women's rights, advanced conflict mediation and support for women in legal cases that women may file under the Women's Law.

The holistic approach of Kongreya Star has created a structure and culture which allows women to speak out against violence. The military training has also had a strong positive impact on the psychological security of women, especially in a society where women who spoke out about violence were most often silenced. Now women are actively speaking out, changing laws and traditions, searching for solutions, educating themselves and regarding themselves as equal partners to men. The organisation of women's self-defence has taught women not only how to defend themselves against physical attacks, but also against a mentality and broader practice of sexism.

Culture and art

Culture and art have played important roles within Kurdish society throughout history. Especially in times of severe cultural, political, and military oppression, art has been used as a means to keep the Kurdish identity and cultural consciousness alive. Since a long time, more as twenty-five years, work in the field of culture and art is being accomplished in Rojava and women played a vanguard role in this work. Theatre, music and folklore groups and women's folklore and music groups have existed since long before the Rojava Revolution. These groups play a positive role in the society. Since the revolution in Rojava, Kongreya Star has worked to strengthen art as a piece of Rojava's democratic culture, as well as promoting the diversity of cultures and languages of the region.

Art and culture encompass all the ways in which meaning, mentality, feeling, consciousness and societal traditions are expressed and enabled. Religion, philosophy, mythology, science and art all integral parts of culture. Culture therefore plays an important role in establishing systems of dominance, as it influences how people are able or allowed to express themselves. Although often considered a 'soft power', establishing control over culture can be one of the most extreme forms of violence against a people. Control over culture means control over the way citizens think, speak and express themselves and the search for power often means strictly oppressing anyone who expresses themselves in a way different from the dominant norm.

The development of the nation-state system grew hand in hand with the process of nation building. Through centralized mass schooling programs, military conscription and the creation of national symbols, holidays and traditions, national identities were created. This process however generally included the severe repression of minority identities, languages and cultures. In all four states where large numbers of Kurds have traditionally resided, they have experienced the severe repression of these assimilation policies throughout history. This process continues today. War is fought on many fronts and psychological warfare is just as

important as military war. Television, music, movies and all other forms of art can be used to influence the mind-sets of people. In the end, the war fought in the mind of every citizen can be even more devastating than physical warfare, as it can lead to the elimination of an entire culture.

The assimilation policies against Kurdish culture and language under the Syrian regime have been so severe that before the revolution in Rojava, Kurdish languages were not allowed to be taught or used in schools or public life. Despite these attempts to stifle anything Kurdish, the suppression of women in education, economy, politics and other fields of the Syrian nation-state actually allowed them to keep their traditional culture and non-dominant languages such as Kurdish and Assyrian alive. It was therefore the mothers who continued speaking Kurdish with their children, singing Kurdish lullabies and telling Kurdish folk stories, breathing life into the Kurdish language and culture.

The emphasis on opening up possibilities of free cultural expression is therefore of great significance in Rojava and should be regarded as a form of cultural self-defence. It is, however, not only the Kurdish culture that is promoted and protected by Kongreya Star. Central to the ideology of Kongreya Star is respect for and promotion of the diversity of society. Arab, Assyrian, Ezidis and other cultures in Rojava should all be able to learn and speak their own languages and express their own culture and religion. Therefore, Kongreya Star makes a concerted effort to accommodate all of these different cultures and languages. For example, all communication for both Kongreya Star and the Self-Administration is done in three languages: Arab, Kurdish and Assyrian. For reviving a democratic society, the promotion of a democratic way of thinking and feeling through culture and art is of key importance.

In Rojava, Tev-Çand coordinates the activities in the field of culture and art, like the work in cultural centres and in the establishing of groups, theatre, folklore, music, cinema, and academies. Every village and city has a cultural centre where all cultural activities are hosted and coordinated. Within these centres, different groups practice and per-

form theatre, folklore dance, music, painting, and sculpture, many of which were banned before the revolution. Kongreya Star has, in collaboration with existing committees, established the committee Tev-Çand-Jin in 2015, which organises cultural activities for and by women. Under the coordination of Tev-Çand-Jin a women's coordination in all cultural centres has been established and an academy for culture and art for women will be established to strengthen the work in culture and art for and by women. Tev-Çand-Jin, for example, organises cultural festivals in which women of all cultural denominations come together to share and perform poetry, stories, theatre, and songs.

Women are faced with a significantly different reality than men and have different ways of expressing their reality and aspirations through art. As historically, women are the ones who keep traditional art and culture forms alive, passing those down to the next generation, they have become the vanguard of art. At the same time, women face other forms of repression under systems of patriarchy and capitalism, which devalue their art forms such as embroidery as mere handicrafts or pastimes. Therefore, Tev-Çand-Jin has taken upon itself the responsibility to elevate women's art and promote women's perspectives on art in society, as it sees the historically significant role of women in the promotion of diversity and democratic values.

Finally, the cultural centres promote activities for children, as art and play are crucial in learning how to communicate and work together in a democratic way. Despite these efforts and improvements, the children in Rojava still face much adversity and violence, growing up in a society plagued by oppression and war. Theatre, music, sculpture, painting, film, and dance are media that enable children to deal with these experiences in a positive way.



Jineology

Jineology is a redevelopment of the social sciences from the female perspective. It builds upon the knowledge developed within the women's movement, analysing existing theories concerning women, society and life. In addition, it also addresses the ideological and societal problems that all women face.

Existing dominant ideologies and power structures such as patriarchy, capitalism, orientalism and the nation-state system are embedded and reinforced by dominant knowledge production systems. Positivism, the central method of these systems, is based on 'neutrality', 'objectivity' and verification through mathematics and prescribed ways of observation. This way of knowledge production reduces the complexity of reality and human experience to something calculable. It also privileges certain forms of knowing over others, thereby deeming non-privileged voices as incapable of finding or voicing truth. By reproducing existing power relations, social sciences based on positivism perpetuate the status quo of hierarchies: mind over body, human over nature, west over east, north over south, white over black, man over woman.

Positivism encourages a distance between the observed reality and the observer. Historically this neutral observer has been the white man, while women -- and other marginalised groups -- were reduced to objects to be studied, without acknowledgement of their experiences or knowledge. This science can therefore be called neither objective nor completely accurate. Jineology aims to break down this hierarchy through studying life from the perspective and experiences of women and therefore accepting and adopting a point of view deeply embedded in struggle.

The existing social sciences reproduce systems of dominance and can't give answers to crucial questions; therefore a revolution in science is necessary. Jineology can be considered as this revolution. Jineology aims to make knowledge production and science part of life, closing the supposed 'critical distance.' 'Jin' is the Kurdish word for women, com-

ing from the same root as 'Jiyan', which means life. Instead of reducing life to observable or calculable variables, Jineology asks questions about how to find and give meaning to life. In the existing social sciences there is no space for such a kind of questions; questions where there are more as one possible answer and which can't be answered in an absolute way are excluded. But these questions are important, to be able to live, questions and research about the meaning of life are essential. If these questions can't be answered life loses its meaning and becomes technical.

Jineology aims to redefine the identity of women, not by changing the binary structure of weak women and strong men, but by surpassing it and creating new options for a female identity as both strong and caring, simultaneously. With the emergence of patriarchy women lost their identity and got identities and roles which don't reflect the identity of women. Only denying the identity and roles patriarchy gave to women is not enough. For a revolution of women a perception of the identity of women is needed. Therefore one task of Jineology is 'the archaeology of women': the identity of women has been put under earth and archaeology of women should dig the identity of women out in the visibility again. Breaking the hierarchical, binary system of patriarchy requires deep reflection and practice.

Another objective of Jineology is to form a theoretical basis which makes equal partnership between men and women possible. Freedom of men and women is an essential condition. Equal relationships based on mutual respect won't be possible as long as societal sexism influences the thoughts and feelings of men and women. A long struggle, education, reflection and theoretical work will be needed to overcome these attitudes. New relationships, based on equality are a requirement for a democracy. By seeing each other as human above all, before gender, we are able to form and develop new relationships. By thinking and acting free from the constraint of patriarchy, both men and women can find ways to live and work together in equality and freedom.

Because dominant knowledge production systems only serve to reinforce existing power relations, they have never been able to solve

actual societal problems. Instead, they simply perpetuate existing problems resulting from the realities of patriarchy. By delinking research and knowledge production from the power relations that cause these problems, Jineology aims to address the problems that women face every day. It aims to simultaneously create new ways of thinking as well as implementing new ways of acting.

In order for a revolution of women's liberation to succeed, a deep shift of power relations and structures of knowledge production must occur. Basic reforms such as equal pay or political representation will not be enough as long as the underlying ideas about what truth is and who wields it are not changed. Many revolutionary movements have fought for structural change in society, but none so far have been able to overturn the underlying patriarchal structure

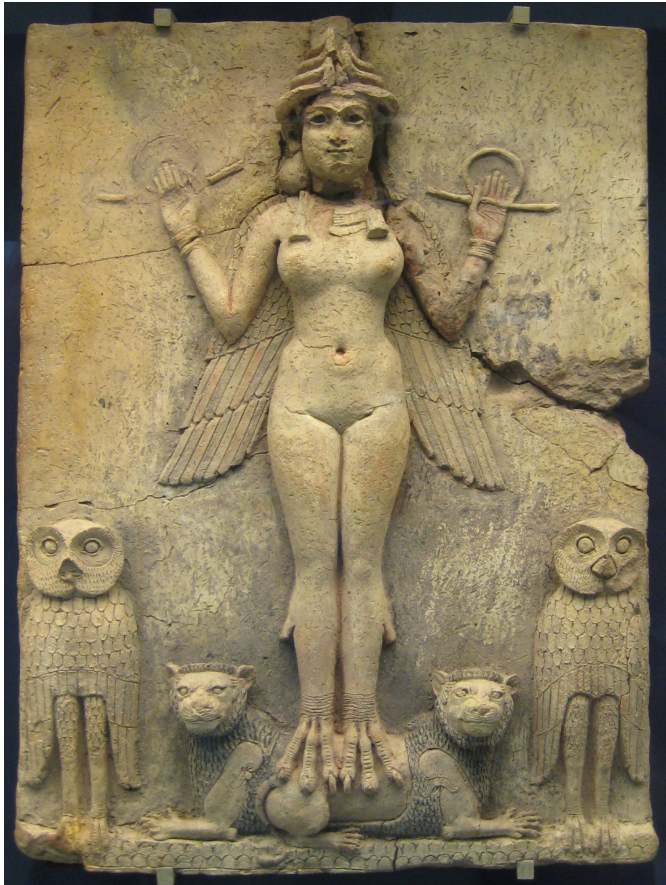
And yet there is a historical, material base that gave rise to the emergence of the hierarchical structure of patriarchy in the first place. To understand the emergence of patriarchy, to understand how and what was lost, we must be able to consider a society without patriarchy, based on equality instead of hierarchy. Especially in moments of rapid change, such as revolution, an ethical social science that reflects, explains and steers is essential. Such an approach may allow us to revitalise society again in an ethical, political way. To remember, imagine and enact the truth of a society based on communality, democracy, equality, freedom and harmony is the goal of Jineology.

As a social science, Jineology plays a large role in redefining the standards of aesthetics and ethics, including working to redefine the identity of women and in making women conscious and knowledgeable. In this way, Jineology lays an important foundation for the women's struggle.

Jineology aims to learn from historical and contemporary feminist and women's movements worldwide and to further the struggle for women's liberation. It regards itself as both a continuation of the feminist struggle and as an alternative to a branch of feminism which has

not broken with capitalism -- and therefore existing structures of (male) dominance -- in a fundamental way.

The revolution in Rojava can be called a women's revolution. Jineology reflects, learns and analyses this as well as other revolutions and struggles as a basis for furthering the revolution in Rojava. As a social science from the perspective of women, it offers a broad perspective and important feedback to the revolutionary movement, strengthening strategies, aims and organisational methods. However, rather than passively observing from a distance like many other social sciences, Jineology takes its place in the middle of this struggle, co-creating knowledge of this struggle while simultaneously participating in the very struggle



itself.

Diplomacy

The revolution in Rojava can be considered a women's revolution and the model implemented in Rojava is unique in offering a chance to democracy, equality and freedom in Rojava, Syria and the entire Middle East. One of the 10 committees of Kongreya Star is the committee of diplomacy. Its goal is to share the ideals and experiences of Rojava with other (women's) organisations inside and outside of Rojava and to build strong relationships of solidarity with women of all religions and ethnicities.

Within the nation-state system diplomacy is often regarded as the negotiation of international relations between states based on geo-political and economic interests. Diplomacy is one the ways in which states aim to increase their strategic, political and economic interests, for example by negotiations enforcing army bases during peace negotiations or access to new markets for multinational companies with economic treaties. Although diplomacy is often associated with peace negotiations or non-violence, this type of diplomacy of power can be seen as the continuation of war by other means. A war with the ultimate goal of the domination of people and nature.

The kind of diplomacy Kongreya Star is striving for is not a diplomacy based on the domination of another people or territory but rather a people's diplomacy based on equal relations based on solidarity and friendship. Instead of politics of isolation and division, it aims to a coming together of the people in solidarity regardless of existing state borders.

Rojava is a pluralistic society which will be celebrated instead of suppressed by the model of democratic confederalism that Kongreya Star pursues. In order to create a pluralistic unity, strong relationships between all women and women's organisations in Rojava and Syria at large are crucial. Foreign powers have historically aimed to use the peaceful heterogeneity of the Middle East to divide people for their own benefits. Combined with a culture of dominance and patriarchy this has created dictatorships and oppression. The only defence against all possible threats is the rebuilding of good relationships between Assyrian, Ezidi, Arab and Kurdish women. This is the only way towards democracy,

as this is based on a mutual life, a mutual understanding and unity that at the same time preserves the different ethnic and religious identities present. Kongreya Star seeks to develop a joint life of women and peoples on the basis of solidarity and political and economic partnership. To accomplish this, the committee of diplomatic relations works towards the building of alliances with all women and women's organisations in Rojava and Syria. At the same time it aims to establish strong relationships between the women's organisations in the four parts of Kurdistan.

Creating solidarity is fundamentally different than asking for aid or support. Solidarity is based on mutual exchange. In Rojava we have many accomplishments and experiences which we like to share with women all over the world. We consider the model of democratic confederalism based on ecology and the freedom of women universally applicable and believe that other women and women's movements can learn of our experiences in their own struggle as the root of the problems that women everywhere faces are similar. Many of the strategies we have developed such as the co-leadership, the alternative economy we are building up, the radical decentralised democratic structure of commune and councils, the experiences of the women's defence forces (YPG) can be of adapted in other localities. We actively study other women's movements and are also eager to learn from the particular struggles and strategies of other women.

Kongreya Star aims to build strong connections with all women and women's movements as well as all democratic, anti-capitalist or anti-fascist organisations. We see the struggle against patriarchy and the model of democratic confederalism as universal and therefore we strive for a joint struggle, overcoming divisions.

Experiences in Rojava: Interview with an anarchist YPG volunteer

We met and interviewed a person who travelled to Rojava to be a volunteer in the Peoples' Protection Units (YPG). We present this interview anonymously, as wished by the person interviewed.

What inspired you to travel to Rojava and join the YPG?

Different aspects, but it connected me and others to our own historical roots such as antifascism, or revolutionary internationalism.

Were you in the International Battalion?

I wasn't in any specific international battalion, just with the YPG/YPJ taburs [Kurdish battallions] formed mostly by Kurds, but also with other people, including other internationals. There is also the International Freedom Battalion, a tabur or battalion inside the YPG/YPJ's structure, with the participation of different socialist and communist volunteers. Personally, I didn't have contacts with them, and they are mostly marxist-leninists.

How important are political ideas of the movement (ie. Democratic Confederalism) inside the YPG?

There's a big variety in the groups. For example the youth from Rojava are all getting new ideas through recent developments, but are still not quite understanding politics or the global perspective, and remain nationalist. Whereas, for example, Kurds from Bakur or Qandil are already very revolutionary, and most of them have a high level of political consciousness and analytical capacity.

Can you tell us about daily life in the YPG and it's command structure?

In general, daily life in the Kurdish defense units is not very similar to any army. Sometimes you forget it's a war because of the friendships and the happiness... and dancing! The feeling of revolution is really alive.

The units put a lot of importance on communitarian relations based on Democratic Confederalism. In this model the idea is that the defense force is not an army - it is a popular militia, a guerrilla force.

The command structure is a common responsibility. For example, the komutan (commander) are the only degree of rank. Actually it's better to call it the co-commander, because above the level of team, the position is shared between a man and a woman. And whether you are the commander of a 5 person team or a tabur commander (a battalion), your position is only a task. The friends will follow your suggestions and direction because there is respect for the structure. You are in that position by consensus and because of your experience, and the rest of the friends recognize the person most suitable for the task.

The komutan is like the basis, or foundation, of the structure because they are the link, the articulation of the common body, and the collective brain. There is a huge responsibility to be a komutan, no matter the number of friends under your responsibility. Because of this, the figure of komutan is respected and they don't even need, usually, to give any direct orders. It is not necessary. They must at least show the correct ethics and discipline, and intelligence and courage in battle.

The rest of friends will fight following their direction, and in the space for Tekmil [military self-

criticism assembly, see below] everyone can participate to discuss the tactics, and mistakes. Of course the commander-friends are human and make mistakes... and that is the moment to change their position, or send them to rest and to have some military and ideology study time. This military system that comes from the school of Qandil's Kurdish guerrillas is the most advanced in the aspect of guerrilla history and of revolution in the art of war.

Also, there is no formal show of hierarchy such as military decorations or salutations, the only formality is the use of "friend" before the name of others, because that reminds us that we are all friends before all else, so we respect each other and resolve any conflicts in the spirit of friendship.

What is the military assembly or Tekmil? Can you elaborate?

The Tekmil is an assembly for critique, where you can give friendly and constructive critique to your commander or others in your unit, and also criticize yourself. But mostly you will receive critique and you must be up for understanding it and learn to be better. This is to take care of checking bad behaviour, to avoid personal conflicts, or small problems with attitude that can develop into conflicts. I saw few punishments or repression; if there is a conflict, there is a lot of talk instead. Of course this is just the model, and for most of the friends from Rojava this is the first time they are learning about this, and where they had their first contact with political ideas.

But you can bring up anything to anyone at Tekmil. A major aim of it is to challenge your perspective, and get away from your ego. Making a critique is thus a great responsibility - to you, and towards the person you direct your critique to - and you should look for a solution and take responsibility for that solution.

This is very similar to the criticism that happens in Tev-Dem, the self-government assembly, where you take something practical and open it up to philosophical discussion. Here you can really see the Kurdish movement evolving.

What are your thoughts on joining the YPG and the training you participated in?

The YPG academy has a lot of ideological, political, and historical education. It also included philosophy and its own Jineology classes (sociology of women). It's really like a academy. One's education there can be short or long, it depends. I was in the academy for a month and a half. The military academy is pretty basic. There are a lot of daily life routines, with an emphasis on how to stay in a team and work together, such as self-discipline and cleaning weapons. There are also academies for specialist military skills like sabotage and sniping.

Did you just spend your time in fighting units? Did you participate in any revolutionary aspect of social organization?

No, though it's hard to say where the limits of "civilian" or "social" structures are in a revolutionary situation. Everyone is in a process of education and self-education, building tools for self-government. Every institution has its own autonomy and in some cases its own interests. This can seem like a huge chaos and full of contradictions, but the confederal system keeps it self-regulating. The Tev-Dem and the people's self defense, the HPC (Hêza Parastina Cewherî), are the most revolutionary aspects in my opinion - it provides the people with their own tools to defend themselves against even the YPG interests, the Canton's institutions - government-etc.

Did you witness a Tev-Dem assembly taking place?

Yes, I saw an assembly but did not participate. I was rather engaged with the Tekmil assemblies in the military context.

The assembly self-government model is forming a really strong basis for the revolution. How assemblies

are created is that if an issue or new social or interest group comes up, one must make an assembly. If another interest or issue comes along, an assembly can be made within the first assembly. The assembly also needs to follow gender quotas; the equality of women is in all aspects of society. Actually the canton's coordination imposes that if a social group, tribe or village makes an assembly, for example, to manage some cooperative farms, they must also have a women's assembly that reflects the women's view about it, and that the people in charge must not be only one, that normally used to be a patriarch, but rather there has to be a co-leadership shared by a man and a woman. So there is a shared leadership position of the co-delegates; the woman represents the local women's autonomous movement. Involving the people in an assembly system to resolve their own problems is the best way to think about revolution...and keeps them away from the TV!

It has been stated that building an ecological society is one of the primary goals of Rojava Revolution. What did you see in terms of ecology and the ecology movement?

They don't understand too much in terms of ecology, in my experience. People from the mountains or Bakur know what it means to act sustainably and with the nature in mind, but in Rojava or Syria in general, not so much. A common experience was to hear that "Rojava is beautiful!" but then see plastic trash burning somewhere.

In terms of real projects, Qamislo has a food sovereignty project, and Kobane has different proposals - and needs! - but needs volunteers. They need people! Not only to visit, but for serious projects and proposals to build a new society and new infrastructure.

However, a lot of people from Bakur and Iran are already mobilized and supporting social and ecological projects in Rojava.

What about the cooperative economy movement? Did you visit any cooperative farms, factories or workplaces?

Personally, I noticed that big landowners have escaped because they supported the regime, ISIS, or Barzani. Those lands were collectivized by the YPG/YPJ, and this includes some huge cement factories managed by foreign Turkish and French corporations, that had Syrian workers from western parts of the country. This was tied to the program of arabization of Kurdish regions during the Syrian Regime. Also there are some empty villages, and the Kurdish organizations called on refugees to not leave and go to Europe, but instead come there and be cooperative owners of their own land and work.

But all of these experiments are limited; there are not enough people, the war puts everything in a fragile situation, there is an embargo that has stopped all investments in infrastructure, they don't have qualified and committed people like volunteer technicians and engineers, the territory is destroyed by years of intensive monoculture, the people themselves are socially and culturally destroyed... Also there are different interests inside the "Kurdish" reality. But even on this subject, some time ago I saw a text on the internet, like a call to action to help them to learn and study, and to put in practice, different historical or political socialization models. I'm not sure if it was some socialist or anarcho-syndicalist union working on this, I think traditional "revolutionary" movements and structures are watching the events in Kurdistan from a distance, they are not involved because it is a completely new paradigm of social revolution.

I saw lot of critiques on the "mixed" economy in Rojava, and the capitalism in Rojava, as well as the class interests that must lead the revolution to become a Revolution. There are a lot of socialists and anarchists of different political strains and tendencies, talking in forums and meetings about this, but very few are going there to work with them to build socialism. Although people in Rojava don't need foreign socialists to teach them what to do, they rather need to build their own reality for themselves.

There is not more economic socialism in Rojava than what the local people want to build, such as the

cooperatives that are working like socialist communities. The canton governments and armed structures cannot impose the socialization of production and economy. They cannot do it and they don't want to do it, so remembering this we can have a better approach to the reality in Rojava. They do have regulations over the economy and social planning programs, but if the people want to live in capitalist relations, there are not many possibilities other than for pedagogic intervention to change people's perspectives.

There is cooperative and collective interest and support appearing thanks to the revolution, so we are at the beginning of the process of education and a process to build new social relations. Maybe we will need the next half a century of new struggles to see the fruits of these seeds.

The Kurdish movement has great respect for its martyrs. What are your thoughts on martyrship?

Martyrs and martyrdom are part of daily life for the Kurdish people and the revolutionaries. In the Middle East, but lost in Europe, the philosophy that martyrs don't die continues to live in the communal mind. This is because the martyrs gave their lives for all of us, they sacrificed for our life and our freedom. That is sacred, and it is spiritual because it trespasses the material interest of the individual. Many show respect for martyrs by showing an image of them in events, and remembering them in salutations.

I know that this is a shock for our individualist mind, that we prefer to take care of our own asses first, and that being a martyr sounds like something fanatical, not like the highest category a person can be. But is true, our martyrs don't die! Their blood never touches the ground!

Is Rojava really so ideal? Do you have any criticisms of the revolutionary process in Rojava?

If I look back on my experience now, it seems ideal. But you can also see a hard reality and lot of contradictions, and sometimes you can even feel that there is more to the aims and propaganda than in reality. There is a process with an honest intention, but it has a lot of problems to confront in reality.

We experienced a shock to our perception of reality in Rojava. I think that we arrived there with a backpack of idealistic and romantic views about the revolution, but in reality you need to build the revolution if you want it, and that means sometimes accepting that not everyone around you has the same idea of revolution and sometimes they cannot even understand why you came there to fight.

We are engaged in a democratic revolution, in the sense that no-one will impose anything upon another. This is totally opposed to the 'proletarian dictatorship' conception of revolution, definitely. This democratic conception accepts working with our own people, and other tendencies, that in many cases are the strongly opposed to our idea of revolution, or have practices opposite to our ethics.

Yes, the gangs of Daesh and the Turkish state are bad people, everybody there agrees, but you can also see racist attitudes against Arabs, and all those 'circumstantial alliances' one day with USA, another with Russia and the Syrian regime. And some people are always trying to get positions of power, just like in any other part of the world.

Democratic Confederalism is against nationalism, but the nationalist idea is alive in most of the Kurdish people. This is not only about Kurdish national rights, that must be respected and defended, but about some positions and perspectives that do not care for the reality and struggles of others. Another criticism is the opportunistic use of capitalism we talked about before, and the so-called "mixed economy", but I cannot think of any other economic system for that situation, so I only remind of this criticism because we have some comrades that insist on it.

It is also important to understand that the armed structures of Kurds come from a stalinist tradition, and that they did a deep, collective self-criticism and are in a process towards a libertarian ethic, thanks to

the confederalist idea and the culture of criticism. But that is a process, and although large parts of the movement are not following the stalinist model anymore, you can see it continuing in some practices like personal hierarchies and other roles.

Would you want to go back?

I wouldn't go back, but who knows... The situation in Rojava is not comfortable, in the sense that there is a hard war, and you should not have other reasons for being involved in the war than your own. I needed to go there to find a perspective on and a sense of our struggles and our lives, but now it is the time for others to do it. We need a generation with new perspectives, since our movements and environments lost the perspective long time ago.

Many Kurdish friends, in different situations, repeated the same thing to me: "Return to your people and continue the same fight over there", "We don't need Western martyrs, we need a revolution in Western countries!" So personally I absorbed the learning and experience in Rojava, and now is the time to see what is happening in our Western countries with this growth of racism and fascism.

Can you tell us about other international volunteers in Rojava and especially were there many women among them?

Many foreigners without political ideas, or former military men, become revolutionaries over there. It's good to remember that people can become conscious to these ideas when surrounded by revolution, and can fight and spread ideas.

A few foreign women come to fight, but I didn't see any of them personally. However, compared to men, the number was very small, anecdotic. We have an internationalist woman martyr, a marxist Euro-African woman, who fought in the International Battalion. And certainly there are much more from other non-Western countries, like Turkish, Arab, or Iranian women. But it is a weak point for the "white western" feminism that there is not enough active involvement in this women's revolution, sadly.

What are your thoughts on Jineology and feminism?

The social science of Jineology (sociology or anthropology of the Woman) explains how the mankind lost a lot of their old nature because of the onset of hierarchical civilization, through the break from communitarian life, men becoming soldiers, priests, workers, etc. Even slaves, but remaining lords of their own house and wife.

Jineology argues that mankind can recover their nature through women's liberation and through communitarian life. However, this is an issue that I'm not too deep in at the moment. It is very complex, but also interesting to study and discuss. It is a new idea for humanity. We have understood our history as the history of Man, and sociology as the social science of a patriarchal society, but now emerging from years of study and discussion by the Free Women's Union in the mountains, we have a new tool to understand the evolution of power with history, and the role of women in it. Jineology is a tool for liberation because that history is also a history of the resistance of women, that we have to learn and know. Jineology is also a rupture with the tradition of Western liberal feminism.

Those inspired by Jineology are breaking with Western feminism because for them, Jineology is much more deep in its analysis; it is not partial and doesn't have tendencies of interpretations or interest groups, but it is integral and universal.

It also has an important factor: Jineology is being put in to practice through autonomous women's organizations and co-delegations in the administrative and political management of the communities. It is a real social practice, not just the thesis of some intellectual bourgeoisie women, or the lifestyle of hedonist youngsters. For example, Jineology and the Kurdish women's movement in Rojava criticize

Western feminism because it was taken into the hands of modernity and positivism, and has broken ties with communitarian life to become individualistic.

I think that Jineology is a good tool to provoke a restructuring of Western (liberal and radical) feminism, especially since any new ideas around the Woman and Revolution haven't appeared in decades. We have revolutionary feminist comrades, but the feminism itself is not revolutionary anymore. Real practice is revolutionary, much more than ideas or aesthetics. Also, I do have to say that the Free Women's Movement from Kurdistan has more conscience in the radical analysis of hierarchical civilization and domination, and has much more of an internationalist and libertarian perspective than the rest of the men in the movement. And this is thanks to the study of Jineology and the example of the Kurdish guerrilla women.

But even in this situation, the Kurdish women's movement also needs to learn more from modern feminism, especially in respect of individuality and sexual liberation. They have social repression against this aspect of woman, and I think it's because they built up a military revolutionary structure that needed to defend itself against the individualist interests and sexual domination in the Middle East, but in some situations, in my opinion and with all my respects, they reproduce some Middle East's religious taboos about the body and the sex.

<http://kurdishquestion.com/article/3865-experiences-in-rojava-interview-with-an-anarchist-ypg-volunteer>

Revolutionary Solidarity: Rojava and the International Struggle

By **Anonymous Contributor** - March 17, 2017

The success of the revolution in Rojava and its political practices have presented international revolutionaries with a unique situation, one many of us didn't know we could hope for in lifetimes. This opportunity has not only revitalized those fighting oppression around the world but also raised the important question: how do revolutionaries in their own cities relate to Rojava? We at Rojava Solidarity NYC, would like to offer a proposal.

Rojava, an autonomous region in Northern Syria, the largest revolutionary territory of the 21st century, has projected anarchist and communist ideas to the forefront of political discourse into the pragmatic and messy reality of everyday life. The revolution's political foundation, democratic confederalism, is an amalgamation of anarchist, communist, and feminist principles with a focus on ecology and profoundly rooted in the Kurdish liberation struggle. Rojava is fighting for survival against Daesh (ISIS), while simultaneously rejecting the state form and implementing decentralized self-governance.

Drawing From Rojava's Success

For revolutionaries who have not had the chance to witness such massive revolutionary change in Rojava, this is a development many thought impossible in their lifetimes. Historical revolutionary situations from Spain to the Ukraine demonstrated examples of projects either crushed or squeezed to the point where they didn't have any more influence. KONGREYA PYD, TEV-DEM, YPG, and YPJ's forms of political organization – political bodies that espouse liberatory politics – have succeeded in being the predominant ones in society. Their political strategic vision has outmaneuvered and consolidated revolutionary gains that many other movements have failed to achieve.

As revolutionaries, we are actively engaged in struggling against hegemonic forms of power building towards new forms of organization. The success and widespread nature of Rojava is indispensable for our learning process. From communal relationships to the councils and self-defense units, we can assess numerous potential routes by which we can create liberatory communities at home, while learning from their possibilities and pitfalls.

For groups struggling inside one of the most imperial and brutally capitalistic states, a large part of our work is convincing our neighbors that self-governance works. Often during the course of the project, people new to our politics have been skeptical of the practicality of anarchism, decentralized decision making, and anti-state organizing. We have been able to explain how these attributes function in Rojava, which, in turn, makes our organizing goals more attainable to their eyes. Rojava's decentralized model exemplifies what is possible today, and how people can begin establishing these revolutionary processes in their communities.

Every revolution struggles with how to deal with counter-revolutionary elements. The Rojava revolution has dealt reasonably, yet uncompromisingly, with political opponents. They have been able to keep the objectives of nation-states in flux, despite their continuous attempts to harness Rojava's resources. Instead, they have been able to leverage the political objectives of other states in order to maintain territorial and revolutionary gains. These are essential lessons for all revolutionaries.

False Binary: The Mindless Cheerleader Versus Critical Solidarity

A false binary has been presented by academics and well-meaning revolutionaries. They one can either be a 'mindless cheerleader' or engage in what is called 'critical solidarity.' formulation, the correct way to engage with Rojava, and to some degree all revolutionary projects, is to analyze which aspects we disapprove of and vocally denounce these attributes that presumably don't line up with our ideologies.

The first problem is that the concept of 'critical solidarity' attempts to homogenize the repretend that it could be evaluated as a uniform entity. If someone is critical of 'Rojava,' i reinforces the framework of evaluating a people in the top-down terms of a nation-state than a specific commune, region, or group. This practice denies the self-defining nature of disparate groups that comprise society, denies the ground-up organizing structure of the commune, and denies the very basis of self-governance. Essentially it eats away at the very heart of the revolutionary aspects of society we are trying to affirm.

The most devastating effect is that these public denouncements have been exploited by opponents of the revolutionary project. While Rojava is under attack by ISIS, it also faces shelling, assassination, and embargo by Turkey, and opposition from the Syrian government the 'Free Syrian Army.' The reactionary forces that don't want to see a liberated region on borders or, for example, the self-liberation of women, are eager to use the fissures between leftists in the West to undermine support for Rojava.

Further criticism is leveled against the political bodies and militias that defend and spread revolution. Such criticism, typically from people who are poorly informed, is in effect, unequivocally counter-revolutionary. Those critics, rather than informing themselves of the revolutionary process, learning about the groups on the ground, the militia movement, or the fluidity and openness of the project, have taken it upon themselves to undermine a fragile movement when it is most important to buttress its gains. For once, a revolutionary territory has been established with calls for expansion around the globe and for revolutionary assistance, arm chair actors decide to fight back against it with the pen instead of strategizing about how to march forward together. These critics should be thoroughly dismissed.

Finally, and most obviously, the absence of public critique does not equate mindlessness; the opposite is true. As political actors we are more mindful of the conditions that lead to

decentralization, and the expansion of revolutionary gains, and we must put our assistance and advocacy to work for those with same goals as us. The most liberatory aspects of society as the communes and feminist organizations, are projects we must develop relationships with. At this moment, this struggle unfolds at this very moment, there is an active opportunity to aid each other's successes.

A Shared Struggle: Revolutionary Solidarity

While there are several inherent flaws with the notion of 'critical solidarity,' the most egregious problem is that it does not acknowledge the most important type of engagement: revolutionary solidarity.

The connections between small revolutionary groups in different cities rely on the concept that we are part of a shared struggle. We share knowledge, resources, and help propel each other towards our objectives, building infrastructure and networks outside state and capitalist relations. The same applies to a region deeply engaged in a revolution. The notion of 'solidarity' is perhaps too weak a term to express the relationship between nascent revolutionary groups in a region already practicing and experimenting with revolutionary social organization. In the concrete terms, as friends and comrades travel to the region, even sometimes giving their lives for its success, our missions become intertwined.

It is our view that the best and most important criticality should be reserved for implementing the struggle in our neighborhoods. We look at how things work in Rojava, make connections with people who are implementing these social practices, learn from them, and evaluate how they will play out in our own struggles. This is where criticality makes sense. How should practices be introduced? How can they be most effective here? What practices allow for true self-direction and participation? This is the very method of self-criticism and reflection practiced within every revolutionary organization in Rojava. In fact, if it hadn't been so integral, it never had pivoted over from a Marxist-Leninist struggle to an anarchist-inspired one.

A new way for relating with a decentralized society is necessary, both for appropriately acknowledging the people's self-governance, but also for the work of propagating and relating to people as people, rather than subjects behind a centralized governing body. Groups, suc

women's organization Kongreya Star or the youth networks, reach out to other such groups around the world, cutting through the unnecessary bureaucracy artificially erected by national borders. Connecting on the basis of interest, identity, and shared revolutionary intention: an essential way for building movements across borders and undermining the hegemony of states.

As the rise of the far right around the globe threatens to destabilize civil society in its battle for power and exclusionary violence, the more important it becomes to push forward revolutionary solutions around the globe. The more successes anti-authoritarians have on the local level, drawing more power towards the ground, the less power imperialist states can wield. The less momentum fascist tendencies will have.

Many reactionary forces would not like to see the social project in Rojava succeed. Accelerating the struggle back home helps undermine the international reach of nation-states, and the forces they breed. The rise of liberatory social movements simultaneously around the world ensure the longevity of all. As international revolutionaries, the borders that separate our landmasses, the languages we were born into, the history of our respective areas are not unbreachable differences that separate us, but things either to be overcome, or understood in order to push the struggle forward together.

International Engagement

Presently international anarchists, socialists, and communist revolutionaries are actively involved in the struggle in Rojava. They are involved at the civic level, participate in the militias, write reports for those back home, and deliver supplies. At very least there is an alliance between actors abroad and at home. By traveling to a dangerous location, often to put their lives on the line by participating in combat, these comrades have shown their commitment to the project. When these fighters return home, they will be able to put their knowledge to use, to help further the struggles there.

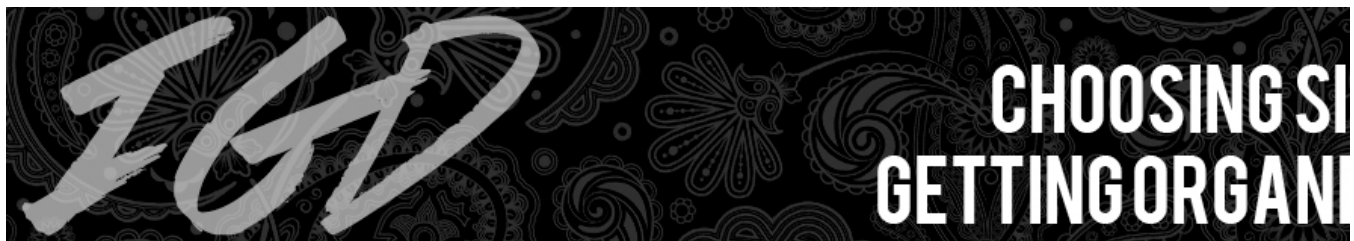
What has been confirmed many times over by the individuals and groups who have traveled to Rojava, whether to report back about what is happening, to engage in the struggle, or to work with civic projects, is that the goals of international revolutionaries and those participating

social experiment are the same. The active engagement of anti-authoritarian revolutionaries is key to the success of any revolutionary undertaking. This could mean traveling to the region to participate, or this could mean actively engaging in struggle back home, or it could simply be spreading accurate knowledge about the practices there.

Rojava has articulated a new set of tools, proven the efficacy of feminism, and demonstrated how to achieve the highest level of humanization of people through a stateless solution and an anti-capitalist practice. This work has not only made massive advances in the region, but these forms of organizing to a broader swathe of the population, from the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria to regions abroad. This new paradigm for revolution has rejuvenated the struggle for smaller groups of anarchists and anti-authoritarians in cities to indigenous resistance at risk from neoliberal or capitalist enterprises, to armed guerrilla armies around the world. The longevity of this model rests on the connection with and success of such struggles around the world.

We propose revolutionary solidarity as the ideal way to engage with the social experiment of Rojava, the new revolutionary paradigm of the 21st century.

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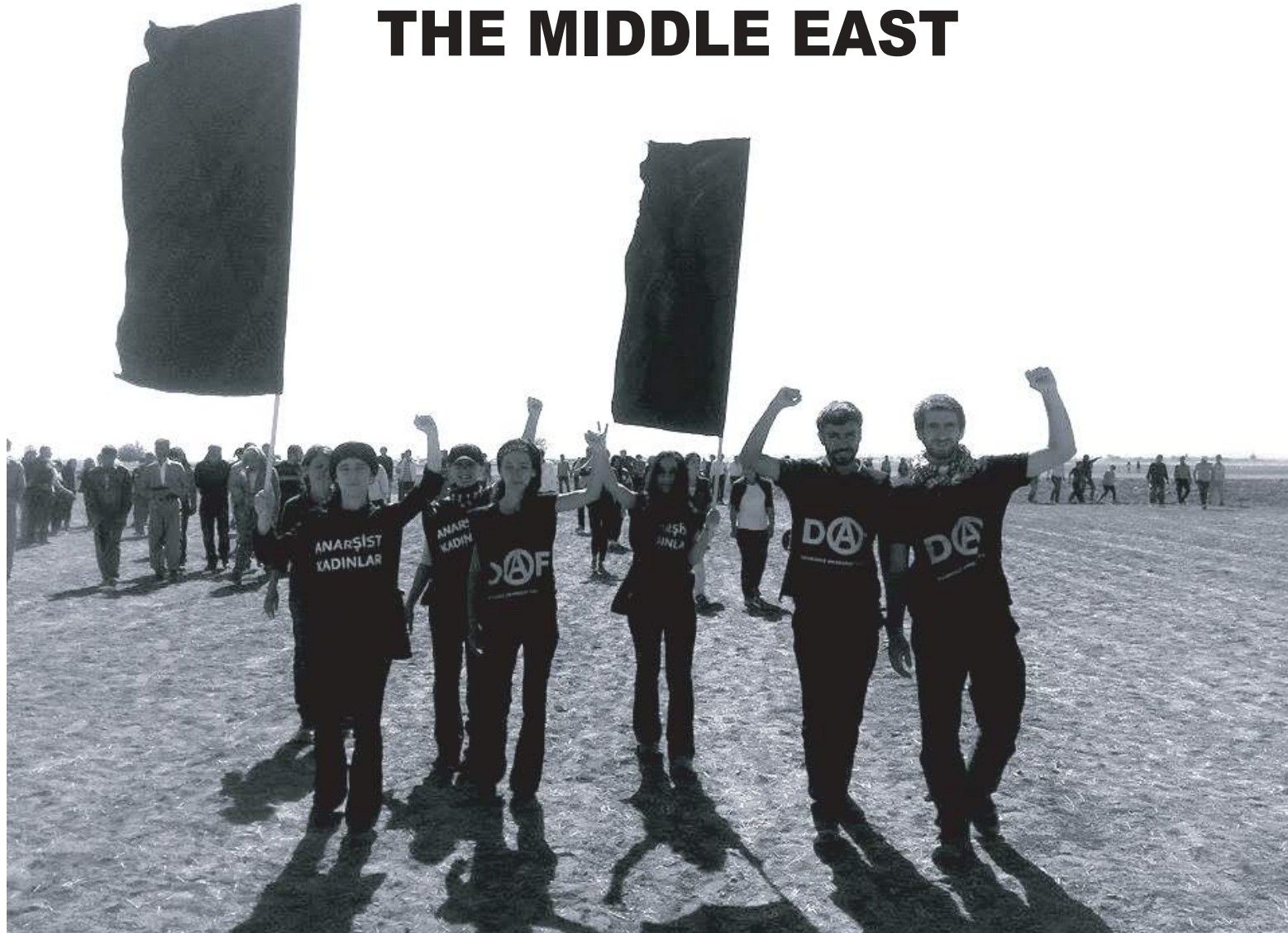
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ANARCHISM IN THE MIDDLE EAST



The Rojava Revolution

**WE STAND IN SOLIDARITY WITH
FREEDOM FIGHTERS
OF ROJAVA**



Solidarity With the Rojava Revolution

The people of Rojava are engaged in one of the most liberatory social projects of our time. What began as an experiment in the wake of Assad's state forces has become a stateless aggregation of autonomous councils and collectives. What began as a struggle for national liberation has resulted in strong militias and defense forces, the members of which fully participate in the unique social and political life of their region. What started as a fight for Kurdish people has resulted in a regional home for a Kurds, Arabs, Syrians, Arameans, Turks, Armenians, Yazidis, Chechens and other groups. What began as the hierarchical Marxist-Leninist political party, the PKK, has evolved into what its leader Abdullah Öcalan calls "Democratic Confederalism", a "system of a people without a State", inspired by the work of Murray Bookchin.

What we see in Rojava today is anarchism in practice.

Each Canton subscribes to a constitution that affirms a society free from authoritarianism and centralism, while allowing for pragmatic autonomy and pluralism. Councils are formed at the street, city, and regional levels. While each council functions differently in cohesion with local particularities, a few key similarities can be found throughout. Committees are self-organized, the councils mediate conflict on an individualized level, cooperatives strive for economic independence through local production.

The explicit intention of the Cantons is to remain decentralized and stateless, and to extend this practice beyond state borders where nascent councils have already usurped the state in dealing with day-to-day affairs.

We, in Rojava Solidarity NYC, express unwavering solidarity with the people of Rojava, the anarchist nature of this project, and with the revolutionary intentions behind it.

Now the people of Rojava and the extraordinary social project they have established finds themselves under the threat of violent extermination and repression. The reactionary forces of the Islamic State of the Levant are attacking on multiple fronts, engaging the People's Protection Units, regional militias, local people, and anarchist support units in the fight for their lives and the free territory they have built. Turkey's Erdogan, afraid of the Kurdish independence project, is squeezing the region from the North, blocking support and supplies.

Rojava Solidarity NYC has been formed to support the Cantons of Rojava in this dire time of need, to publicize this incredible social structure and the struggle it is engaged in, and to provide a forum where we can learn from the pragmatic anarchism in this region. We call on those in the radical left and beyond to do the same and to support the autonomous territory of Rojava.

Rojava Solidarity NYC

Power and The Kurds

The Kurdish Question has never been a strictly regional affair. Since before World War I until today, powers stretched over the entire globe—from Australia to America—have been involved in this issue. From Iraq to Egypt, the Kurds have been used as pawns to leverage the players of the region. Just like in a game of chess, the Kurdish pawn is often sacrificed to gain a better position on the board. Over and over again, foreign powers intervene for a brief period of time, encouraging Kurdish rebellion just to withdraw support at crucial points and sacrificing the Kurds when they are no longer needed. Sometimes world powers support one Kurdish rebellion while simultaneously backing another regime's crackdown on Kurdish villages only a few hundred miles away across the border. Kurdish autonomy has been used as a functional and disposable tool for achieving other countries' agendas from the realignment of the region after WWI, the rise of Soviet power, through the Cold War and the spread of Nasserism, to George Bush Sr.'s New World Order. Kurdish autonomy has always been a means to end, never an end to itself, for the many states that have gotten involved over the years. Owing to their precarious position, the Kurds have been led to naively believe, decade after decade, that the world powers actually cared about their cause while they were being manipulated for someone else's momentary geopolitical advantage.

The Soviet Union's relationship to both its own 450,000 Kurds and the Kurds in Kurdistan was also marked mostly by state suspicion and repression. In the first years of the Soviet Union, Kurds, like many other minority groups, were forcibly displaced and a special regional government unit was set up to monitor them. This regional unit was reorganized several times and ultimately disbanded in 1930 when the Stalinist central government feared it had become too sympathetic to the Kurds. Under Stalin, tens of thousands of Kurds were deported from Azerbaijan and Armenia to Kazakhstan, while Kurds in Georgia became victims of the purges that followed the end of WWII. Through the 1960s, various measures were taken by the Soviet Regime to marginalize and oppress its Kurdish population. In the 1980s the PKK, the only Kurdish political party to partner with Kurds in the USSR, began collaboration with Kurds living in the Transcaucasia region and made serious inroads with the population there. By 1986, non-armed PKK support organizations had formed in the USSR, though they were technically illegal. According to Turkish press, there was even a PKK organization in Kazakhstan in 2004.

For the most part the Soviet Union, and later the Russian Federation, has not been involved directly with Kurdish Independence since the 1940s, when it supported an autonomous Kurdish state in Iran. Despite the PKK's early communist roots, the Soviet Union never supported it because of the USSR's ties with Syria and Turkey. Today the Russian Federation is reluctant to actively support Kurdish independence in Kurdistan because of its own restive minorities, including the Russian Kurds. At various times the PKK has sought support for training

bases, weapons, resources, and a place for exiles from other communist regimes, including Cuba, Angola, Vietnam and others, but not a one of those countries was interested in supporting their communist cousins in such a complicated geopolitical area without backing from the USSR. Some socialist countries did bring up UN resolutions, and most of the Soviet sphere voted for measures in support of Kurdish autonomy in Kurdistan. Russia, along with UN Security Council member China, has also refused to designate the PKK or any other Kurdish political groups as terrorist organizations.

Western governments and organizations such as NATO have been involved in one side or another of the Kurdish questions since the early 19th century at the dawn of the Kurdish autonomy movement. The French and the British foreign offices have used various regional Kurds and their dreams of autonomy as proxies to secure their mandates in the Middle East and to thwart each other. During particular crises, for example immediately following World War I and World War II, shadowy diplomats were shuttling between Paris or London to Kurdish shepherd villages, bringing a little aid and vague promises of support if the Kurds supported their particular political machinations. European powers did not limit their role to just the territory of Kurdistan either, and also used their home countries to get involved in the Kurdish Question. Countries like Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands for a while allowed militant Kurdish training bases to operate on their soil but would raid and shut them down depending on the geopolitical winds of the time. Greece supplied Kurds in Turkey and housed exiled PKK officials in order to punish Turkey for their 1974 invasion of Cyprus, but after coming to agreement on trade with Turkey they kicked the PKK out and stopped all aid. France even tried to use Kurds to slow Algerian independence, despite the fact that there were no Kurds in Algeria, by implying they may give them territory in a French-owned Algeria.

The US was late to the show of manipulating the Kurds' desire for freedom. During the Cold War the US mostly found itself siding with the Shah of Iran and using CIA personnel and resources to help both repress the Kurds in Iran and foment Kurdish rebellions in Iraq. The US stuck to covert operations, and thus little was known until recently about US involvement in the Kurdish Question. During the first Gulf War, when Iraq occupied the oil-rich emirate of Kuwait in August 1990, Saddam Hussein became America's enemy number one. Yet from 1987 until the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the US said nothing. At times, the US even supported Iraq in the UN, when Saddam Hussein was gassing tens of thousands of Kurds and bombing whole Kurdish towns and villages. But at the beginning of the First Gulf War, George Bush Sr. publicly declared Kurds are the US's "natural allies" and suggested they should revolt against the Baghdad regime. Of course, Bush Sr. knew that the Kurds had already been fighting the Ba'athist regime in a bloody, fifteen-year, on-again off-again civil war.

After the war, the US put in place an ineffective no fly zone, which apparently did not include helicopters, to "protect the Kurds." Thousands of Kurds and other civilians in northern Iraq were killed by Saddam's military while US planes flew overhead doing nothing. During the second Gulf War, the US

asked again for the peshmerga (the military forces of Iraqi Kurdistan) to help rid the country of the Ba'athist regime. This time, the Kurds decided to focus on securing the north for themselves and on creating an army that could defend itself—they'd learned their lesson from the first Gulf War. Today the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) exists not because the US protected the Kurds, but because they took US and coalition aid and resources to prepare their own defense. The KRG also pursued its own diplomatic strategy with the fledgling and factious National Iraqi Congress.

Many other countries, from China to Australia, have interfered in the Kurdish Question, ultimately thwarting the Kurdish dream of freedom across a unified Kurdistan. Today almost all countries in the West have designated Kurdish militant groups as terrorists while at the same time trying to enlist their help in the war against the Islamic State and other Jihadist groups. It seems the Kurds have lost some of their naivete and have learned that being temporary sacrificial pawns for the West will not aid their cause in the long run. The lesson of the second Gulf War and the recent Syrian civil war is that the Kurds must rely on their own forces to have any hope of securing autonomy and justice for their people.



From Red Star to Ishtar's Star

While the PKK was not founded by die-hard communists, it soon became a classic Maoist national liberation struggle party complete with an unquestioned charismatic “father of the people”, Abdullah Öcalan, a.k.a Apo. There was little to differentiate the PKK from the dozens of Mao-inspired militant liberation groups of the late 1970s and 1980s.

The PKK weren't the only committed Marxists in Kurdistan—a number of other smaller groups existed, some claiming to be Leninists, Trotskyites, or even Titoists. But the peasant-based insurrectionary philosophy of Maoism, as espoused by the polit-bureau and the leadership of the PKK, was by far the most popular and militarily effective means of resisting oppression.

The PKK's flamboyant embrace of communism garnered some support from the calcified old Left parties of Western Europe, but it failed to produce much in the way of real solidarity. While certain Maoist ideas appealed to Kurds eager to rid themselves of authoritarian state repression, those same ideas alienated a lot of potential, more liberal, supporters. Thus, the PKK's struggles were largely ignored and sometimes condemned by possible sympathizers in and outside the region. The emphasis on centralization in Maoist communism also alienated many of the social leaders inside Kurdistan. The Kurds traditionally have been socially and politically organized by loosely connected tribes and have supported tribal leaders who had distinguished themselves in some way other than heredity. Periodically, Kurds formed large, temporary confederations of tribes to mount uprisings and military actions. Political parties have never gained the monopoly on political organizing that they have in many other parts of the world—it wasn't uncommon for a Kurd to be part of a few political parties and switch between them based on how successful they were. Despite these cultural obstacles, the PKK championed hardline communism until well after the fall of the Soviet regime.

For the PKK, the crisis in their communist faith didn't occur until 1999 when their leader Öcalan was arrested in Nairobi by the MIT (Turkish military intelligence), flown back to Turkey, and incarcerated on a prison island upon which he was the only inmate. The Turkish media showed a humiliated Öcalan, “the Terrorist of Turkey,” harmless and in chains. With their leader captured and no obvious successor, the PKK's central committee was thrown into crisis. The increasingly militant tactics of bombings, roadside ambushes, and suicide bombers were not working, and the rise of Jihadi attacks in the Middle East and the West made the PKK seem just like another Islamic terrorist organization despite its communist ideology. This, combined with the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and Russia, led to a period of ideological soul-searching for the PKK and its leader.

Thousands of miles away, on January 1, 1994 (five years before Öcalan's capture) a new type of liberation struggle kicked off in the forgotten mountain jungles of Chiapas, Mexico. The Zapatistas, with their red star flag and their black masks, burst onto the world stage and quickly inspired the progressive Left around

the world. A small Mayan liberation struggle had risen from the Lacandon Jungle of Southern Mexico and declared themselves autonomous. These politically savvy revolutionaries created a new type of leftist insurrectionary political configuration they called Zapatismo. Zapatismo situated itself as a mode of liberation and leftist struggle that rejected hierarchy, party control, and aspirations to create a State apparatus. The architects of this new configuration had spent years in hardline Marxist guerrilla organizations in Mexico before rejecting that model of struggle and seeking a new approach.

Öcalan and the other leaders in the central committee of the PKK were familiar with the rapid rise and success of the Zapatistas. A year before his arrest, Öcalan had spoken to PKK party leaders about Zapatismo at a two-day conference. And in his first months of imprisonment, Apo had a “crisis of faith” regarding doctrinaire Marxist ideology and its ability to free the Kurds. Öcalan, who spent much of his life espousing a hardline Stalinist doctrine, started to reject Marxism-Leninism in favor of direct democracy. He had concluded that Marxism was authoritarian, dogmatic, and unable to creatively reflect the real problems facing the Kurdish resistance. In prison, Apo started reading anarchist and post-Marxist works including Emma Goldman, Foucault, Wallerstein, Braudel, and Murray Bookchin. Öcalan was particularly impressed with Bookchin’s anarchist philosophy of ecological municipalism, going so far as to demand that all PKK leaders read Bookchin. From inside prison, Öcalan absorbed Bookchin’s ideas (most notably Bookchin’s *Civilization Narratives*) and wrote his own book based on these ideas, *The Roots of Civilization* (2001). It was Bookchin’s *Ecology of Freedom* (1985), however, which Öcalan made required reading for all PKK militants. It went on to influence the ideas found in Rojava.

In 2004, Öcalan tried to arrange a meeting with Bookchin through his lawyers, describing himself as Bookchin’s “student” and eager to adapt Bookchin’s ideas to the Kurdish question. In particular, Öcalan wanted to discuss his newest manuscript, *In Defense of People* (2004), which he had hoped would change the discourse of the Kurdish struggle. Unfortunately for Öcalan, the 83-year-old Bookchin was too ill to accept the request and sent back a message of support instead. Murray Bookchin died of congested heart failure two years later, in 2006. A PKK congress held later that year hailed the American thinker as “one of the greatest social scientists of the 20th century,” and vowed that “Bookchin’s thesis on the state, power, and hierarchy will be implemented and realized through our struggle.... We will put this promise into practice, this as the first society that establishes a tangible democratic confederalism.” Five years later, in 2011, the Syrian civil war gave the Kurds a chance to try to make good on their promise.

The Syrian civil war began as part of the general uprisings in spring 2011 in North Africa and the Middle East that the West dubbed the “Arab Spring.” Kurds from a variety of political backgrounds joined students, Islamists, workers, political dissents, and others in calling for the end of the repression of the Assad dictatorship. Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, however, had learned the lessons of Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt and quickly sent in troops to crush the growing democratic movement. By autumn, the mostly peaceful protests that had taken place in



the spring had morphed into a full-on armed insurrection against the Assad regime.

When the protests first began, Assad’s government finally granted citizenship to an estimated 200,000 stateless Kurds in an effort to neutralize potential Kurdish opposition. By the beginning of 2012, when over 50% of the country was controlled by rebel groups and Islamic militias, and Assad’s forces were spread thin, the regime decided to pull all military and government officials out of the Kurdish regions in the north, in effect handing the region over to the Kurds and Yezidis living there. Opposition groups, most prominently the PKK-aligned Democratic Union Party (PYD), created a number of coalition superstructures to administer the region. There was tension between PYD and parties aligned with the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) in Iraq, however, and at one time there were even two competing coalitions: the PYD-backed National Coordination Committee for Democratic Change (NCC) and the KRG-aligned Kurdish National Council (KNC). In early 2012, when it looked like the tension between the two groups might result in armed conflict, the President of the KRG Massoud Barzani and leaders of the PKK brought the two groups together to form a new coalition called the Supreme Kurdish Council (SKC) made up of over fifteen political parties and hundreds of community councils. Within months of forming, the SKC changed its name to the Democratic Society Movement (TEV-DEM) and added non-Kurdish groups, political parties, and organizations to the coalition. The TEV-DEM created an interim governing body for the Rojava region.

The TEV-DEM's program was heavily influenced by the PYD's ideas of "democratic confederalism," which the PKK had adopted as their official platform in a people's congress on May 17th, 2005. According to the platform, and subsequent documents and proclamations from Rojava, "democratic confederalism of Rojava is not a State system, it is the democratic system of a people without a State... It takes its power from the people and adopts to reach self-sufficiency in every field, including economy." In Rojava, Democratic Confederalist ideology has three main planks: libertarian municipalism, radical pluralism, and social ecology. The TEV-DEM have been implementing this new social vision on a massive scale in Rojava since early 2012. The PKK has attempted (and succeeded to some degree) to implement democratic confederalism in scattered villages in Turkey along the Iraq border since 2009, experiments that served as an inspiration for much of the Rojava revolution. This vision, in both Turkey and in Rojava, draws heavily from contemporary anarchist, feminist, and ecological thought.

Democracy and Decentralization

How do you base a government on anarchism? Rojava is not the first, and hopefully won't be the last, experiment in creating a new form of a decentralized non-state government without hierarchy. In the past two years, two-and-half million people in Rojava have been participating in this new form of governance, a governance related to that of the Spanish Revolution (1936), the Zapatistas (1994), the Argentinian Neighborhood Assembly Movement (2001-2003), and Murray Bookchin's libertarian municipalism. Despite some similarities to these past experiments and ideas, what is being implemented in war-torn Rojava is unique—and it's extremely ambitious. It's no hyperbole to say that this revolution in northern Syria is historic, especially for anarchists.

At the core of this social experiment are the variety of "local councils" that encourage maximum participation by the people of Rojava. The Kurdish people have a long history of local assemblies based on tribal and familial allegiances. These semi-formal assemblies have been an important practice of social organizing for Kurds for hundreds of years, so it is no surprise that the face-to-face assemblies soon became the backbone of their new government. In Rojava, neighborhood assemblies make up the largest number of councils. Every person (including teenagers) can participate in an assembly near where they live. In addition to these neighborhood assemblies, there are councils based on workplaces, civic organizations, religious organizations, political parties, and other affinity-based councils (e.g. Youth). People often are part of a number of local councils depending on their life circumstances. These councils can be as small as a couple dozen people or they can have hundreds of participants. But regardless of size, they operate similarly. The councils work on a direct democracy model, meaning that anyone at the council may speak, suggest topics to be decided upon, and vote on proposals (though many councils use consensus for their decision-

making). It is unclear how membership is determined in these councils, but we know that the opposition movement councils prior to 2012 had no fixed membership and anyone showing up at assembly could fully participate. It is also unclear how often these councils meet and who determines when they meet. It is known that the neighborhood assemblies in the Efrin Canton meet weekly, as does one of the hospital workers' councils. These local councils make up the indivisible unit of Rojava democracy. Larger bodies (e.g. Supreme Council of the Rojava cantons) are populated with representatives from these local councils. All decisions from these "upper councils" must be formally adopted by the local councils to be binding for their constituents. This is very different from the federalist tradition, in which the federation supersedes local control. In August 2014, for example, a regional council decided that local security forces could carry weapons while patrolling a city, but three local assemblies did not approve this decision, so in those local assembly areas security must refrain from carrying weapons. The role of the "upper councils" is currently limited to coordination between the myriad of local councils while all power is still held locally. Representatives to the "upper councils" rotate frequently, with a maximum term set by the "upper council," but local councils often create their own guidelines for more frequent rotation of their representatives. The goal of the Rojava council system is to maximize local power and to decentralize while achieving a certain necessary degree of regional coordination and information-sharing.

The remaining government above the upper council level seems similar to a council parliamentary system with rotating representatives, an executive branch composed of canton co-presidents, and an independent judiciary. All governmental power emanates from the councils, and the councils retain local autonomy, thus forming a confederation. The confederation is made up of three autonomous cantons that have their own ministries and militias. There is no federal government in the Rojava canton system. Voluntary association and mutual aid are key concepts for the confederation, as these ideas protect local autonomy. Voluntary association leads to radical decentralization, severely limiting any organizational structures above the primary decision-makers of the local councils. All bodies beyond the local councils must have proportional representation of the ethnic communities in the canton and at least 40% gender balance (this includes all ministries). Most ministries have co-ministers with one male and one female minister, with the exception of the Women's Minister. Most decisions by the Supreme Council need support of 2/3 of the delegates from the upper councils. Any canton retains autonomy from Supreme Council decisions and may override them in their own People's Assembly (the largest upper council of any region) while still being part of the confederation. This bottom-up decentralization seeks to preserve the maximum level of autonomy for local people while encouraging maximum political participation.

Both internal and external security for the cantons is administered by each canton's People's Assembly. The local security, which are equivalent to police, are called Asayish (security in Kurdish). The Asayish are elected by local councils and serve a specific term determined by the local council and the canton's People's

Assembly. The Asayish have also their own assembly (but not one that can send representatives to the People's Assembly), in which they elect officers and make other decisions. In addition to the Asayish, there are people's self-defense militias to provide security from outside threats (e.g. currently the Islamic State, but this could also include regional and state government forces). These militias elect their own officers but are directly responsible to the canton's People's Assembly. Both the Asayish and the people's self-defense militias have two organizations: one a female-only group and the other co-ed. Militias that are providing mutual aid in another canton (Asayish are for the most part forbidden to work in other cantons) must follow that canton's People's Assembly but can retain their own commanders and units. In times of peace, the cantons do not maintain standing militia service.

Rojava's relationship with the Syrian state is yet to be tested. The Rojava Canton Confederation is not set up as a state. It draws instead on the idea of dual power, an idea first outlined by the French anarchist Proudhon. The KCC described dual power as "a strategy of achieving a libertarian socialist economy and political and social autonomy by means of incrementally establishing and then networking institutions of direct participatory democracy" to contest the existing authority of state-capitalism. Rojava currently has set out a path of co-existence with whatever state arises from the Syrian civil war and to the current alignment of neighboring states (namely Turkey, Iraq, and Iran) that encompass Kurdistan. People in Rojava would maintain their Syrian citizenship and participate in the Syrian state so long as it doesn't directly contradict the Rojava principles. This uneasy co-existence is the reason the cantons have explicitly forbidden national flags, have not created a new currency, a foreign ministry, or national passports and identity papers, and why they do not have a standing army. It is unclear if the people of Rojava plan to maintain this relationship with the state or what would happen in conflictual situations.

Rojava is neither a state nor a pure anarchist society. It is an ambitious social experiment that has rejected the seduction of state power and nationalism and has instead embraced autonomy, direct democracy, and decentralization to create a freer society for people in Rojava. The Rojava principles have borrowed from anarchism, social ecology, and feminism in an attempt to chart a societal vision that emphasizes accountability and independence for a radically pluralistic community. It is unclear whether this experiment will move towards greater decentralization of the kind Bookchin suggests and the Zapatistas have implemented or if it will become more centralized and federal as, happened after both the Russian and Spanish revolutions. What is happening right now is a historic departure from traditional national-liberation struggle and should be of great interest to anti-authoritarians everywhere.

This excerpt was taken from the book A Small Key Can Open A Large Door. The proceeds from the sale of this book pay for shipping radical texts to The Mesopotamian Academy in Rojava and the People's Library in Kobane. It is available at www.combustionbooks.org.



Principles of Democratic Confederalism

1. The right of self-determination of the peoples includes the right to a state of their own. However, the foundation of a state does not increase the freedom of a people. The system of the United Nations that is based on nation-states has remained inefficient. Meanwhile, nation-states have become serious obstacles for any social development. Democratic confederalism is the contrasting paradigm of the oppressed people.

2. Democratic confederalism is a non-state social paradigm. It is not controlled by a state. At the same time, democratic confederalism is the cultural organizational blueprint of a democratic nation.

3. Democratic confederalism is based on grass-roots participation. Its decision-making processes lie with the communities. Higher levels only serve the coordination and implementation of the will of the communities that send their delegates to the general assemblies. For limited space of time they are both mouthpiece and executive institutions. However, the basic power of decision rests with the local grass-roots institutions.

4. In the Middle East, democracy cannot be imposed by the capitalist system and its imperial powers which only damage democracy. The propagation of grass-roots democracy is elementary. It is the only approach that can cope with diverse ethnical groups, religions, and class differences. It also goes together well with the traditional confederate structure of the society.

5. Democratic confederalism in Kurdistan is an anti-nationalist movement as well. It aims at realizing the right of self-defence of the peoples by the advancement of democracy in all parts of Kurdistan without questioning the existing political borders. Its goal is not the foundation of a Kurdish nationstate. The movement intends to establish federal structures in Iran, Turkey, Syria, and Iraq that are open for all Kurds and at the same time form an umbrella confederation for all four parts of Kurdistan.

This excerpt was taken from the book Democratic Confederalism by the jailed leader of the PKK, Abdullah Öcalan. This text marks a shift in his thinking to a stateless society, led by the people who participate in it.

This stateless system has given rise to creative self-administration. In the cantons of Efrin, Kobane, and Cizire (formally northern Syria) and in cities in Northern Kurdistan (also Southern Turkey), the formations and solutions to day-to-day problems are as various as the people who populate these areas. There are no overarching rules for how these councils and communes work. Rather, each region has adapted functions that make sense for their unique conditions. Conflict resolution in each area takes on a different character, depending on the people involved and the problems they face. So rather than describe a system, here you can read first hand accounts of councilors and descriptions of visitors to the communes.

Conflict Resolution

The commune is a place not only of self-organization but also of social conflict resolution. It concerns itself with social problems in the districts, support of poorer members of the commune, and the just distribution of fuel, bread, and foodstuffs. Meetings of the commune handle not only conflicts, the usual neighborhood fights, but also violence against children, and resolution is attempted. In Dêrik we attended a meeting of representatives of a commune: they were discussing the case of a family that had tied up a child. This behavior was now monitored and controlled. If the misbehavior continues, the children will be taken to a protected place.

1 Alternative Justice: a legal committee in Gewer

In resolving conflicts, they try to find a consensual solution...The legal committees try to clamp down on this destructive cycle and seek to mediate a peaceful solution between parties even in cases of murder. When a murder is committed, the perpetrator is punished with a heavy material fine and put on probation. He is also obligated, with the help of a psychologist or other professional, to work on changing the way he thinks about the crime and on taking seriously his punishment. Something similar goes on for those who commit other crimes.

After this punishment process comes the attempt to socially reintegrate the perpetrator. Explained a member of the Gewer legal committee:

Our way of administering justice isn't as retrospective as it is with state systems. We don't lock people up and then release them fifteen years later. Instead we try to effect a fundamental transformation in the person, and reintegrate them.

2 The Colemêrg Women's Council

Every district in Colemêrg has a women's committee, and every committee consists of ten to fifteen women. This way, problems that arise can be addressed quickly.

If a woman's neighbor is a victim of violence, she notifies us. She comes to us, not to the state, because people have had bad experiences with the state. And we try to find solutions. One woman moved from her village to the city, after which her husband injured his foot. So he had financial problems. We provided food for them, then we talked to the municipal government, which allocated bricks and sand, so they could build a house...

Another example: divorce is not accepted here, but we are firmly opposed to domestic violence. When we know that a woman has been beaten, we sit down with her and find out what she wants to do about it. Sometimes she loves the man very much and doesn't want a separation. In that

case, we call in the family and the husband for a discussion. We explain to him our attitude toward violence and present him with the woman's demands.

If people are to take our movement seriously, they have to take our demands seriously. That's also true when the woman prefers to separate, and she has to return the gifts she received at the wedding and the dowry. During the period of the divorce, we stand with her.

3 A district council in Wan

How is your council organized?

About 15,000 people live in our urban district. We have street councils, district councils, and city councils. When a street council can't solve a problem, it's passed to the district council. If the district council can't solve it, nor the city council, it's discussed in the DTK. Wan has thirty-one districts, five of which have a council. Our work is highly collective and communal, and so we're always considering things in terms of the other districts.

Do you receive outside financial support?

That wouldn't fit our ideology. We're autonomous. So we don't accept financial support...

What else does the district council do?

We have a committee where district people can bring their complaints, like domestic violence and quarrels between neighbors. Let's say a family can't afford to pay for a child's school uniform, or some parents don't want to send their daughter to school. They come to us.

4 Amed City Council

What's happening with the cooperatives?

We have cooperatives that grow vegetables and pickle them. Women cultivate mushrooms, or bake bread, to achieve economic independence. Those are a few of the projects that we have under way. There's also the clay house project, which helps homeless people build clay houses. And communes already exist in many rural places, with the goal of providing for themselves.

What do legal committees do?

When we talk about judicial matters, you have to understand that we're trying to organize a society without a state. Many people who have legal disputes or other problems that need solving don't go to the Turkish courts anymore — they come to the city councils. So many of the city councils are developing legal committees to handle legal issues, and people are learning to rely on them to solve their problems.



5 The Democratic Society Congress, DTK, was founded in 2005 as a democratic confederation for the pro-Kurdish BDP and other political parties, civil society organizations, religious communities, and women's and youth organizations.

On July, 14, 2011, more than eight hundred participants from different tendencies assembled in Amed and issued the Call for Democratic Autonomy, by a common declaration. The published document called for democratic autonomy in eight dimensions: politics, justice, self-defense, culture, society, economics, ecology, and diplomacy. The state [Turkey] promptly criminalized the DTK, as the highest institution of democratic autonomy, and initiated judicial proceedings against it.

As an example of the DTK's work, one of our interviewees described the arbitration of blood feuds. DTK members try to end a blood feud before it can escalate. But they avoid the state courts; instead they discuss and hopefully solve the problem peacefully, within the community.

A member of the DTK explained his work:

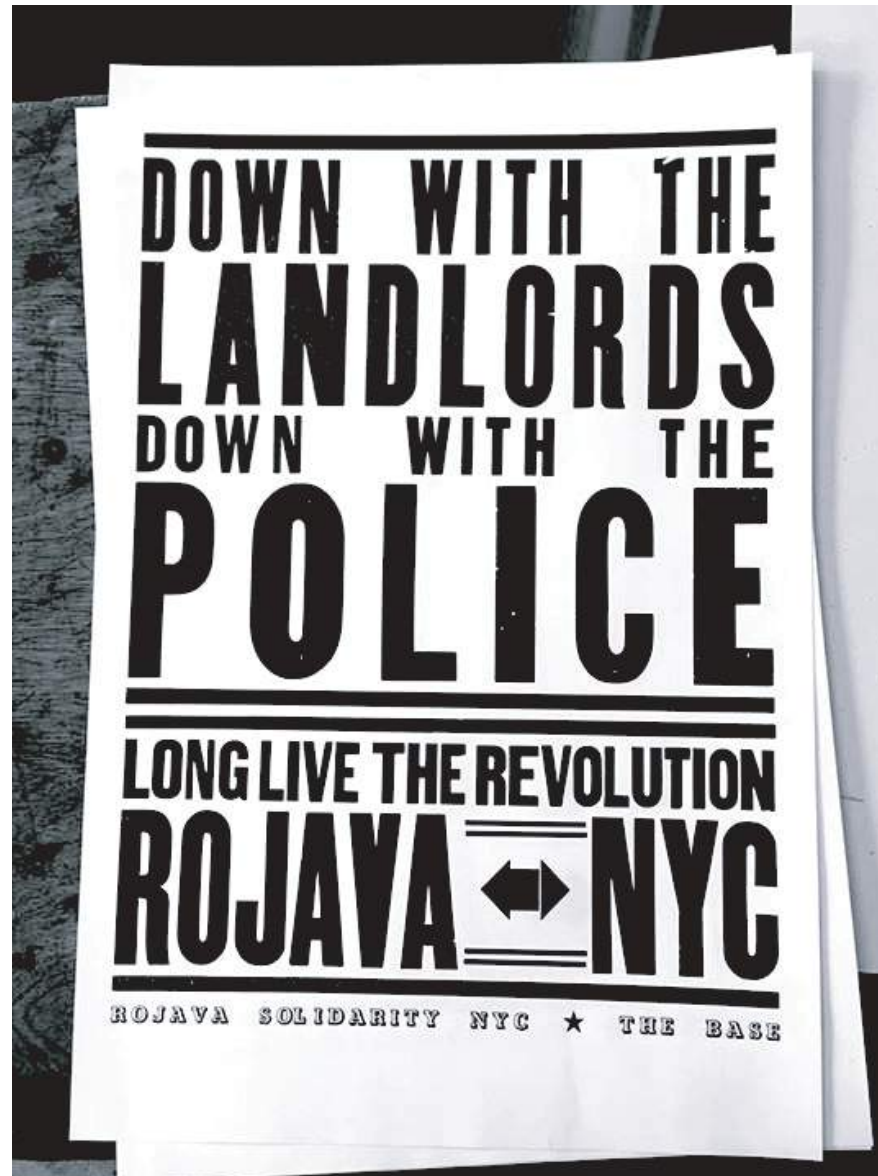
A practical example: a man called me up and shouted, 'My wife has left me-I'm gonna kill her! Bring her back, or I'll kill her!' I tried to talk to talk him down over the phone, but when I couldn't, I went over to his place. We talked for a long time, but I couldn't get him to see reason. Now, I had been married for twenty-five years. I finally told this man. "My wife also left me. Should I kill her? Yesterday we had an argument. I hit her, and so she left me. Was she right, or am I right?' He thought about it, then hung his head and apologized. Now, don't get me wrong - that never really happened between me and my wife - I just told him it did.

I was mayor for a year, during which time I as a delegate to the DTK. I've seen many cases of blood feuds and honor killings, for which the state has no solution. We stepped in and because we better understand people's sensitivities, we were able to solve the problem. I could tell you about innumerable cases like that. Many of our mayors and delegates face such situations. They do these individual interventions, but every locality also has a peace committee, from the BDP or the DTK, that tries to mediate conflicts.

These excerpts are interviews from the book *Democratic Autonomy in Northern Kurdistan* by TATORT Kurdistan, translated by Janet Biehl, and accounts from the article *Democratic Autonomy in Rojava* also by TATORT.







Rojava Solidarity NYC is an anarchist organization that aims to spread info and show solidarity with the revolutionary region of Rojava.

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At the end of March 2017, news spread that a **new anarchist guerrilla group** had formed in **Rojava**, the International Revolutionary People's Guerrilla Forces (**IRPGF**). Their emergence has reignited discussions about anarchist participation in the **Kurdish resistance** and in armed struggle as a strategy for social change. It has been difficult to communicate with comrades in Rojava about these important questions, as they are operating in wartime conditions and surrounded by enemies on all sides. Therefore, we are excited to present the most comprehensive and critical discussion yet to appear with the IRPGF, exploring the complex context of the Syrian civil war and the relationship

between armed struggle, militarism, and revolutionary transformation.

The developments in Syria foreshadow a rapidly arriving future in which war is no longer limited to specific geographical zones but becomes a pervasive condition. State and non-state actors have been drawn ineluctably into the conflicts in Syria, and those conflicts extend far beyond its borders; today, civil war is becoming thinkable again in many countries that have not experienced war within their home territories for 70 years. Proxy wars, once geographically contained, are spreading around the world as religious denominations, ethnicities, nationalities, genders, and economic classes become proxies in the struggles between various ideologies and elites. As capitalism generates intensifying economic and ecological crises, these struggles are probably inevitable. But while they offer new opportunities to challenge capitalism and the state, they hardly point the way to the relations of peaceful coexistence and mutual aid that anarchists desire to create.

Is it possible for anarchists to participate in such conflicts without abandoning our values and principles? Is it possible to coordinate with forces pursuing different agendas while retaining our integrity and autonomy? How might we confront these situations without turning into a militarized war machine? From the vantage points of Europe and the United States, we can only develop limited perspective on these questions, though it is necessary to form our own critical hypotheses. We are grateful for the opportunity to engage in dialogue with those who are fighting in Rojava, and we hope to facilitate conversations on this topic across blockades and battle lines all across the world.

Anarchists in Rojava announce formation of IRPGF



Anarchists in Rojava announce formation of the IRPGF.

Kurdish forces have been calling for international supporters to fight alongside them for years now. How does this play out in practice? Do you consider yourselves to be equal and autonomous participants in both the fighting and the transformation of society? Or you feel your role to be allies supporting their defense?

First, it is important to realize that not all international supporters come to Rojava, or for that matter to the broader region of Kurdistan, for the same reason. As you are aware, there has been a steady flow of international supporters joining the ranks of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) for decades now. Additionally, international support has come from neighboring countries as well as other parties and guerrilla groups like the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA).

More recently, however, international supporters have come to the region mostly as a result of the growth of *Daesh* (ISIS) and its full-out assault in both Iraq and

Syria. A few years ago, during the period of the battle of Kobanê and the genocidal campaign by *Daesh* in Rojava and **Shengal**, various international groups and individuals came to struggle for a myriad of reasons. For example, the Lions of Rojava attracted those with more militaristic, right-wing and religiously motivated ideologies and perspectives. At the same time, the Turkish militant Left, namely the Marxist-Leninist Communist Party (MLKP) and the Turkish Communist Party Marxist-Leninist (TKP/ML) had arrived in Rojava (to later include the United Freedom Forces, or BÖG, which would be formed after Kobanê) and joined the armed struggle in an effort to assist Kurdish forces and aid the struggle not only in Rojava but in **Bakur** (Northern Kurdistan - Turkey) and broader Turkey.

Thus, simultaneously during those pivotal months in Kobanê, there were Christian fundamentalists, fascists, and Islamophobes fighting alongside Turkish and international communists, socialists, and even a few anarchists. That is not to say that all Western fighters are either fascists or leftists. On the contrary, in fact, quite a few international supporters have simply identified as anti-fascists, supporters of the Kurdish struggle, liberal feminists, democracy advocates, and those with a fascination with the democratic confederalist project unfolding in Rojava. While the situation has changed on the ground and many of those with right-wing or religious convictions are no longer fighting with the People's Protection Units and Women's Defense Units (YPJ/G), there is still an eclectic and far from monolithic mix of international supporters here.

In practice, international supporters are placed in different units depending on certain criteria. For example, prior military personnel who come to Rojava may have access to Kurdish units that would, for the most part, be closed off to those who do not have prior military experience. Those include sniper (*suîkast*) and sabotage (*sabotaj*) units (*tabûrs*). Internationals who come to fight for ideological reasons, for anarchism, communism, or socialism, could choose to go to one of the Turkish party bases to train and fight as an attached member of their guerrilla units. Most international supporters, however, join a Kurdish unit within the YPJ/G and fight alongside the Kurds, Arabs, Ezidis, Armenians, Assyrians and other groups within the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).

The social position of international supporters in relation to the local and indigenous members of the military forces is of course complex. For the people of Rojava and for the broader Kurdish liberation movement, it is an honor for them to have international supporters come to defend them when they feel that the international community, for almost a century, has abandoned their struggle for autonomy and self-determination. Yet, there is this almost celebrity atmosphere around some Westerners who come here to fight, as well as a tokenizing and sometimes paternalistic atmosphere on the part of some elements of the local political and military establishment. Of course, this changes depending on the international supporters' reasons and motives for coming to Rojava. For example, some international supporters take great pleasure in showing their faces, posing with weapons and gloating about their "accomplishments." Others choose to hide their faces and identities for both political and practical reasons.

There is no doubt that some international supporters have used the conflict in Rojava as a vehicle for personal advertising, which is of course part of the "age of the selfie" and social media. This has allowed some of them to make a small fortune writing books and using the revolution for their own gain. This is opportunism and adventurism at its worst. This is a small minority of the international supporters here and in no way indicative of the motives or actions of the much larger population of foreign fighters. While there is an appreciation for those who have brought the conflict and revolution to a much wider audience, there is also the fact that those who struggle here can, in most cases, forget the struggle and have the privilege to go back to their comfortable lives. There are also the war-tourist types who come here for the love of combat and fighting. They gloat about their military experiences and many even have served or attempted to join the French Foreign Legion. When asked, they often express a desire to travel to Ukraine or to Myanmar to continue fighting after leaving Rojava.

This brings us to an important theoretical position that we hold as the IRPGF. For us, we believe that many of the international supporters, specifically most Westerners, reproduce their privilege and social position here in Rojava. We want to introduce the concept of the "safe struggle." That is to say that, since this war is

supported by the United States and Western powers, it is safe to fight against the enemy and not face the repercussions for being in an organization whose ideology is Apoist (Apo is an affectionate nickname for Abdullah Öcalan, one of the founding members of the PKK), and therefore linked to a declared terrorist organization. There is no real penalty for involvement in Rojava except if one has direct links to some of the more radical groups here. For example, Turkish nationals who fight with the groups here are declared terrorists by the state of Turkey and even the comrades of the Marxist-Leninist Party (Communist Reconstruction) were arrested and imprisoned leading to their offices being closed across Spain on charges that they had links to the PKK. These unique cases aside, the vast majority of international supporters who come to fight *Daesh* and help the Kurds are safe from prosecution.

Additionally, in some cases, this reproduces the often-cited example of Western intellectuals and activists applauding a conflict beyond their borders but not willing to sacrifice their comfort and privileges to increase the fight at home. Some international supporters can come and be revolutionaries for six months or a year, they can be applauded and self-congratulatory and return back to their complacency and normal existence. This is not the majority of cases, but it is still an issue here. Also, coming for a few months or a year is in no way something we want to downplay or ridicule. In fact, every international supporter does put their life in danger by simply choosing to come to an active war zone. Concordantly, international supporters can learn skills and new perspectives while risking their lives here in the struggle and then go back to their homes and continue struggling there in a variety of ways.

Some international supporters have even changed their ideological positions in both directions. Mostly in a positive direction, seeing women's liberation and self-organization to be key components to a more liberated life. A small minority have changed their opinions for the worse, claiming that the Kurds are incompetent fighters, that the revolution has failed or will fail and that coming to Rojava did not provide the unrestrained combat and war that they desired. With all of this in perspective and as we will discuss, what will happen when the international

powers turn their backs on the project in Rojava and have no more use for the revolutionary forces? Will the vast majority of international supporters be willing to fight against Turkish forces or, for that matter, even US forces? This remains to be seen.

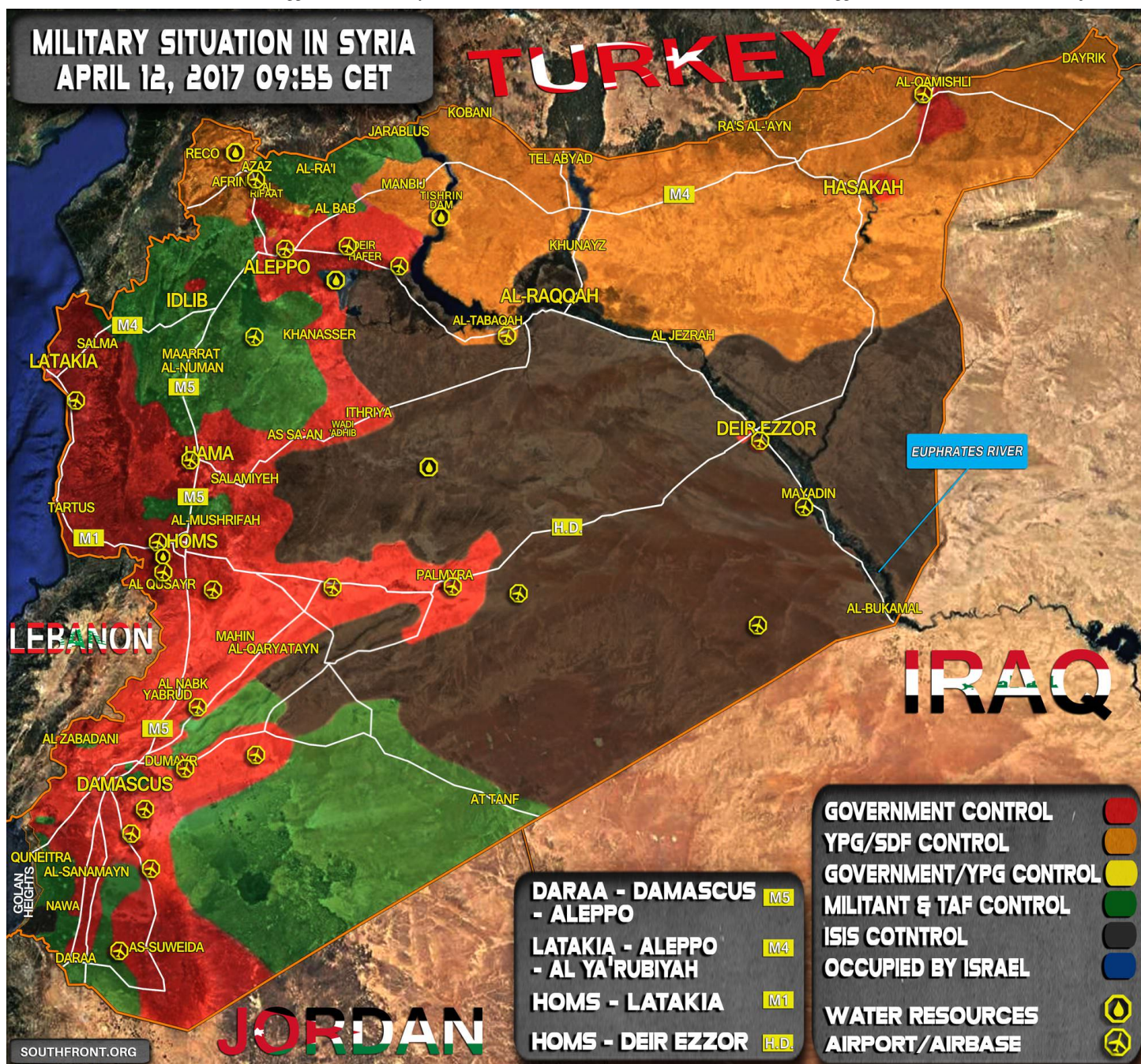
In contrast to the aforementioned group of international supporters, there are those who have come here with a profound depth, clarity, and analysis of their ideological positions, the regional geopolitics, and guerrilla warfare. The mixture, quality, and amount of communist, socialist, and anarchist guerrilla fighters is unsurpassed in any other armed conflict around the world. This provides new opportunities and has led to some unique innovations, like the International Freedom Battalion (IFB), as well as joint training and operations, but also raises the specter and danger of repeating history.

In the final analysis, those who have come for ideological reasons or to support the people of Rojava and their struggle feel that they are equal participants in both the fighting and social transformation while others, at this time a growing minority, who have come with their military experience or a war-tourist type attitude aren't and in some cases don't want to be considered equal, claiming to know more about warfare than the local forces on the ground. This can make for tense exchanges and sometimes physical confrontation and intimidation.

We, as the IRPGF, are both equal and autonomous participants and, of course, we are allies supporting the people's defense. We do not see them as mutually exclusive. Yet, our autonomy is in some ways limited, since we are a part of a much larger struggle with a semi-formalized military structure and set of alliances. We are under the YPG, which means we are under the SDF which at this point cooperates with some US military forces and those of other Western countries in attacking *Daesh*. We see this as pragmatism and, of course, this does not change our opinions that the United States is as much our enemy as *Daesh* or any state for that matter. Yet, we also recognize that since it is the foreign policy of the United States that eventually led to the creation of *Daesh*, they ultimately must be responsible for combating them.

With the complex set of alliances and international powers aside, this struggle contains both indigenous and international characteristics, which makes it all the more important and necessary to defend. What we are currently investigating and learning, through (self-)criticism, theory, and practice, is the relationship of internationalist revolutionary anarchists to an indigenous struggle which sees itself as part of an internationalist revolutionary movement that will spread beyond its "borders."

Since the majority of our energy is focused on armed struggle, we at present have limited projects in civil society. We are presently working to support anarchist initiatives and capabilities within civil society. Yet, social transformation is not exclusive to projects in civil society. For example, local Arab villagers who neighbor the base we are stationed at come every other day to give us milk and yogurt they produce, while we provide them with sugar or other commodities they do not have in an act of mutual aid. This creates a bond of solidarity and collective life. We also have a positive relationship with a few Armenian families in the region. The simple act of drinking chai with someone and kissing them on the cheek is the first step towards building relationships which in the long term can help lay the foundation on which to build projects leading to social transformation.



International fighters, particularly anarchist and communist fighters, have been organizing separately in Rojava for some time already. Why is that? What is your relation to other Kurdish structures?

As we alluded to in the first question, most international anarchist, Apoist, socialist, and communist fighters in addition to other fighters who identify more as anti-fascists and anti-imperialists have been attempting to organize separately in Rojava for some time. This is not something new. Answering this question will

require a description of the historical situation of the Turkish Left and the numerous armed groups that operate within the region.

For the Turkish Left, specifically the Left that is involved in armed struggle and that maintains guerrilla units, the relationship between the groups is one that has changed and adapted over time. There was a time when Turkish Left parties would see each other as enemies as much as they would see the Turkish state or the capitalist system. This led to inter-party violence and even deaths. Yet, as history has revealed, the Turkish state has proved much stronger and more resilient than many have expected. Previously, the vast majority of Turkish society did not advance the struggle as many of the parties, being traditional Marxist-Leninists, dogmatically believed would naturally happen as result of historical necessity. In fact, with the referendum in Turkey nearing, and Erdogan practically secure in an "evet" or "yes" victory, the parties saw a necessity to unite and struggle together. This is not to say that they had not done so before. In fact, many of the parties, the largest one being the PKK, had worked with other guerrilla groups in the vast mountainous regions of Turkey, sharing resources and training and even conducting joint operations. It was on March 6, 2016, when history was made in Turkey with the formation of the People's United Revolutionary Movement (*Halkların Birleşik Devrim Hareketi*). This united front brought 10 of the major parties involved in the armed struggle under one structure and banner to fight against the government of Erdogan and the Turkish state.

Of course, one must also look at Middle Eastern history in general to understand how the various Turkish parties operated within various countries and participated in various conflicts. For example, The Communist Party of Turkey/Marxist-Leninist (TİKKO), ASALA, and the PKK operated in Lebanon (Beqaa valley) and trained alongside the PLO and various Palestinian, Lebanese, and international guerrilla groups, even conducting joint operations. In Syria, the PKK set up its headquarters and opened up party offices and training facilities in Rojava in the 1980s until the mid-'90s. Abdullah Öcalan was able to operate relatively freely with the support of the Syrian regime, who saw Turkey as an enemy. Turkish-Syrian tensions and the threat of war would force Hafiz al-Assad to cut all ties with Öcalan and expel him

from Syrian territory. The collapse of the Soviet Union forced many Turkish and international guerrilla groups underground and limited their mobility, resources, training, and operations. The Syrian Civil War and the start of the revolution in Rojava provided another opportunity for Turkish parties which were illegal, clandestine, and in the mountains to come to set up operations and bases in Rojava by which to support the struggle as well as organize and communicate more freely and effectively. This led to multiple parties setting up *karargahs* (headquarters) in Rojava.

With the struggle in Rojava intensifying and the parties needing to share resources, intelligence, and military operations, the parties, with the lead of MLKP, formed the International Freedom Battalion in Rojava. This experiment in joint management and command, unifying the various parties and groups under one banner to fight, was the first experiment of its kind in Rojava and preceded the formation of Peoples' United Revolutionary Movement (HBDH). This experiment has had mixed results. For example, the IFB is run on the principles of democratic centralism, which we, as the IRPGF, disagree with. We would rather it be horizontal and equal for all groups and members. Additionally, the vast majority of the groups, parties, and fighters within the IFB are Turkish, leading to the international character being skewed. Even Kurdish forces refer to the IFB as "*çepê turk*" or "Turkish Left." Yet, this aside, we would argue that it has had positive and symbolic value as well as various military successes. It has shown that the various parties and groups, including the IRPGF, can work, train, and fight together against a common enemy, uniting our energies and forces to achieve victory both in combat as well as in civil society.

The International Freedom Battalion, though it is directly under the command of the joint leadership of the various parties and groups, is ultimately under the command of YPG and SDF forces. While we are autonomous in terms of our military structures, unit organization, and individual movements, we await orders and directives directly from YPG about our position and movements on the battlefield, as does the rest of the IFB. This situates us directly under the command of YPJ/G and therefore we, too, share their alliances and the battlefield

with those they conduct joint operations with. Yet, the parties and groups maintain their autonomy as separate entities outside the structure of the IFB to disagree with the positions of Kurdish forces and even to criticize certain policies and decisions. Yet, while part of the IFB, we are careful about the positions, views, and perspectives we express while using the IFB name and structure. Ultimately, the IFB has proved to be a unique experiment and laboratory to bring (far/ultra-)leftists and radicals of all colors and persuasions to fight under one unit and command structure.



IRPGF statement of solidarity with the struggle in Brazil.

Considering that the alliance between Kurdish and US forces is not likely to last indefinitely or to create space for radical projects to grow in Rojava, how can anarchists position themselves in this struggle? Can you maintain autonomy from decisions made by others in Rojava who are involved in this alliance?

The word "alliance" here is very misleading, indeed it is a strong and implicit word. The US and its coalition allies, for totally unrelated political and economic reasons, have made a project of eliminating an armed group (*Daesh*) from which the

Revolution must defend itself and which YPJ/G would also like to eradicate. YPJ/YPG are on the same battleground as US forces. Since they share the same enemy, and since the inherent political, ideological, and economic antagonism between the two is, by a certain priority of interests, delayed from igniting, military cooperation is not surprising. There is no political alliance between the US and the revolutionaries of Rojava.

Indeed, we believe that the cooperation between revolutionary forces and US forces is not likely to last. Of course there exist forces here in Rojava that would seek a nation-state or have used nationalist sentiments to stir up support. Right next door is the US supported Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) under the leadership of Masoud Barzani, who is yet another US puppet in the region. The KRG has a virtual embargo on Rojava. Barzani and the KDP are seen by many as traitors for allying themselves with Turkey at the expense of the Kurds and the Ezidis of Shengal. Additionally, the KRG seeks to "stir things up," both politically with groups like the Kurdish National Council (ENKS) and KDP within Rojava as well as militarily with the Rojava *Peshmerga*. The enemies of this revolution are countless.

It is often noted that some anarchist thinkers like Murray Bookchin contributed to this social revolution in the first place, which led Abdullah Öcalan to move away from Marxism-Leninism and create his theory of "Democratic Confederalism." Regardless of how accurate that is, ultimately anarchists both in the armed struggle and in civil society can make an impact on this revolution. Through dialogue and joint projects, we can work with local communities and develop relationships that can further entrench the gains of the revolution while pushing it forward. The more influence anarchists and anarchist philosophy have in dialogue with the people and structures in Rojava, the more we can build something new together and focus on transformation not only in Rojava but around the world. That is the importance of connecting the struggles as we have done so far regarding Belarus, Greece, and Brazil. The struggle in Rojava is the struggle in every oppressed neighborhood and community. It is the struggle for a liberated life and that is where anarchists can have their biggest impact.

As anarchists, we are uncompromisingly against all states and authority. That is non-negotiable. While we fully acknowledge the role of the various parties in struggling and fighting to liberate territory both in Rojava and in the broader mountainous regions of Kurdistan, we believe that critical solidarity allows us to work, fight, and possibly die alongside the parties while having the autonomy to remain critical of their ideologies, structures, feudal mentalities, and numerous policies. We can maintain autonomy in the sense that we can disagree with the positions or choose not to fight should the alliances the revolutionary forces make be beyond survival and pragmatic geostrategic necessity. In the final analysis, should the revolutionary forces make formal alliances with state powers and Rojava be turned into a new state, even if that state is social democratic, the IRPGF would leave and move our base of operations elsewhere to continue the revolutionary struggle. Anarchist projects within civil society would still be able to operate and function so long as they were allowed to do so, and they should, but, it is most likely that anarchist as well as communist guerrilla groups would no longer be allowed to operate in Rojava.

From Rojava to Belarus: Solidarity with the Anarchist Prisoners



IRPGF statement of solidarity with the struggle in Belarus.

Have you experienced a tension between engaging in armed struggle and developing social projects in Rojava? In what ways do they feed into each other and reinforce each other? In what ways are they in contradiction?

Our group is only in the beginning stages of developing social projects in Rojava. It is difficult for a unit to organize and maintain social projects while engaged, at the same time, in armed struggle if it lacks the resources in terms of personnel and infrastructure. This requires more people to be here; we must reach the critical mass necessary to develop a successful project. Some of our comrades have worked in civil society before and are actively working on creating new initiatives that are both sustainable and achievable. This will allow us to achieve our respective commitments to the armed struggle and the social revolution.

Has the war effort in the Rojava community subjected other structures to its imperatives? Are there spaces or spheres of life in which control is centered in the hands of militarized groups, contributing to de facto hierarchical relations? How do we prevent military priorities from determining who has power in a community at war?

Certainly the war in Rojava and the broader Syrian and Iraqi Civil Wars have drastically changed the relationship between civil society and military forces. What is currently going on in Rojava can be aptly described and characterized, as some *hevals* [comrades] have put it, as "war communism." The current situation in Rojava has subjected much of the economy and civil society to the war effort. However, this is not surprising. Rojava is surrounded by enemies who seek to destroy the nascent revolutionary experiment. *Daesh* is a highly lethal and efficient para-state actor with tremendous resources, both financial and military, as well as a fighting force numbering in the tens of thousands. As such, it is one of the most brutal and capable threats against Rojava itself. Had it not been for the massive war effort on the part of large segments of the society, most notably the resistance of Kobanê and its subsequent victory which was a pivotal turning point, *Daesh* would have been victorious and continued its rapid expansion.

While the war has turned and *Daesh* is now on the run both in Iraq and Syria, Turkey entered the war seeking to stifle YPJ/G efforts to secure contiguity between the Kobanê and Afrîn cantons. One must be cognizant of the fact that almost daily, Turkish forces on the borders of Rojava bombard targets within its territory, killing scores of civilians and military forces. Likewise, to the east in Iraq, the Kurdistan Regional Government (*Bashur*) under the leadership of Masoud Barzani and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) continue to impose a virtual blockade and embargo on Rojava in addition to attacking People's Defense Force (HPG) and The Sinjar Resistance Units (YBŞ) positions in Shengal using the *Peshmerga*. Additionally, Barzani and the KDP collude with Erdogan, the fascist Justice and Development Party – Nationalist Movement Party (AKP-MHP) government and the Turkish state, sharing intelligence, resources, and conducting joint military operations.

Without a doubt, war leads to de facto hierarchical relationships and seriously hinders horizontal relations and community power. In fact, multiple layers of hierarchical relationships exist. There are hierarchies within the party structures which permeate social structures and extend into the broader civil society. Those tend to be, for example, whether someone is a cadre or not, how long they have been in the movement for, their ideological formation and knowledge, their influence and contacts in addition to their combat experience. This can be perceived as a system of rank, privilege, and advancement. It does in fact exist, but it is something that operates in tension with a party which is self-critical of this and an ideology that seeks to transcend these relations in the midst of a real existing social revolution. While the cadre members of the militarized groups do in fact have a de facto social position which would be above other people in society, they ultimately answer to the people through the commune structure and the larger framework of the Northern Syrian Federation. Ultimately, these hierarchical relations exist as a military necessity in the midst of one of the most brutal wars. As anarchists, we see them and understand why they are necessary while being critical of their existence and seeking to challenge these relations of centralized authority and control. It is positive that these relations can be criticized using the **tekmil process** (a directly democratic assembly for critiquing a commander or

others in a unit), a serious, vital practice of criticism-self-criticism and self-discipline which has its roots in Maoism.

Hierarchical relations of power, while sometimes necessitated by military realities and priorities in the context of combat, must exist as something which we want and desire from one another in order to act effectively. When there is time for deliberation, we can discuss, criticize, and make collective decisions. In combat, one expects immediate guidance, instruction, protection, certainty, and accountability from comrades more experienced and knowledgeable, because there are many decisions and tasks affecting the group that one cannot deal with and should not be burdened with. This applies to training and secure recruiting as well. But these relations can ultimately have the potential to harm the autonomous, horizontal, and self-organized nature of communities if they are not understood and practiced in accordance with other ideological principles. How can we, as anarchists and members of the IRPGF, prevent kyriarchal relations in this context—that is, in these overlapping contexts? The complexity of this question additionally reveals an inherent problem with how the question is framed. That is to say, that somehow the military priorities or defense of a community are separated from the community itself; imposed from without by some non-community actor. While it is true that military priorities are imposed on some communities, for example, evacuating villages that are on the front lines, in danger of attacks and using people's homes for temporary military outposts, the fact is that in Rojava, local communities, neighborhoods, and ethno-religious communities are responsible for their own defense.

This is not something new. In fact, it goes back to the Qamishlo riots of 2004 (an uprising of Syrian Kurds in the northeast) that led to the creation of community defense initiatives and the precursor to the YPG. To protect against the larger defense structure, the YPG, should it seek to impose its will in a military style coup and take power away from the communities, communities have their own defense forces, the HPC (*Hêzên Parastina Cewherî*). While the YPG represents the people's guerrilla army of Rojava, there are smaller forces—for example, the Syriac Military Council which is comprised of Syriac Christians and works to protect that

community. Defense itself is decentralized and confederalized while at the same time retaining the ability to deploy rapidly, to call on troops and even conscription, which does occur in Rojava.

We believe and affirm that communities at war must be responsible for their own defense. Yet, with large state, para-state, and non-state actors attacking these communities in an effort to wipe them out, there is a necessity for even larger military forces. This may necessitate certain processes that, in a time of war, curtail the autonomy of a community. This reality is one that we are forced to live with. Ultimately, there is a dichotomy and tension between communities at war and the military forces which confront enemies sometimes many times their size. We are tasked with ensuring, as much as possible, that communities retain their autonomy and decision-making processes while simultaneously protecting them and ensuring their survival. Communities are ultimately responsible for their defense; when the need arises, all the unique and diverse communities can come together to form a larger military force for their collective protection. This means that each community constitutes a fundamental component part of the much larger force whose task is the protection of all the communities. This tension, between the community and military, is but another aspect of the philosophical tension between the particular and the universal. Our task is to ensure that this imbalance is minimized as much as possible so that communities can remain autonomous and ultimately have the final say as to their priorities and defense.



What is it that distinguishes anarchist armed struggle formations and strategies from other examples of armed struggle? If you oppose **"standing armies' or ossified revolutionary groups"** but grant that armed struggle may be necessary until it is impossible to force hierarchical institutions onto anyone, what is the methodological difference that can keep long-term anarchist guerrilla forces from functioning in the same way that a standing army or ossified revolutionary group does, concentrating social power?

A question often asked of us is how we are different from other armed left-wing groups? What are our distinguishing characteristics? As an anarchist armed struggle formation, along with other anarchist groups around the world, we strive for liberated communities and individuals based on fundamental principles within anarchism. We are not dogmatic nor orthodox in our understanding of anarchism, but perpetual iconoclasts and innovators. Anarchism is an ever changing and growing ideology that cannot be separated from life itself. While other non-anarchist left-wing groups may want some version of socialism and/or communism, we are ultimately distinguished from these armed struggle

formations by our understanding of authority, both within the group and beyond. We have no leader. There are no cults of personality and no portraits of ourselves hanging on the wall. We take inspiration from the Zapatistas who cover their faces and focus more on the collective than on individuals, for we, as a collective of individuals, represent many unique identities and social positions. We make decisions by consensus, and when we are on the battlefield we agree on one or more comrades who will be responsible for the operation. There is no permanent command structure within the IRPGF. There are rotating positions of responsibility and assignments, the logic being not to reproduce military ranks or technocratic class structures.

Anarchist armed struggle formations are not new. For example, there are anarchist groups around the world including the Conspiracy of Cells of Fire, FAI-IRF (Informal Anarchist Federation - International Revolutionary Front), and Revolutionary Struggle. We do not necessarily agree with all the positions of these groups or their members. For us, we do not seek to be elitist or to be mountain guerrillas who leave the world to focus on people's war in the countryside, though that is an important aspect of the struggle. We seek to bring the mountains to the cities and vice versa. It is important to connect all the struggles around the world, for they are interconnected by nature due to the various systems of oppression and domination which exist. We too "shit on all the revolutionary vanguards of the world" as Subcomandante Marcos once said. We do not see ourselves as anarchist vanguards. We are anything but this.

The IRPGF feels it is necessary to be with the people and to understand the social character of the revolutionary process. There is no revolution without all of the communities, neighborhoods, and villages participating. We do not seek to glorify the arms and weapons we possess, though we do see them as a vehicle towards our collective liberation. Yet liberation is not possible if the social revolution is not present. Therefore, we are not another urban guerrilla group that seeks only to destroy without building anything social and communal. Of course, having arms and engaging in armed struggle carries with it a tremendous responsibility and great danger, not only for ourselves but for the power we possess. We agree with

the guerrillas who often repeat the Maoist principle of not even taking pins from the people. We are revolutionaries guided by principles, not a marauding gang of mercenaries. This is the foundation by which we, as the IRPGF, seek to develop a collective ethic and understanding of armed struggle.

Knowing full well that armed struggle may be necessary for many years and decades to come, and realizing that as the years progress, structures become more entrenched and rigid, we are concerned about the creation of certain group dynamics that could lead to various hierarchies and a concentration of social power wherever we are based. In order to minimize this risk, we feel that it is necessary to not only be professional full-time revolutionaries but equally members of a living community. That means that we must be involved with local struggles and projects within civil society. Whereas a standing army or an ossified revolutionary group see their position as either professional work or lifelong dedication to struggle, they both maintain their distance and remoteness from communities and everyday life.

Anarchist guerrilla groups must remain horizontal entities and resist the temptation or structural necessity to centralize and concentrate social power. Should they fail to do this, they would no longer be liberating nor anarchist, in our perspective. As the IRPGF, understanding this danger, we feel that developing projects and developing relationships within civil society is the main way to withstand the creation of social hierarchies. It is a process that will be fraught with contradictions and errors. Yet it is through these contradictions and shortcomings coupled with our criticism-self-criticism mechanisms and horizontal self-organized structure that will challenge the creation of an ossified revolutionary group that has centralized its own authority and concentrated social power.



As you say, the conflicts in Syria, Ukraine, and elsewhere are only the beginning of what will be a protracted and messy period of global crisis. But what do you consider the proper relationship between armed struggle and revolution? Should anarchists seek to commence armed struggle as soon as possible in the revolutionary process, or to delay it as long as we can? And how can anarchists hold our own on the terrain of armed struggle, when so much depends on getting arms—which usually means making deals with state or para-state actors?

First of all, there is no general formula for how much armed struggle is necessary to initiate and advance the revolutionary process, nor at which point it should commence, if at all. For the IRPGF, we recognize that each group, collective, community, and neighborhood must ultimately decide when they initiate armed struggle. Armed struggle is contextual to the specific location and situation. For example, whereas throwing a Molotov cocktail at police is fairly normalized in the Exarchia neighborhood in Athens, Greece, in the United States the person throwing it would be shot dead by the police. Each particular local context has a different threshold for what the state allows in terms of violence. However, this is

not an excuse for inaction. We believe that armed struggle is necessary. Ultimately, people must be willing to sacrifice their social position, privilege, and lives if necessary. Yet we are not asking people to go on suicide/sacrifice missions. This struggle is not for martyrdom but for life. Should it require martyrs, like the struggle here in Rojava and Kurdistan, that will be part of the armed struggle and revolutionary process as it unfolds.

Armed struggle does not necessarily create the conditions for a revolution and some revolutions may occur with little to no armed struggle. Both armed struggle and revolutions can be spontaneous or planned years in advance. Yet, local or national revolutions, which in some cases have been peaceful, do not create the conditions for world revolution nor challenge the hegemony of the capitalist world-system. What remains our fundamental question here is—when should one commence armed struggle? To start, we think that one has to analyze their local situation and context. The creation of local community and neighborhood defense forces which are openly armed is a critical first step to ensuring autonomy and self-protection. This is a powerful symbolic act and one that will certainly attract the attention of the state and its repressive forces. Insurrection should happen everywhere and at all times, but it doesn't necessarily need to happen with rifles. Ultimately, armed struggle should always be done in relation to living communities and neighborhoods. This will prevent vanguard mentalities and hierarchical social positions from developing.

Revolutions are not dinner parties and, what's worse, we do not choose the dinner guests. How can we, as anarchists, remain principled in our political positions when we have to rely on state, para-state, and non-state actors to get arms and other resources? Firstly, there is no ideologically clean and pure revolution or armed struggle. Our weapons were made in former Communist countries and given to us by revolutionary political parties. The base we are staying in and the supplies and resources we receive come from the various parties operating here and ultimately from the people themselves. Clearly, we as anarchists have not liberated the kind of territory we would need to operate on our own. We must make deals. The question then becomes: how principled can our deals be?

We have relationships with revolutionary political parties that are communist, socialist, and Apoist. For us, we fight against the same enemy at this point and our combined resources and fighters can only further the struggle. Yet, we remain in critical alliance and solidarity with them. We disagree with their feudal mentalities, their dogmatic ideological positions, and their vision of seizing state power. We both know that should they one day seize state power, we will be enemies. Yet for the time being, we are not only allies but comrades in the struggle. This does not mean that we have sacrificed our principles. On the contrary, we have opened a dialogue on anarchism and criticized their ideological positions while affirming the principles and theoretical positions we share in common. This exchange has transformed us both and is part of what some of them refer to as the dialectical process: the necessity of both theory and practice to advance both the armed struggle and the social revolution.

For the IRPGF, making deals with other leftist revolutionary groups we can find common ground with is a reality we live with. Yet, we also must acknowledge that the larger guerrilla structure that we are a part of does make deals with state actors. While we once again reaffirm our position against all states, which is non-negotiable, our structure makes pragmatic deals with state actors to survive another day to fight. For the time being, all of our supplies and resources come from revolutionary parties that we are in alliance with, who also make concessions and deals with state and non-state actors. We recognize this as a contradiction but a harsh reality of our current conditions.

Anarchists must choose, depending on their particular context and situation, what kind of deals they can make and with whom. Should they need to be pragmatic and make deals with state, para-state, or non-state actors to acquire arms, to hold on to their terrain, or to, at the very least, survive, that will be addressed and critiqued when the time comes. Ultimately, collectives and communities will make decisions for how to advance in the revolutionary process and how to use the various state and non-state actors for their benefit, with the goal of eventually not needing them and destroying them all. In the final analysis, armed struggle is necessary for the revolutionary process and the various alliances we make we

deem necessary to achieve this goal of a liberated world. We, as the IRPGF, believe and affirm the often-repeated phrase from Greece that the only lost struggles are the ones that weren't given.

Şehîd Kawa Amed (Paolo Todd) Eulogy

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IRPGF Eulogy for Şehîd Kawa Amed (Paolo Todd)

Sooner or later, every revolution divides into its constituent parts and necessary conflicts ensue. These conflicts determine the ultimate outcome of the revolution. Has this already begun in Rojava? If it has, how have anarchists dealt with this? If it has not, how can you prepare comrades around the world for the situation we will be in when the internal conflicts in the revolution rise to the surface, and it is necessary to figure out what the different positions are? Some comrades outside Rojava have been unsure how to understand some of the reports from Rojava, because in our experience there are always internal conflicts, even in the strongest periods of social revolution, and people reporting on the experiment in Rojava have been hesitant to articulate what they are. We can understand

why it would be necessary not to speak openly about such conflicts, but any perspective you can offer us will be very useful, even if it is abstract.

The simple answer is yes, these conflicts have begun in Rojava. Within such a large party and confederal structure, contradictions and different factions have emerged. There are those who seek to carry the revolution to the end and others who are ready to make compromises on certain aspects of the revolution in order to secure whatever has been achieved up until now. There are those who still dream of a Marxist-Leninist Kurdistan and others who are ready to open up to the West and ally themselves with the "forces of democracy." Within the armed struggle, there are some who want to unleash an all-out people's war while others claim that the time for armed struggle is nearing its end and that we should slowly cease hostilities. Within this chaotic political arena, with what is a seemingly endless array of acronyms, how do we as members of the IRPGF navigate these murky and often dangerous waters?

As anarchists, we navigate within these complexities and contradictions with the goal of trying to claim as much ground as possible for anarchism. We align ourselves with the sections of the revolution and the party that are closest to us. The alliances we forge are ones that are most facilitating and the least assimilating. We try to keep ourselves safe from assimilation both ideologically and as a group. Being in an autonomous space that supports our goals provides us with tremendous opportunities. There is free space that the party gives to groups such as ours for training, to develop projects and outright space for revolutionary experimentation. The more anarchists come here to Rojava to help us build anarchist structures, the more we will influence and make our goals a reality in society. For example, the youth, who are more critical of their feudal and traditional past, are at the forefront of tremendous social changes and advancements. We want to work with the youth to form educational cooperation and, as anarchists, to focus on anarchist theory and even address queer, gender, and sexuality (LGBTQ+) issues which are still very taboo in the majority of society.

There is a vast space to experiment and build the anarchist structures that will continue to revolutionize society and further liberate all individuals and communities. We believe that our work as anarchists, both in the armed struggle and in civil society here in Rojava, will be valuable to the entire anarchist community worldwide. We look forward to sharing our results, to everyone's continued solidarity, and to the anarchists who will join us out here.

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Building Anarchist Forces: The IRPGF and the International Struggle

By **Anonymous Contributor** - April 28, 2017

The first anarchist battalion has been launched in Rojava, and with that a new call for revolutionary anarchists from around the world to join them. Rojava Solidarity NYC (RS NYC) conducted an interview with the members of the International Revolutionary People's Guerrilla Forces (IRPGF) about how they got started, how they have experienced revolutionary life and the possibilities for anarchists when an autonomous region supports the movement.

RS NYC: What made you decide to come to Rojava?

IRPGF: We decided to come to Rojava to defend the ongoing social revolution unfolding here and in the broader region. We wanted to support the revolution not only with words and with solidarity events but with our physical presence and our lives. The revolution's primary focus on women's liberation and ecology are vital to any liberatory revolution and thus something we not only support and defend but also seek to spread. Additionally, we wanted to learn as much as we could about tactics and practices from the various militant Apoist and communist parties as well as create a space for anarchist militants in the revolution.

RS NYC: How do you see your role in Rojava? And has it changed over the course of each member's involvement, from arriving to forming this collective?

IRPGF: Our role in Rojava is first and foremost to help defend and ensure the success of the revolution on both a social and military level. Secondly, our role includes spreading anarchist principles and theory through education programs and exchanges with local communes and collectives. We see ourselves here in Rojava as a constitutive part of the project of democratic confederalism and we carry out whatever work is necessary to achieve the project's revolutionary goals and aims. While we all came here with these ideals and principles, the longer we have stayed the more we have seen and understood the richness and complexity of the revolution and the people, not only in an analytic sense but also in an emotional sense. For example, here we have gained a new understanding of comradeship that would have never developed in individualistic societies. This has allowed our understanding of the revolution to be much more nuanced and comprehensive than any armchair revolutionary attempting to critique from afar.

RS NYC: What are the characteristics or practices you've found in Rojava that exemplify the revolution for you?

IRPGF: One of the main characteristics and practices that exemplify the revolution and its ideals include the Tekmil, which is the term for the revolutionary practice of criticism and self-criticism implemented into the PKK by Öcalan and now used in revolutionary institutions in both the social and military spheres. The teknil is used for several purposes: to ensure that people are continuously improving themselves and their relationships with those around them, as a means of resolving differences and tensions in a healthy and effective way, to keep the goals of a shared revolutionary horizon at the forefront of the struggle, and to restrict hierarchical relationships from forming within autonomous groups. Other main characteristics include collective life, women's empowerment and defense, people's defense, pluralism (religious, ethnic), efforts to bridge ethnic conflicts (reconciliation), and politics being an integral part of life for many. All of these characteristics have worked together to enable a heterogeneous population of human beings to not only liberate and defend themselves but also confront and work to reconcile conflicts that threaten their own solidarity. To us, this type of continual struggle to advance the emancipation of all is what it means to be revolutionary.

RS NYC: How do you see the Rojava Revolution in relation to anarchist struggles around the world?

IRPGF: The Rojava Revolution, much like the revolution in Chiapas in the 90's, is one of indigenous peoples not only standing up against colonizers and imperialists, but also seeking to transcend capitalism and the nation-state. The Rojava Revolution and its principles are in

line with those of anarchism and provides hope to other indigenous communities around the world who are co-struggling against their oppression and for their liberation. For example, Şehîd Kawa Amed was a native american and NoDAPL activist who traveled to Rojava to show his solidarity with the revolution and ultimately give his life for the cause. It is people like this who reveal the interconnectedness of indigenous and anarchist struggles around the world and fill us with the inspiration and determination to keep the struggle alive.

RS NYC: What are the larger goals of this organization?

IRPGF: Beyond supporting and defending the revolution in Rojava, we as IRPGF seek to advance the cause of anarchism around the world and continue the armed struggle until world revolution. In the meantime, we aim to create a training base in the region explicitly for anarchists to come, train, and prepare for the revolution both here and on their home fronts. We hope that this base will serve as a collective space where anarchists can come to learn a variety of revolutionary skills, spanning from the social to the guerrilla. Additionally, with the creation of this group, we aim to inspire more anarchists to come to the region and show physical solidarity for the revolution. For those anarchists that are unable to come for reasons outside their control, we hope that they can still support us and the revolutionary movements around the world through local solidarity actions and other creative means.

RS NYC: What would be the ideal outcomes for IRPGF?

IRPGF: Ideal outcomes first include the success of the revolution in Rojava and the spread of anarchist revolution and insurrection in every neighborhood around the world. Additionally, an anarchist base that can act as a center for revolutionary living and training for the foreseeable future would also be ideal. See you all in Rojava.

RS NYC: How did you come to the conclusion to make this group?

IRPGF: During the Spanish Civil War, tens of thousands of international volunteers and revolutionaries traveled to Spain from as far as China to show their solidarity and give their lives for a revolution that unfortunately proved to be unsuccessful. During the Syrian Civil War today, less than a thousand international revolutionaries have come to support and defend the ongoing social revolution in Rojava. We asked ourselves – how could it be that in the age of the Internet, air travel, and a thus vastly interconnected world was there such a lack of substantial international solidarity. We have heard criticisms from those who pay lip service to the Spanish Civil War, yet attempt to shame those that travel to Rojava with terms such as

adventurists, imperialists, racists, and more. However, it is precisely those who level such critiques and do not show their physical solidarity here in Rojava who are the real racists, islamophobes, and imperialists. Instead of risking their comfort, privilege, and craft beer, they remain on their cushions, enjoying the material comforts provided by the imperialist and colonialist powers that have created the fascist monsters in this region. Thus, we came to the conclusion to make this group in order to fill the vacuum left by the anarchists who had yet to do so.

RS NYC: Have there been any particular scenes or anecdotes that have reaffirmed your impressions of or commitments to the revolutionary project in Rojava?

IRPGF: One of the most vivid scenes occurred when one of our comrades was staying with a family and a woman of the family began to tell our comrade about her experience with receiving education from and getting involved with the Mala Jin. She related how it changed her life, how she was able to revolutionize her perception of herself as a human being, and how a world of possibilities had opened up for her. Her eyes while discussing this are something that our comrade will never forget. Still, our comrade notes that one mostly experiences the revolutionary spirit in day to day life and those moments of true liberation don't come from the institutions that have been set up but from the cultural changes that have occurred, which are almost impossible to capture with words.

Another event occurred on the eve of Nevroz. During the night, the city streets were full of fires usually consisting of burning tires. People were gathered around them chanting, singing and dancing. This was the day that for decades had been repressed and forbidden for Kurds in Syria and Turkey. Now it was celebrated openly as a day of cultural expression and liberation with great joy and excitement. While we were riding around the city in our pick up truck waving, shouting and occasionally shooting off AK's with our comrades, a large convoy of cars appeared. They were packed with people who were hanging out the windows and even on the roofs of the vehicles waving flags, chanting and shouting. Some were shooting tracer rounds from their weapons since there were no fireworks for the festivities. We quickly pulled into the convoy and drove around the city for hours honking the horn, waving to the people gathered on the streets or looking from their balconies and windows and blasting revolutionary music. During the evening we stumbled upon a large fire with many young children holding hands, jumping up and down while singing and dancing. In front of the fire was a group of young girls of all ages holding their hands up in the victory symbol and jumping up and down shouting "Jin, Jiyan, Azadî!" or "Women, Life, Freedom!" Some of our comrades got emotional as the

girls shouted with such joy and freedom. One comrade looked over and said that even if the revolution is defeated, it would not have been in vain for this was the revolution victorious.

Lastly, a scene that cannot be left unmentioned is that of one of the şehîd ceremonies (essentially a funeral) for one international and two local comrades. Even though it was just two people from the region that had passed, the entire village and surrounding villages came to the ceremony. All of the people came with their various YPG, YPJ, and related flags, all while yelling powerful chants of 'Şehîd Namirin! (Martyrs don't die!) and 'Bi can, bi xwîn, em bi te re ne ey şehîd! (With soul, with blood, we are with you şehîd!' They came together, cried together, and experienced the death of a loved one together. This is due to the fact that death is still a very communal event here; people know that a death in the community does not just affect the individual, rather it affects everyone as each individual makes up part of the whole. Further, they understand the need for physical solidarity with each other, which was thoroughly exemplified by the attendance of the HPC, or the community defense militias – consisting mainly of women ready to help defend their community from anyone that attempts to infringe on its autonomy, whether it be daîş, the asayîş, or even the YPG. Scenes and anecdotes such as these not only remind us why we fight and but also fill us with hope that the revolution will both continue to flourish in the region and spread to the rest of the world.

RS NYC: What do you see as the greatest threat to the revolution?

IRPGF: The greatest threats to the revolution comes from various fronts: counterrevolutionary forces; imperialist forces and/or colonial forces such as Turkey, USA, Assad, Russia, Iran, and Barzani – KDP/ENKS; religious/ethnic sectarianism; and a liberal, statist outcome of the revolution. As individual anarchists and as a collective under the name IRPGF, we will combat these threats and do everything possible to ensure their destruction if they take a strike at the revolution. For any anarchist interested in becoming a part of IRPGF, this is a prerequisite.

RS NYC: How would you like to position IRPGF in relation to struggles internationally?

IRPGF: From Chile to Greece, anarchist groups have risen and answered the call of armed struggle. In other areas where armed struggle is not yet possible, anarchists have creatively developed infrastructure and projects that truly address social issues when no one else would. We see ourselves as a part of these larger anarchist movements and we extend our support and solidarity to the anarchists who currently struggle both in and outside of the confines of the state. We also honor and praise the brave anarchists around the world who have given their lives to defeat oppression in all of its forms. In the long term, we hope to create a

network of armed anarchist groups around the world who can jointly struggle against capitalism and the state.

RS NYC: Did coming to Rojava change how you see the nature of the anarchist struggle?

IRPGF: Anarchist struggle without praxis is not struggle. Therefore, with a unified understanding of theory and praxis necessary for revolution, we have seen how taking up arms changes the struggle and our relationship to it and to one another. The severe lack of international anarchist support is both shameful and indicative of a larger problem within the anarchist movement – the unwillingness to truly put one's life on the line for the struggle. Thus, beyond all the self deception, delusion and congratulatory anarchist politics is the very truth of the struggle; that in order to change the world one must be willing to risk their lives, their comfort and their privilege. What this entails is of course relative to the area you are organizing in. For example, if people in your area are experiencing heavy ICE raids, begin sabotaging these raids by any means possible. If mosques are being attacked by far right extremists, form groups to help prevent such attacks and expel fascists from the area. Pick up a gun if necessary. Stand in front of a gun if necessary. If one is not ready to do this, they, in our opinion, cannot call themselves a revolutionary.

RS NYC: What sorts of skills and practices would you recommend anarchist revolutionaries develop to help them further the struggle?

IRPGF: Considering that revolution will contain both social and military aspects, we suggest that to prepare adequately and further the struggle, people must learn to live communally and develop the skills to carry out armed struggle. This is precisely the reason we see it as imperative that we create a base in the region for anarchists to travel to and do just that.

RS NYC: There are many groups around the world right now hoping to bring the practices of the Rojava Revolution back home. What sort of advice would you give them?

IRPGF: First, some advice is to be aware of the local contexts and develop programs specific to not only the current but historical local contexts. Second, to defeat the imposed alienation of both the State and Capital, it is important to find a way to develop means of spending time with each other that create and maintain truly revolutionary relationships. Experiencing life communally is an essential part of existing in Rojava and a key factor in the people's ability to continually rise up and defend each other when necessary. People here care about those around them in a much deeper sense than the capitalist concept of simply scratching each

other's backs. To recreate this sense of community in Western societies we will first need to revolutionize ourselves and our relationships with each other. Call outs on social media need to be done away with. Baseless egos and smugness need to be done away with. Those attitudes have done nothing but further stagnate the movement. Bring yourself back down to the level of those around you, begin to perceive the movement as more than just something to boost your self-esteem, and struggle. Until this is done, a revolution will not be possible. So, spend time with each other. If you see problems in your comrades' behavior, address them as a group that cares about each other's improvement as revolutionary human beings, rather than taking it to Facebook and denouncing them publicly. Create groups that enable people to begin to rely on each other again instead of the State. Get to know your neighbors and their problems. Don't think of yourself as better or separate from the general populous, as a real revolution needs to flow up from the people. Hold neighborhood assemblies that allow for projects to develop around local needs and put your lives on the line for others. Develop decentralized defense militias that can go to war with the State and its lackeys (cops, boneheads, etc.). In short, this is a time in the West when anarchism may either succeed or fail completely and the path it will take is in all of our hands.

RS NYC: What are the best ways for people back home to join in your mission and support your work?

IRPGF: Of course, the best way for anarchists back home to join in our mission and work would be to come to Rojava and join the struggle directly. However, we are well aware that this is not possible for everyone and understand the need for ways to support us from afar. One simple yet crucial way to do so would be to join or create a local Rojava Solidarity group and help fund raise for our military and medical supplies. Bleeding out is the number one killer here and blood coagulates such as cellox are unfortunately in short supply. That and generally spreading awareness about the revolution and anarchist participation in it would be very helpful. Of course, continuing to advance the anarchist movement in your own neighborhoods and fighting shoulder-to-shoulder with the oppressed wherever you are will help the overarching mission and work of anarchism as well.

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Feminism and Gender Abolition

Women in Prison: How It Is With Us

Assata Shakur / Joanne Chesimard
published in The Black Scholar, April 1978

Assata Shakur was a member of the Black Panther Party who went underground to evade police repression, joining the Black Liberation Army. She was captured in 1973 and held as a political prisoner until 1979 (one year after this article was written), when she was broken out of prison by a unit of the Black Liberation Army. She made her way to Cuba where she lives to this day, despite increasing pressure from the United States for her extradition.

We sit in the bull pen. We are all black. All restless. And we are all freezing. When we ask, the matron tells us that the heating system cannot be adjusted. All of us, with the exception of a woman, tall and gaunt, who looks naked and ravished, have refused the bologna sandwiches. The rest of us sit drinking bitter, syrupy tea. The tall, fortyish woman, with sloping shoulders, moves her head back and forth to the beat of a private tune while she takes small, tentative bites out a bologna sandwich. Someone asks her what she's in for. Matter of factly, she says, "They say I killed some nigga. But how could I have when I'm buried down in South Carolina?" Everybody's face gets busy exchanging looks. A short, stout young woman wearing men's pants and men's shoes says, "Buried in South Carolina?" "Yeah," says the tall woman. "South Carolina, that's where I'm buried. You don't know that? You don't know shit, do you? This ain't me. This ain't me." She kept repeating, "This ain't me" until she had eaten all the bologna sandwiches. Then she brushed off the crumbs and withdrew, head moving again, back into that world where only she could hear her private tune.

Lucille comes to my tier to ask me how much time a "C" felony conviction carries. I know, but i cannot say the words. I tell her i will look it up and bring the sentence charts for her to see. I know that she has just been convicted of manslaughter in the second degree. I also know that she can be sentenced up to fifteen years. I knew from what she had told me before that the District Attorney was willing to plea bargain: Five years probation in exchange for a guilty pleaø a lesser charge.

Her lawyer felt that she had a case: specifically, medical records which would prove that she had suffered repeated physical injunes as the result of beatings by the deceased and, as a result of those beatings, on the night of her arrest her arm was mutilated (she must still wear a brace on it) and one of her ears was partially severed in addition to other substantial injunes Her lawyer felt that her testimony, when she took the stand in her own defense, would establish the fact that not only had she been repeatedly beaten by the deceased, but that on the night in question he told her he would kill her, viciously beat her and mauled her with a knife. But there is no self defense in the state of New York.

The District Attorney made a big deal of the fact that she drank. And the jury, affected by t.v. racism, "law and order", petrified by crime and unimpressed with Lucille as a "responsible citizen," convicted her. And i was the one who had to tell her that she was facing fifteen years in prison while we both silently wondered what would happen to the four teenage children that she had raised almost single-handedly.

Spikey has short time, and it is evident, the day before she is to be released, that she does not want to go home. She comes to the Bing (Administrative Segregation) because she has received an infraction for fighting. Sitting in front of her cage and talking to her i realize that the fight was a desperate, last ditch effort in hope that the prison would take away her "good days." She is in her late thirties. Her hands are swollen. Enormous. There are huge, open sores on her legs. She has about ten teeth left. And her entire body is scarred and ashen. She has been on drugs about twenty years. Her veins have collapsed. She has fibrosis epilepsy and edema. She has not seen her three children in about eight years. She is ashamed to contact home because she robbed and abused her mother so many times.

When we talk it is around the Christmas holidays and she tells me about her bad luck. She tells me that she has spent the last four Christmases in jail and tells me how happy she is to be going home. But i know that she has no where to go and that the only "friends" she has in the world are here in jail. She tells me that the only regret she has about leaving is that she won't be singing in the choir at Christmas. As i talk to her i wonder if she will be back. I tell her good bye and wish her luck. Six days later, through the prison grapevine, i hear that she is back. Just in time for the Christmas show.

We are at sick call. We are waiting on wooden benches in a beige and orange room to see the doctor. Two young women who look only mildly battered by life sit wearing pastel dresses and pointy-toed state shoes. (Wearing "state" is often a sign that the wearer probably cannot afford to buy sneakers in commissary.) The two are talking about how well they were doing on the street. Eavesdropping, i find out that they both have fine "old men" that love the mess out of them. I find out that their men dress fly and wear some baad clothes and so do they. One has 40 pairs of shoes while the other has 100 skirts. One has 2 suede and 5 leather coats. The other has 7 suedes and 3 leathers. One has 3 mink coats, a silver fox and a leopard. The other has 2 minks, a fox jacket, a floor length fox and a chinchilla. One has 4 diamond rings and the other has 5. One lives in a duplex with a sunken tub and a sunken living room with a water fall. The other describes a mansion with a revolving living room. I'm relieved when my name is called. I had been sitting there feeling very, very sad.

There are no criminals here at Riker's Island Correctional Institution for Women, (New York), only victims. Most of the women (over 95%) are black and Puerto Rican. Many were abused children. Most have been abused by men and all have been abused by "the system."

There are no big time gangsters here, no premeditated mass murderers, no godmothers. There are no big time dope dealers, no kidnappers, no Watergate women. There are virtually no women here charged with white collar crimes like embezzling or fraud. Most of the women have drug related cases. Many are charged as accessories to crimes committed by men. The major crimes that women here are charged with are prostitution, pick-pocketing, shop lifting, robbery and drugs. Women who have prostitution cases or who are doing "fine" time make up a substantial part of the short term population. The women see stealing or hustling as necessary for the survival of themselves or their children because jobs are scarce and welfare is impossible to live on. One thing is clear: amerikan capitalism is in no way threatened by the women in prison on Riker's Island.

One gets the impression, when first coming to Riker's Island that the architects conceived of it as a prison modelled after a juvenile center. In the areas where visitors usually pass there is plenty of glass and plenty of plants and flowers. The cell blocks consist of two long corridors with cells on each side connected by a watch room where the guards are stationed, called a bubble. Each corridor has a day room with a t.v., tables, multi-colored chairs, a stove that doesn't work and a refrigerator. There's a

utility room with a sink and a washer and dryer that do not work.

Instead of bars the cells have doors which are painted bright, optimistic colors with slim glass observation panels. The doors are controlled electronically by the guards in the bubble. The cells are called rooms by everybody. They are furnished with a cot, a closet, a desk, a chair, a plastic upholstered headboard that opens for storage, a small book case, a mirror, a sink and a toilet. The prison distributes brightly colored bedspreads and throw rugs for a homey effect. There is a school area, a gym, a carpeted auditorium, two inmate cafeterias and outside recreation areas that are used during the summer months only.

The guards have successfully convinced most of the women that Riker's Island is a country club. They say that it is a playhouse compared to some other prisons (especially male): a statement whose partial veracity is not predicated upon the humanity of correction officials at Riker's Island, but, rather, by contrast to the unbelievably barbaric conditions of other prisons. Many women are convinced that they are, somehow, "getting over." Some go so far as to reason that because they are not doing hard time, they are really in prison.

This image is further reinforced the pseudo-motherly attitude many of the guards; a deception which all too often successfully reverts women children. The guards call the women inmates by their first names. The women address the guards either as Officer, Mis --- or by nicknames, (Teddy Bear, Spanky, Aunt Louise, Squeeze, Sarge, Black Beauty, Nutty Mahogany, etc.). Frequently, when a woman returns to Riker's she will make the rounds, gleefully embracing her favorite guard: the prodigal daughter returns.

If two women are having a debate about any given topic the argument will often be resolved by "asking the officer." The guards are forever telling the women to "grow up," to "act like ladies," to "behave" and to be "good girls." If an inmate is breaking some minor rule like coming to say "hi" to her friend on another floor or locking in a few minutes late, a guard will say, jokingly, "don't let me have to come down there and beat your butt." It is not unusual to hear a guard tell a woman, "what you need is a good spanking." The tone is often motherly, "didn't I tell you, young lady, to..."; or, "you know better than that"; or, "that's a good girl." And the women respond accordingly. Some guards and inmates "play" together. One officer's favorite "game" is taking off her belt and chasing her "girls" down the hall with it, smacking them on the butt.

But beneath the motherly veneer, the reality of guard life is every present. Most of the guards are black, usually from working class, upward bound, civil service oriented backgrounds. They identify with the middle class, have middle class values and are extremely materialistic. They are not the most intelligent women in the world and many are extremely limited.

Most are aware that there is no justice in the amerikan judicial system and that blacks and Puerto Ricans are discriminated against in every facet of amerikan life. But, at the same time, they are convinced that the system is somehow "lenient." To them, the women in prison are "losers" who don't have enough sense to stay out of jail. Most believe in the boot strap theory - anybody can "make it" if they try hard enough. They congratulate themselves on their great accomplishments. In contrast to themselves they see the inmate as ignorant, uncultured, self-destructive, weak-minded and stupid. They ignore the fact that their dubious accomplishments are not based on superior intelligence or effort, but only on chance and a civil service list.

Many guards hate and feel trapped by their jobs. The guard is exposed to a certam amount of abuse

from co-workers, from the brass as well as from inmates, ass kissing, robotizing and mandatory overtime. (It is common practice for guards to work a double shift at least once a week.) But no matter how much they hate the military structure, the infighting, the ugliness of their tasks, they are very aware of how close they are to the welfare lines. If they were not working as guards most would be underpaid or unemployed. Many would miss the feeling of superiority and power as much as they would miss the money, especially the cruel, sadistic ones.

The guards are usually defensive about their jobs and indicate by their behavior that they are not at all free from guilt. They repeatedly, compulsively say, as if to convince themselves, "This is a job just like any other job." The more they say it the more preposterous it seems.

The major topic of conversation here is drugs. Eighty percent of inmates have used drugs when they were in the street. Getting high is usually the first thing a woman says she's going to do when she gets out. In prison, as on the streets, an escapist culture prevails. At least 50 percent of the prison population take some form of psychotropic drug. Elaborate schemes to obtain contraband drugs are always in the works.

Days are spent in pleasant distractions: soap operas, prison love affairs, card playing and game playing. A tiny minority are seriously involved in academic pursuits or the learning of skills. An even smaller minority attempt to study available law books. There are no jail house lawyers and most of the women lack knowledge of even the most rudimentary legal procedures. When asked what happened in court, or, what their lawyers said, they either don't know or don't remember. Feeling totally helpless and totally railroaded a woman will curse out her lawyer or the judge with little knowledge of what is being done or of what should be done. Most plead guilty, whether they are guilty or not. The few who do go to trial usually have lawyers appointed by the state and usually are convicted.

Here, the word lesbian seldom, if ever, is mentioned. Most, if not all, of the homosexual relationships here involve role playing. The majority of relationships are either asexual or semi-sexual. The absence of sexual consummation is only partially explained by prison prohibition against any kind of sexual behavior. Basically the women are not looking for sex. They are looking for love, for concern and companionship. For relief from the overwhelming sense of isolation and solitude that pervades each of us.

Women who are "aggressive" or who play the masculine roles are referred to as butches, bulldaggers or stud broads. They are always in demand because they are always in the minority. Women who are "passive," or who play feminine roles are referred to as fems. The butch-fem relationships are often oppressive, resembling the most oppressive, exploitative aspect of a sexist society. It is typical to hear butches threatening fems with physical violence and it is not uncommon for butches to actually beat their "women." Some butches consider themselves pimps and go with the women who have the most commissary, the most contraband or the best outside connections. They feel they are a class above ordinary women which entitles them to "respect." They dictate to fems what they are to do and many insist the fems wash, iron, sew and clean their cells for them. A butch will refer to another butch as "man." A butch who is well liked is known as "one of the fellas" by her peers.

Once in prison changes in roles are common. Many women who are strictly heterosexual in the street become butch in prison. "Fems" often create butches by convincing an inmate that she would make a "cute butch." About 80 percent of the prison population engage in some form of homosexual relationship. Almost all follow negative, stereotypic male/ female role models.

There is no connection between the women's movement and lesbianism. Most of the women at Riker's Island have no idea what feminism is, let alone lesbianism. Feminism, the women's liberation movement and the gay liberation movement are worlds away from women at Riker's.

The black liberation struggle is equally removed from the lives of women at Riker's. While they verbalize acute recognition that america is a racist country where the poor are treated like dirt they, nevertheless, feel responsible for the filth of their lives. The air at Riker's is permeated with self-hatred. Many women bear marks on their arms, legs and wrists from suicide attempts or self-mutilation. They speak about themselves in self-deprecating terms. They consider themselves failures.

While most women contend that whitey is responsible for their oppression they do not examine the cause or source of that oppression. There is no sense of class struggle. They have no sense of communism, no definition of it, but they consider it a bad thing. They do not want to destroy Rockefeller. They want to be like him. Nicky Barnes, a major dope seller, is discussed with reverence. When he was convicted practically everyone was sad. Many gave speeches about how kind, smart and generous he was; no one spoke about the sale of drugs to our children.

Politicians are considered liars and crooks. The police are hated. Yet, during cop and robber movies, some cheer loudly for the cops. One woman pasted photographs of Farrah Fawcett Majors all over her cell because she "is a baad police bitch." Kojak and Barretta get their share of admiration.

A striking difference between women and men prisoners at Riker's Island is the absence of revolutionary rhetoric among the women. We have no study groups. We have no revolutionary literature around. There are no groups of militants attempting to "get their heads together." The women at Riker's seem vaguely aware of what a revolution is but generally regard it as an impossible dream. Not at all practical.

While men in prison struggle to maintain their manhood there is no comparable struggle by women to preserve their womanhood. One frequently hears women say, "Put a bunch of bitches together and you've got nothin but trouble"; and, "Women don't stick together, that's why we don't have nothin." Men prisoners constantly refer to each other as brother. Women prisoners rarely refer to each other as sister. Instead, "bitch" and "whore" are the common terms of reference. Women, however, are much kinder to each other than men, and any form of violence other than a fist fight is virtually unknown. Rape, murder and stabbings at the women's prison are non-existent.

For many, prison is not that much different from the street. It is, for some, a place to rest and recuperate. For the prostitute prison is a vacation from turning tricks in the rain and snow. A vacation from brutal pimps. Prison for the addict is a place to get clean, get medical work done and gain weight. Often, when the habit becomes too expensive, the addict gets herself busted, (usually subconsciously) so she can get back in shape, leave with a clean system ready to start all over again. One woman claims that for a month or two every year she either goes jail or to the crazy house to get away from her husband.

For many the cells are not much different from the tenements, the shooting galleries and the welfare hotels they live in on the street. Sick call is no different from the clinic or the hospital emergency room. The fights are the same except they are less dangerous. The police are the same. The poverty is the same. The alienation is the same. The racism is the same. The sexism is the same. The drugs are the

same and the system is the same. Riker's and is just another institution. In childhood school was their prison, or youth houses or reform schools or children shelters or foster homes or mental hospitals or drug programs and they see all institutions as indifferent to their needs, yet necessary to their survival.

The women at Riker's Island come there from places like Harlem, Brownsville, Bedford-Stuyvesant, South Bronx and South Jamaica. They come from places where dreams have been abandoned like the buildings. Where there is no more sense of community. Where neighborhoods are transient. Where isolated people run from one fire trap to another. The cities have removed us from our strengths, from our roots, from our traditions. They have taken away our gardens and our sweet potato pies and given us McDonald's. They have become our prisons, locking us into the futility and decay of pissy hallways that lead nowhere. They have alienated us from each other and made us fear each other. They have given us dope and television as a culture.

There are no politicians to trust. No roads to follow. No popular progressive culture to relate to. There are no new deals, no more promises of golden streets and no place else to migrate. My sisters in the streets, like my sisters at Riker's Island, see no way out. "Where can I go?", said a woman on the day she was going home. "If there's nothing to believe in," she said, "I can't do nothin except try to find cloud nine."

What of our Past? What of our History? What of our Future?

I can imagine the pain and the strength of my great great grandmothers who were slaves and my great great grandmothers who were Cherokee Indians trapped on reservations. I remembered my great grandmother who walked every where rather than sit in the back of the bus. I think about North Carolina and my home town and i remember the women of my grandmother's generation: strong, fierce women who could stop you with a look out the corners of their eyes. Women who walked with majesty; who could wring a chicken's neck and scale a fish. Who could pick cotton, plant a garden and sew without a pattern. Women who boiled clothes white in big black cauldrons and who hummed work songs and lullabys. Women who visited the elderly, made soup for the sick and shortnin bread for the babies.

Women who delivered babies, searched for healing roots and brewed medicines. Women who darned sox and chopped wood and layed bricks. Women who could swim rivers and shoot the head off a snake. Women who took passionate responsibility for their children and for their neighbors' children too.

The women in my grandmother's generation made giving an art form. "Here, gal, take this pot of collards to Sister Sue"; "Take this bag of pecans to school for the teacher"; "Stay here while I go tend Mister Johnson's leg." Every child in the neighborhood ate in their kitchens. They called each other sister because of feeling rather than as the result of a movement. They supported each other through the lean times, sharing the little they had.

The women of my grandmother's generation in my home town trained their daughters for womanhood. They taught them to give respect and to demand respect. They taught their daughters how to churn butter; how to use elbow grease. They taught their daughters to respect the strength of their bodies, to lift boulders and how to kill a hog; what to do for colic, how to break a fever and how to make a poultice, patchwork quilts, plait hair and how to hum and sing. They taught their daughters to take care, to take charge and to take responsibility. They would not tolerate a "lazy heifer" or a "gal with her head

in the clouds.” Their daughters had to learn how to get their lessons, how to survive, how to be strong. The women of my grandmother’s generation were the glue that held family and the community together. They were the backbone of the church. And of the school. They regarded outside institutions with dislike and distrust. They were determined that their children should survive and they were committed to a better future.

I think about my sisters in the movement. I remember the days when, draped in African garb, we rejected our foremothers and ourselves as castrators. We did penance for robbing the brother of his manhood, as if we were the oppressor. I remember the days of the Panther Party when we were “moderately liberated.” When we were allowed to wear pants and expected to pick up the gun. The days when we gave doe-eyed looks to our leaders. The days when we worked like dogs and struggled desperately for the respect which they struggled desperately not to give us. I remember the black history classes that did mention women and the posters of our “leaders” where women were conspicuously absent. We visited our sisters who bore the complete responsibility of the children while the Brotha was doing his thing. Or had moved on to bigger and better things.

Most of us rejected the white women’s movement. Miss Ann was still Miss Ann to us whether she burned her bras or not. We could not muster sympathy for the fact that she was trapped in her mansion and oppressed by her husband. We were, and still are, in a much more terrible jail. We knew that our experiences as black women were completely different from those of our sisters in the white women’s movement. And we had no desire to sit in some consciousness raising group with white women and bare our souls.

Women can never be free in a country that is not free. We can never be liberated in a country where the institutions that control our lives are oppressive. We can never be free while our men are oppressed. Or while the American government and American capitalism remain intact.

But it is imperative to our struggle that we build a strong black women’s movement. It is imperative that we, as black women, talk about the experiences that shaped us; that we assess our strengths and weaknesses and define our own history. It is imperative that we discuss positive ways to teach and socialize our children.

The poison and pollution of capitalist cities is choking us. We need the strong medicine of our foremothers to make us well again. We need their medicines to give us strength to fight and the drive to win. Under the guidance of Harriet Tubman and Fannie Lou Hamer and all of our foremothers, let us rebuild a sense of community. Let us rebuild the culture of giving and carry on the tradition of fierce determination to move on closer to freedom.

If women want any rights
more than they's got, why
don't they just take them, and
not be talking about it.
—Sojourner Truth

after the fall
press and distro

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THIS IS NOT A LOVE STORY



ARMED STRUGGLE AGAINST
THE INSTITUTIONS OF
PATRIARCHY

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Many feminist theorists and activists categorically condemn "violence"-- be it offensive or defensive, physical or verbal-- on the grounds that "violence" (an extremely ambiguous term in itself) has its roots in patriarchal culture and the patriarchal mindset, and is somehow the "invention" of men-- as if violence doesn't appear everywhere in the natural world in myriad forms, usually contributing in significant ways to the balance of local ecosystems. While certain feminist thinkers put forth an analysis of violence and hierarchical power relationships that is well worth considering, a wholesale condemnation of revolutionary violence aimed at the destruction of that which oppresses us is a gross oversimplification of an extremely complex situation: that is, the web of patriarchal tyranny that all of us, wimmin and men alike, find ourselves born into, where violence is used by our oppressors to enforce our political and social submission, and where we are all desperately looking for effective ways to reclaim our lives. Analyzing the role of armed resistance movements (and wimmin's participation in them) in the larger liberation struggle against patriarchy and civilization from an entirely "essentialist" perspective -- as Robin Morgan does in her often cited work *The Demon Lover* -- is a misleading and deceptive form of *Herstorical revisionism*, as it completely discounts the lives of wimmin like Harriet Tubman, who led armed guerrilla raids into the southern united states (basically a slave-owning armed camp) to rescue fellow New Afrikans from captivity, as well as numerous other wimmin like Assata Shakur, Marilyn Buck, and Bernadine Dohrn, who enthusiastically embraced armed struggle as a tactic and had no regrets about it. This article will not attempt to defend armed struggle (because in our opinion it requires no justification) but will instead focus on two very specific groups (of many) that engaged in violent rebellion against the institutions of patriarchy.

"No one who understands the feminist movement, or who knows the soul of a real woman, would make the mistake of supposing that the modern woman is fighting because she wants to be a man. That idea is the invention of masculine intelligence. Woman is fighting today, as she has all the way through the ages, for the freedom to be a woman."

Anne B. Hamman

A Herstory of the Revolutionary Cells and Rote Zora Armed Resistance in West Germany

The Revolutionary Cells (RZ) made their first appearance on November 16th, 1973 with an attack against ITT in West Berlin to point out the participation of this multinational corporation in Pinochet's military putsch in Chile. In 1974, the first high-explosive attack was undertaken by the wimmin of the RZ against the Federal Constitutional Court in Karlsruhe, Germany, the day after it supported a new abortion law,

Par. 218; a paragraph against free choice on abortion, allowing abortion only in certain cases. The RZ wimmin naturally demanded the total right for every womyn to have an abortion, as a right to self-determination over their own bodies. In 1976, numerous wimmin broke with the RZ and formed their own splinter group and from 1977 onwards, the militant feminist anti-patriarchal urban guerrilla group Rote Zora (Red Zora) acted autonomously and independently, though some wimmin still participated in the Revolutionary Cells, which had by then shifted its focus to acts of clandestine sabotage in support of the larger anti-nuclear movement in Germany.

Red Zora attacked predominantly patriarchal institutes, companies, and persons representing and building up a male sexist society, which is oppressing and exploiting wimmin worldwide. They have conducted campaigns against porn traders, sex shops, international traders of wimmin (those who profit from importing Asian wimmin as "brides" for West German men), doctors who are carrying out forced sterilizations, the Doctors Guild ("We see the Federal Doctors Guild as exponents of rape in white trenchcoats" - RZ), as well as drug companies like Schering who produced the birth-defect causing drug *Duogynon*. Another popular Red Zora tactic was the illegal reprinting of bus and streetcar fares. In individual cases, the Red Zora worked to put together a critique of the peace movement in 1984. In this paper, they criticized the peace movement as a bourgeois movement with an apocalyptic vision. The Red Zora said that the

In Total Strength and Resistance

Continually spinning through sisterhood

Ann Hansen

Julie Belmas

Once Again, this article is nowhere near as comprehensive as it could be: herstory is full of innumerable examples of strong, defiant wimmin who have utilized revolutionary violence in their own struggle for liberation, and to deny this or attempt to discredit revolutionary violence by branding it "male identified" is bullshit and an insult to wimmin everywhere. Political oppression can only be ended through resistance, and quite often this resistance will have to take on "violent" forms. Every real freedom fighter - whether they are female or male - recognizes this at some point, and stops wasting their time engaging in irresolvable philosophical debates and instead channels their energies towards the destruction of that which oppresses us all.

* For more information on the revolutionary politics of Direct Action and the Wimmin's Fire Brigade, we suggest the pamphlet, "Writings of the Vancouver Five" (available for free from falldistro@gmail.com) or "The Vancouver Five: Armed Struggle in Canada" (available for free download from zinelibrary.info)

* Ann Hansen has also published a book recently called "Direct Action: Memoirs of an Urban Guerrilla", which is available through the AK Press Mail-order Catalog

major mistake of the peace movement was to concentrate their political goal only on the preservation of peace in the metropolis instead of discussing the imperialist context between armament and crisis: Third World misery and social cutbacks; sexism and racism.

The Red Zora in the 90's

In the first two or three years of the 1990's, the RZ concentrated their actions on the issue of West German foreigner and refugee policies.

Attacks such as the one on the Center

for the Central Register in Cologne, or the kneecapping of Hollenburg -- the Chief of Immigration Police in West Berlin -- show the wide range of these militant politics. While those who were attacked were directly responsible for the racist refugee policies in Germany, the intentions of the attacks on the institutions involved in formulating these racist policies -- whose documents, files and data were destroyed -- was to procure a space which wasn't controlled or regulated by the State.

Since the early 70's, the RZ and Red Zora have carried out over 200 attacks against the infrastructure of patriarchal culture. Red Zora's most comprehensive and successful attack campaign so far has been the planting of incendiary bombs in ten branches of the Adler Corporation, one of West Germany's largest clothing manufacturers selling discount clothing in the FRG, produced by low paid wimmin in South Korean and Sri Lankan factories. *"The wimmin at Adler in South Korea struggle against the exploitation of their capacity for work and are putting up a fight against the daily sexism. They call for support from the FRG for their struggle. As a result, the shitty living and working conditions of wimmin in the vacuous production centers of the three continents and especially those of Adler in South Korea and Sri Lanka are becoming more widely known here through leaflets, events and actions at Adler's retail centers. In these actions, anti-imperialism can be practical. So it was possible for the struggle there (by the wimmin in South Korea) and the struggle here (by Red Zora) are compatible: We aren't fighting for the wimmin in the Third World, we're fighting alongside them."* (Quote from Red Zora, in their Adler statement.)

In 1987, when Red Zora and their sister group in West Berlin, the Amazonen, fire bombed ten Adler outlets throughout West Germany, they caused millions of dollars in damages. Because of this, Adler was forced to meet the demands of the textile workers, clearly proving that militant resistance can be very effective. Both the Revolutionary Cells and Red Zora have anti-authoritarian structures and a decentralized decision-making process for choosing targets. As well, they point out that militant direct

years. At her sentencing, Ann got one more opportunity to express herself, and she did just that by picking up a tomato she had smuggled into the courtroom and heaving it in the direction of the judge. It splattered on the curtain above his head, and he ducked out of the courtroom before he was called on to witness any further disruption of the courts decorum. In May 1983, the long-running canadian anarchist paper Kick It Over published a statement by Ann Hansen and Julie Belmas that was written from their jail cells. We would like to conclude this article with a passage from this prison statement titled, *"We Are Not Terrorists..."*

"Being womyn identified, politically conscious, environmentalists and determined to challenge the power and profit motives of the patriarchal society that insures the rape and mutilation of our mother earth, we refuse to accept their labels of us as terrorists. We know that there are many sisters who share our radical analysis of the issues around the charges laid on us. For centuries the authorities have reacted violently to womyn who resisted; they used to brand us as "witches" and burned us, now they label us as "terrorists" and will try to bury us in their cement tombs.

The State and its media are portraying us as elements of a "lunatic fringe" so that people will be frightened of us instead of relating to us with their rebellious spirits. We must not allow the liberalism of this society to bide the sickness of the rulers and rapers behind their institutions, laws and lies. We are always threatened with their violence, whether it be through nuclear power plants, nuclear weapons, industrialism, prisons or sexual terrorism in our everyday society. We will face their horrors boldly and challenge their corporate interests with the determination and strength of womyn warriors. We will see a resistance movement building, in an attempt to rid the earth of further corporate destruction so that future generations can survive.

It is not possible in this society to be a "liberated" womyn without being in a constant state of conflict and struggle. However, if our conflict and struggle is not guided by a consciousness of the magnitude of the problem, then our energies will be misdirected and futile. The womyn's movement cannot be a one-issue oriented struggle, but must understand and embrace the ecological struggle, indigenous peoples resistance and anti-imperialist liberation movements because the same patriarchal institutions that perpetuate our oppression also oppress the animals, the indigenous peoples, the third world peoples and the earth."

But the actions that we most want to analyze - within the context of this article - are the actions carried out by Ann Hansen and Julie Belmas, two members of Direct Action who formed the Wimmin's Fire Brigade and firebombed three Red Hot Video Stores in the city of Vancouver (Red Hot was an American chain that had built up an inventory of video tapes pirated from hard-core porn films). These actions are worth looking at because they are a powerful reminder that the *physical dismantling* of patriarchy is just as important and necessary as the dismantling of patriarchy in our minds. Wimmin's groups had been fighting for six months against the Red Hot chain when The Wimmin's Fire Brigade lit the way to victory with firebombs: Within a few weeks, scores of wimmin's groups of all stripes had issued statements of sympathy and understanding for the action, demonstrations had been held in a dozen centers across the province, and six porn shops had closed, moved away or withdrawn much of their stock out of fear that they would be the "next target".

The Wimmin's Fire Brigade (WFB) actions were so successful because it was so well-integrated into, and complimentary to, the public campaigns. As *B.C. Blackout*, a biweekly autonomist newsletter put it, *"the action of the WFB could only have the impact it did because of the months of spade work by many groups and individuals educating themselves, doing research, making contacts, pressuring the authorities, documenting their case--in short, building the infrastructure for an effective, grass-roots movement."* Since Vancouver already had a well-organized and militant campaign at work in opposition to the merchandising of violence against wimmin, the support was there when the WFB struck.

The support was also there when Ann Hansen and Julie Belmas went to trial the following year. Every day hundreds of female and male supporters rallied on the courthouse steps carrying banners with messages like "Ann Hansen is a Freedom Fighter Not a Terrorist!". In her final court statement just before her sentencing, Ann Hansen concluded with the comment: *"Businesses such as Litton, BC Hydro and Red Hot Video are the real terrorists. They are guilty of crimes against humanity and the earth, yet they are free to carry on their illegal activities while those who resist and those who are their victims remain in prison. How do we, who have no armies, weapons, power or money, stop these criminals before they destroy the earth? I believe if there is any hope for the future, it lies in our struggle."* As expected Ann was given life (she's now out) and Julie was given 20

actions are just one part of the revolutionary movement: *"Although we participate in far-reaching and extensive legal work campaigns and social movements through our militant actions, these actions aren't of any more importance than handing out flyers or leaflets, going to demonstrations, having sit-ins, publishing newspapers, educating people, or squatting houses. We don't have a hierarchical system for choosing actions. Thinking in hierarchical divisions puts actions in a perspective of privilege and makes it prone to a patriarchal way of thinking."* (Quote by members of the RZ in an interview that appeared in *Autonomie* in 1980.)

One reason for the tactical successes of the Red Zora is that in their direct actions--militant as they are - they address issues that many people are already educated on and sympathetic to. For example, Red Zora has gained wide popular support because their actions appeal to the massive feminist movement that already exists in West Germany, where the anarchist and radical media had been doing much work for a long time to educate the public on issues involving sexism, wimmin's oppression and exploitation, and wimmin's rights to the control of their own bodies. While the RZ doesn't claim as much support as Red Zora, in 1987, supporters of the Revolutionary Cells published the book *Der Weg Zum Erfolg* (The Way To Success), explaining their strategies, politics, and actions. Less than a week after the book hit the shelves of radical bookstores, the entire printing (around 3000) was sold out.

The high degree of effectiveness of many RZ and Red Zora actions wouldn't be possible without popular support. By themselves, their actions might only serve to alienate them from the more long-term struggle. However, with the support of the mass movements, members of the RZ and Red Zora are able to work among the numbers of people active in the above-ground struggle without exposing their underground identities. In their herstory, only one womyn has been arrested for membership in Red Zora, but due to lack of evidence against her, charges were dropped.

Resistance Is Possible: An Interview with Two Anonymous Members of Red Zora

(Editor's note: This was first published in June of 1984 in the German women's magazine, Emma, and was the first interview where active members of the Red Zora explain why they struggle autonomously inside the RZ's and the nature of their relationship to the wimmins movement)

Let's start with who you are.

Zora 1: If this is a personal question, then we are women between the ages of 20 and 51. Some of us sell our labour, some of us take what we need, and others are "parasites" on the welfare state. Some have children, some don't. Some women are lesbians, others love men. We buy in disgusting supermarkets, we live in ugly houses, we like going for walks or to the cinema, the theatre or the disco. We have parties and we cultivate idleness. And of course we live with the contradictions that many things we want to do can't be done spontaneously. But after successful actions we have great fun.

What does your name mean?

Zora 2: "The Red Zora And Her Gang" (a children's book) - that is the wild street kid who steals from the rich to give to the poor. Until today it seems to be a male privilege to build gangs or to act outside the law. Yet particularly because girls and women are strangled by thousands of personal and political chains this should make us masses of "bandits" fighting for our freedom, our dignity and our humanity. Law and order are fundamentally against us, even if we have hardly achieved any rights and have to fight for them daily. Radical women's struggles and loyalty to the law - there is no way they go together!

Yet it is no coincidence that your name has the same first letters as the Revolutionary Cells (RZ).

I Have Not Signed a Treaty with Any Government *A Brief Look at "Direct Action" and "The Wimmin's Fire Brigade"*

In 1982, five Canadian anti-authoritarian activists, variously known as Direct Action, the Wimmin's Fire Brigade, and the Vancouver Five, conducted a highly visible series of guerrilla actions against patriarchal, industrial civilization. When the five anarchists - two wimmin and three men-- who comprised these cells were finally captured by the Canadian state in 1983, they were charged with a host of clandestine attacks on industries that represented some of the most notorious war criminals, environmental despoilers, and exploiters of wimmin and children.

The most serious charges that these anarchists faced when they were caught were related to three bombing operations, all conducted in support of massive public campaigns of protest: one against the Litton Systems plant near Toronto, where parts for Cruise missiles are made; another against the environmentally destructive Cheekye-Dunsmuir power project of British Columbia on Vancouver Island; and also a smattering against retail stores of Red Hot Video in Vancouver, where videotapes glorifying rape and other forms of savagery toward woman and children were sold. In addition, the Five were also charged with conspiring to hold up a Brinks armored car to finance their struggle (the hold-up never took place) and a variety of other weapon offenses.

Each of these actions produced very specific tangible results that assisted the above-ground campaigns they were meant to compliment: In the case of Litton Systems of Canada, there had already been an ongoing mass struggle of sit-ins and other forms of civil disobedience before their Toronto factory was partially destroyed by a bomb attack in 1982. These demonstrations escalated after the bombing resulting in Litton losing their contract to produce the guidance system for an advanced version of the Cruise missile being developed by NATO and the United States military.

when they start to present those who struggle uncompromisingly as responsible for state persecution, destruction, and repression. They not only confuse cause with effect, they also justify implicit state terror. Therefore, they weaken their own position. They narrow the frame of their protest and their resistance.

Zora 1: Our experience: to stay uncontrolled and to protect ourselves against state attacks, a strong unity is necessary. We can no longer afford to have every group repeat the same mistakes. There must be structures in which we share knowledge and experiences which are useful for the movement.

How can non-autonomous, non-radical women understand what you want? Armed actions do have a "scare away" effect.

Zora 2: Why doesn't it have a "scare away" effect if a guy sells women, but it does if his car burns? Behind it is the fact that traditional social violence is accepted whereas similar reprisals "scare away". Maybe it is scary if everyday reality is questioned. Women who get it pounded into their heads from the time they are little girls that they are victims get insecure if they are confronted with the fact that women are neither victims nor peaceful. This is a provocation. Those women who experience their powerlessness with rage can identify with our actions. As every act of violence against one woman creates an atmosphere of threat against all women, our actions contribute - even if they aim only against the individual responsible - to the development of an atmosphere of "Resistance is possible!"

Zora 1: No, of course not. Rote Zora expresses the fact that we have the same principles as the RZ's, the same concept of building illegal structures and a network which is not controlled by the state apparatus. This is so we can carry out our subversive direct actions - in connection with the open legal structures of various movements. "We strike back!" - this slogan of the women of May 1968 is no longer as controversial today regarding individual violence against women. But it is still very controversial, and most of the time taboo as an answer to the power conditions that steadily produce this violence.

What actions have you carried out and what was the background?

Zora 2: The women of the RZ started in 1974 with the bombing of the Supreme Court in Karlsruhe because we all wanted the total abolishment of Paragraph 218 (the abortion law). On the Walpurgisnight (last day of April, "Women Take Back The Night") 1977, we bombed the Federal Doctor's Guild because they undermined even this reduced abortion reform. Then the bombing against Schering during its Duogynon trial, and constant attacks against sex-shops. Actually one of these porno stores should burn or be devastated every day! Therefore we think it absolutely necessary to tear the oppression of women as sexual objects and producers of children out of the "private domain" and to show our anger and hate with fire and flames.

Zora 1: We don't limit ourselves to direct or obvious women's oppression. As women we are also concerned about social power conditions, whether it be urban or environmental destruction, or capitalist ways of production; the same conditions men are confronted with. We don't like the left's "division of labour" under the motto: the women for the women's question, the men for the general political themes. Nobody can take away from us the responsibility for changing our everyday life. Therefore, for example, we have set fire to the fancy cars of the lawyers of "slumlord" Kaussen, who were responsible for a series of brutal evictions. Together with the RZ's we printed pirate public transportation tickets and distributed them in the Rulo area to introduce a little bit of zero-tariff.

Zora 2: Our latest bombings were directed against Siemens and the computer company Nixdorf. They promote the development of new domination technology for more sophisticated possibilities of war production and counter-revolution. They also have the function of remodelling labour, especially on the backs of women world-wide. Women here will be exploited with the technology of these companies by working isolated from each other in part-time jobs, without social security. The women of the so-called Third World will be worn out by producing these technologies. At the age of 25 they are totally ruined.

How important is the connection to the Third World, the exploitation of women there, for you?

Zora 1: In all of our attacks we've declared this context, also when we attacked the women traders and the Philippine Embassy last year. We don't struggle for women in the Third World - we instead struggle with them, for example against the exploitation of women as a commodity. This modern slave trade has its equivalent in the conjugal possession conditions here. The forms of oppression are different but they all have the same roots. Nobody can play cards with us any longer. The separation between men and women has its equivalent internationally between people of the First and Third World. We ourselves profit from the international division of labour. We want to break with our involvement with this system and understand our common interests with women from other countries.

You explained how you understand your practice, but you didn't explain why you organize yourself in the context of the RZ's.

Zora 2: First of all the main reason is that these politics were developed by the RZ's and we still think they are correct. During our development we determined our own content - therefore we organized autonomously as women - but we fall back on the experiences of the RZ's. We also think that the cooperation of radical groups can strengthen the militant resistance. There were productive forms of cooperation such as the actions against Reagan's visit or the discussion paper about the peace movement. But there are also stressful discussions. Sometimes men who otherwise transform their radical breaking with this system into a consequent practice are

attack them and make them look foolish in public. For example, that it will be written on his house who he is and what he did, on his car, at his job - women's power everywhere!

How can you take responsibility for possibility endangering the lives of innocent people with your actions?

Zora 2: Why is it that people always assume that those who deal with explosives don't care about what is self-evident for yourselves, for the women's movement, or for the left? It's the opposite! Because of the possibility of endangering life we are forced to be especially responsible. You know as well as we do that we could give up if you were right with your question. It would be a paradox to struggle against a system for which life is only worthwhile as long as it is utilizable and at the same to become as cynical and brutal as that system. There were many actions we rejected because we couldn't eliminate the danger to innocent people. Some firms know this full well, which is why they prefer to move into residential buildings. They speculate with our morals if they move into residential dwellings to protect their property.

What do you say against the argument: armed actions harm the movement. They are part of the reason for increasing surveillance of the women's movement to denounce it as terrorist, that it's split and isolated from the majority of women in the women's movement.

Zora 1: To harm the movement - you talk about the installation of repression. The actions don't harm the movement! It's the opposite, they should and can support the movement directly. Our attack on the women traders, for example, helped to expose their businesses to public light, to threaten them, and they now know they have to anticipate the resistance of women if they go on with their business. These "gentlemen" know they have to anticipate resistance. We call this a strengthening of our movement.

Zora 2: For a long time the strategy of counter-revolution has begun to split the radical wing from the rest of the movement by any means and isolate them to weaken the whole movement. In the 70's we had the experience of what it means when sectors of the left adopt the propaganda of the state,

develop. The increasing oppression, with the help of new technologies, is investigated from the point of view of the lowest echelons of our society, new wages and work structures for women are analyzed, the indirect structures of women are understood. Many women understand and reject the everyday war against women - the wave of hardcore porn and propaganda contemptuous of women - and the call of the society for increased motherhood and more femininity. They also understand that the setbacks in women's and family politics are presuppositions for the crisis and the new strategies of capital. The policy of population control, for example the change of the abortion law, is the attempt to have a qualitative influence on the development of the population. Among other things its aim is to multiply the "healthy" German middle-class together with state sponsored genetic technology, which is a development we have to prevent. Today we need more urgently than ever before a radical women's movement which has the power to prevent and break open the social and political encirclement, not only of women, but also of foreigners and minorities; a women's liberation movement which does not reduce the hope for revolution to a nice dream.

Do you understand yourself as being part of the women's movement, or of the guerrilla movement, or both, and how do you see the context?

Zora 1: We are part of the women's movement. We struggle for women's liberation. Beside theoretical commonalities there also exists another unity between our practice and the legal women's movement, that is the personal radicalization which can encourage other women to resist and take themselves and the struggle seriously. It is the feeling of strength if you see that you can do things which before you were afraid of, and if you see that it brings about something. We would like to share this experience. We don't think it has to happen in the forms we choose. For example, take the women who disrupted a peep show by drawing women's symbols and dropping stink bombs - these actions encourage us, strengthen us, and we hope women feel the same way about our actions. Our dream is that everywhere small bands of women will exist, that in every city, a rapist, a women trader, a battering husband, a misogynist publisher, a porn trader, a pig gynecologist should have to feel that a band of women will find them to

alarmingly far away from realizing what anti-sexist struggle means and what meaning it has for social-revolutionary perspective. Between us women it is also controversial where the limits are, when a cooperation strengthens or paralyzes our women's struggle. But we think our feminist identity unites us with some women of the RZ's.

Does that mean that you define yourself as feminists?

Zora 1: Yes, of course, we think the personal is political. Therefore we believe that all things social, economic, and political which structure and reinforce the so-called personal are an invitation for struggle, especially for us women. These are the chains we want to tear apart. But it is incomplete to make the oppression of women here in West Germany the only turning of politics and not to see other oppressive conditions such as class oppression, racism, or the annihilation of whole peoples through imperialism. This attitude never understands the base of misery: that the oppression of women and sexual division of labour are presuppositions which are fundamental for oppression of any kind - against other races, minorities, the old and the sick, and especially against those who revolt.

Zora 2: For us, difficulties start when feminist demands are used to demand "equal rights" and recognition in this society. We don't want women in men's positions and reject women who make their career inside the patriarchal structure under the guise of women's struggles. Such careers remain an individual act from which only some privileged women can profit. Women are only allowed to design and manage power in this society if they advocate the interests of men.

The women's movement was quite strong in the 70's. It achieved some things in a legal way. For example: the struggle against the abortion law, publicity about violence against women in the family, and rape as an act of power and violence, the building of autonomous counter structures. Why do you then maintain the necessity of armed struggle?

Zora 1: Of course, the women's movement achieved a lot and for me the most important is the development of a broad consciousness about

women's oppression in this society. Also women no longer experience their oppression as an individual case or think they themselves are responsible for it, instead women come together and experience their strength. The things that were organized by the women's movement like women's bookstores, women's centres, women's newspapers, and meetings and congresses - all this has been part of the political reality for some time and is a strong part of the development of the struggle.

Zora 2: Some successes were rather an expression of the situation in a society which can allow women some leeway. Of course when they wanted women in the factories and offices they created more places in kindergartens, but this didn't lead to a basic change in the lifestyle of a woman. It requires a continuous movement whose aims cannot be integrated, whose uncompromising section cannot be forced into legal forms, whose anger and dedication to non-parliamentary struggles and anti-institutional forms is expressed without limit.

Zora 1: The legal route is not sufficient because the usual repression and structures of violence are legal. It is legal if husbands beat and rape their wives. It is legal if women traders buy our Third World sisters and sell them to German men. It is legal when women ruin their health and do monotonous work for subsistence wages. These are all violent conditions which we are no longer willing to accept and tolerate and which can't be changed solely by criticism. It was an important step to create a public consciousness about violence against women, but it didn't lead to its prevention. It is a phenomenon that the screaming unfairness which women suffer is met with an incredible proportion of ignorance. It is a tolerance which exposes male parasitism. This "typical situation" is connected to the fact that there is not much resistance. Oppression is only recognized through resistance. Therefore we sabotage, boycott, damage, and take revenge for experienced violence and humiliation by attacking those who are responsible.

What do you think about the contemporary women's movement?

Zora 2: We think it's wrong to talk about the women's movement. On the one hand the women's movement is understood as a result of long existing

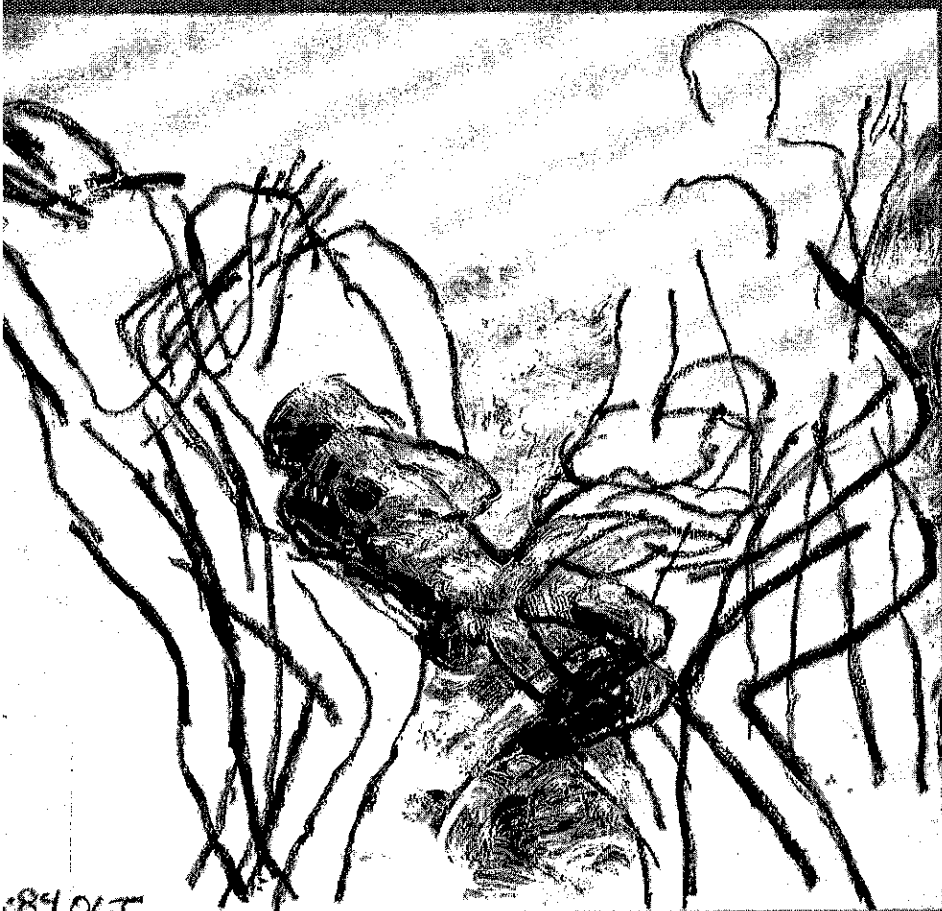
structures, of projects, encounter centres, and of mysticism. There are many currents which do not reinforce each other very fruitfully, but instead partly exclude or fight each other. On the other hand new political impulses start from different contexts where women are becoming aware of their oppression and are radically questioning patriarchal structures and developing politics in the interests of women - for example women in Latin American solidarity groups, in anti-imperialist groups, in the squatters movement. Therefore the saying "The women's movement is dead, long live the women's movement!" is accurate. The women's movement is not one issue like the anti-nuke or squatter movements, which will not survive if no more nuclear plants are built, or no more property is available for speculation. The women's movement relates to the totality of patriarchal structures, their technology, their organization of labour, their relationship to nature, and it is therefore a phenomenon which won't disappear with the removal of some cancerous growths, but instead in the long process of social revolution.

Zora 1: The women's movement has never really analyzed its defeat around the abortion law and around the state financing of projects like shelters for battered women. It lacks a rejection of state politics. Also, it anticipated the turning point in family politics through the wave of the new motherhood in the women's movement. Also, the class question never existed; social differences were denied by the universalization of sexist oppression. This makes it difficult to find an answer to the worsening of labour conditions, increasing oppression, and reactionary family politics in the present crisis. The lack of a perspective for action in order to react appropriately to the attack leads to the dilemma of either going offensively against reactionary politics or solely preserving the unfolding of leeway for women. We can't solve this problem in theory, but we don't think the building of women's committees (in the Green Party) is an appropriate solution. The experience is that women do not come to power by ways which exist directly to exclude women and to stabilize and conserve patriarchal domination. Therefore, we consider women's committees which want to organize greater influence in parties and institutions the wrong way.

Zora 2: But in the meantime other important discussions and analyses by women which consider the future development of society have begun to

Scenes OF Subjection

TERROR, SLAVERY, AND SELF-MAKING
IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY
AMERICA



SAIDIYA V. HARTMAN

lover, or singing across the Potomac to slaves on the other side. The incompleteness of redress and the constancy of breach and crisis are primary determinants of the force of repetition in black performance and the ambivalent formation of pleasure.

Therefore, rather than think of these practices as providing a reprieve from domination, we must think about pleasure not only in the context of domination but also as an articulation of these tensions, limits, fissures, wounds, and ravages. The ambivalence of the pleasures afforded in the context of slavery was documented in numerous accounts of "fun and frolic." When Anna Lee described Saturday night dances, she emphasized the fact that these dances provided the only occasion for collective gatherings and having fun: "We *had to have* some way to see the other sex and be together, and that was the only time that our master allowed us to be together just among ourselves, and we sure made the best of it cause we generally danced, hollered and had our fun all night long."¹²¹ Rather than the dance providing an occasion for forgetting or escaping the "reality" of slavery, the pleasure such opportunities afforded were bittersweet, fleeting, and tempered by the perpetuity of bondage. Moreover, the pleasure to be had was infected with despair, fear, dissatisfaction, and a desire for freedom, and surreptitious gatherings were haunted by the fear of discovery and reprisal.

If through performance the enslaved "asserted their humanity," it is no less true that performance articulated their troubled relation to the category "human," if only because no absolute line could be drawn between the pleasant path of slave management and the collective articulation of needs, solidarity, and possibility. While the pleasures afforded within the confines of slavery were vulnerable to Douglass's critique of debased amusement and reactionary diversions, they also provided the occasion for small-scale assaults against slavery and opportunities for collective reflection on one's condition. Thus, in this regard, it is impossible to separate the use of pleasure as a technique of discipline from pleasure as a figuration of social transformation.¹²² The confusion of the slave's good time and stealing away in these short-lived transports therefore mitigates against absolute assertions about pleasure. The claims made on behalf of pleasure are tenuous, provisional, and double-edged.

In short, pleasure was inseparable from the expenditure and ravishment of the body. As Celeste Avery recalled, at weekly frolics and dances folks would get "broke down from so much dancing."¹²³ Parties were called drag downs, hoe downs, or dig downs, according to Charles Anderson, because folks would "dig right into it, and give it all they got."¹²⁴ Thus it appears that pleasure was inescapably ensnared with expenditure and dissolution—bodies exhausted and restored, lost and regained, anguished and redressed. This state of expenditure, according to Victor Turner, is an integral part of performance process, for in the "breakdown," the individual is "reduced or ground down in order to be fashioned anew."¹²⁵ However, the breakdown also illuminates the dilemma of pleasure and possession since the body broken by dance insinuates its other, its double, the body broken by the regimen of labor and (dis)possessed by the chattel principle.¹²⁶ This doubling of the body bespeaks the ambivalence of pleasure and illuminates the brutal and myriad uses of slave property and the infinitesimal and innumerable assaults posed in the expression of desire.

3

Seduction and the Ruses of Power

In the very nature of things, he [the slave] is subject to despotism. Law as to him is only a compact between his rulers, and the questions which concern him are matters agitated between them.

—Justice D. L. Wardlaw, *Ex parte Boylston* (1845)

You never knew what it is to be a slave; to be entirely unprotected by law or custom; to have the laws reduce you to the condition of chattel, entirely subject to the will of another.

—Harriet A. Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*,
Written by Herself (1861)

The relation between legal interpretation and the infliction of pain remains operative even in the most routine of legal acts.

—Robert Cover, "Violence and the Word" (1986)

I went to converse with Celia (defendant) at the request of several citizens. The object of my conversation was to ascertain whether she had any accomplices in the crime. This was eight or ten days after she had been put into the jail. I asked whether she thought she would be hung for what she had done. She said she thought she would be hung. I then had her to tell the whole matter. She said the old man (Newsome, the deceased) had been having sexual intercourse with her. That he had told her he was coming down to her cabin that night. She told him not to come and if he came she would hurt him. She then got a stick and put it in the corner. He came down that night. There was very little fire in the cabin that night. When she heard him coming she fixed the fire to make a little light. She said his face was towards her and he was standing talking to her when she struck him. He did not raise his hand when she went to strike the first blow but sunk down on a stool towards the floor. Threw his hands up as he sunk down. . . . The stick with which she struck was about as large as the upper part of a . . . chair, but not so long. . . . She said after she had killed him, the body laid a long time, she thought an hour. She did not know what to do with it. She said she would try to burn it.

—*State of Missouri v. Celia, a Slave* (1855)

In nineteenth-century common law, rape was defined as the forcible carnal knowledge of a female against her will and without her consent.¹ Yet the actual or attempted rape of an enslaved woman was an offense neither recognized nor punished by law. Not only was rape simply unimaginable because of purported black lasciviousness, but also its repression was essential to the displacement of white

culpability that characterized both the recognition of black humanity in slave law and the designation of the black subject as the originary locus of transgression and offense. The cases of *State of Missouri v. Celia, a Slave*² and *George v. State* averred that the enslaved were not subjects of common law, thus not protected against rape. In other words, slaves were placed solely under the regulation of statutory law (slave codes) and not covered by the common law, though the rape of slave women was not a statutory offense either. Therefore, the repression or effacement of rape can be explained only in part by the inapplicability of common law to the enslaved. Rather, the repression and the negation of this act of violence are central not only to the pained constitution of blackness but also to the figuration and the deployment of sexuality in the context of captivity. Moreover, the disavowal of rape most obviously involves issues of consent, agency, and will that are ensnared in a larger dilemma concerning the construction of person and the calculation of black humanity in slave law since this repression of violence constitutes female gender as the locus of both unredressed and negligible injury.³

The dual invocation of person and property made issues of consent, will, and agency complicated and ungainly. Yet the law strove to contain the tensions generated by this seemingly contradictory invocation of the enslaved as property and person, as absolutely subject to the will of another, and as actional subject by relying on the power of feelings or the mutual affection between master and slave and the strength of weakness or the ability of the dominated to influence, if not control, the dominant. The dual invocation of the slave as property and person was an effort to wed reciprocity and submission, intimacy and domination, and the legitimacy of violence and the necessity of protection. By the same token, the law's selective recognition of slave humanity nullified the captive's ability to give consent or act as agent and, at the same time, acknowledged the intentionality and agency of the slave but only as it assumed the form of criminality. The recognition and/or stipulation of agency as criminality served to identify personhood with punishment. Within the terms of the law, the enslaved was either a will-less object or a chastened agent.

If the definition of the crime of rape relies upon the capacity to give consent or exercise will, then how does one make legible the sexual violation of the enslaved when that which would constitute evidence of intentionality, and thus evidence of the crime—the state of consent or willingness of the assailed—opens up a Pandora's box in which the subject formation and object constitution of the enslaved female are no less ponderous than the crime itself or when the legal definition of the enslaved negates the very idea of "reasonable resistance"?⁴ We might also consider whether the wanton and indiscriminate uses of the captive body can be made sense of within the heteronormative framing of sexual violation as rape. If a crime can be said, in fact, to exist or is at all fathomable within the scope of any normative understanding of rape, perhaps it can only be apprehended or discerned precisely as it is entangled with the construction of person in slave law and the punitive stipulation of agency as abasement, servility, or criminality. Basically, I attempt to interrogate the legal definition of rape and the limits of the law by looking at issues of will and consent, the relationship between subjectivity and injury, and instances of sexual violence that fall outside the racist and heteronormative framing of rape—that is, the sexual exploitation of slave women cloaked as the legitimate use of property and the

castration and assault of slave men. I feel it is warranted to look at this range of violence as sexual violation because enslaved men were no less vulnerable to the wanton abuses of their owners, although the extent of their sexual exploitation will probably never be known, and because of the elusiveness or instability of gender in relation to the slave as property and the erotics of terror in the racist imaginary, which range from the terrible spectacle of Aunt Hester at the whipping post to the postbellum specter of lynching. In this chapter, I also try to make visible the "crimes" licensed and disavowed by the law by highlighting the state's crimes of omission and the categorization of negligible injury.

What Thomas Jefferson termed the boisterous passions of slavery, the "unremitting despotism" of slave owners, and the "degrading submissions" of the enslaved were curiously embraced, denied, inverted, and displaced in the law of slavery.⁵ The boisterous passions bespeak the dynamics of enjoyment in a context in which joy and domination and use and violence could not be separated. As well, this language of passion expresses the essential conflation of force and feeling. The confusion between consent and coercion, feeling and submission, intimacy and domination, and violence and reciprocity constitutes what I term the discourse of seduction in slave law.⁶ The discourse of seduction obfuscates the primacy and extremity of violence in master-slave relations and in the construction of the slave as both property and person. To paraphrase John Forrester, seduction is a meditation on liberty and slavery and will and subjection in the arena of sexuality.⁷ Seduction makes recourse to the idea of reciprocal and collusive relations and engenders a precipitating construction of black female sexuality in which rape is unimaginable. As the enslaved is legally unable to give consent or offer resistance, she is presumed to be always willing.⁸

If the legal existence of the crime of rape depends upon evaluating the *mens rea* and *actus rea* of the perpetrator and, more important, the consent or nonconsent of the victim, then how does one grapple with issues of consent and will when the negation or restricted recognition of these terms determines the meaning of enslavement?⁹ If the commonplace understanding of the "will" implies the power to control and determine our actions and identifies the expressive capacity of the self-possessed and intending subject, certainly this is far afield of the condition or terms of action available to the enslaved. Yet the notion of the will connotes more than simply the capacity to act and to do; rather, it distinguishes the autonomous agent from the enslaved, the encumbered, and the constrained. Furthermore, not only does the extremity of power and the absolute submission required of the slave render suspect or meaningless concepts of consent and will, but also the sheer lack of limitations regarding the violence "necessary" to the maintenance of slave relations—that is, black submission—unmoors the notion of "force." What limit must be exceeded in order that the violence directed at the black body be made legible in the law? In the case of slave women, the law's circumscribed recognition of consent and will occurred only in order to intensify and secure the subordination of the enslaved, repress the crime, and deny injury, for it asserted that the captive female was both will-less and always willing. Moreover, the utter negation of the captive's will required to secure absolute submission was identified as *willful* submission to the master in the topsy-turvy scenario of onerous passions. Within

this scenario, the constraints of sentiment were no less severe than those of violence. The purportedly binding passions of master-slave relations were predicated upon the inability of the enslaved to exercise her will in any ways other than serving the master, and in this respect, she existed only as an extension or embodiment of the owner's rights of property. To act outside the scope of willful submission was to defy the law. The surety of punishment awaited such transgressions.

The Violence of the Law

In *State of Missouri v. Celia, a Slave*, Celia was prosecuted for the murder of her owner, Robert Newsome. The first time Newsome raped Celia was on the day he purchased her. He only stopped four years later when she killed him. Celia was found guilty by the court and sentenced to death by hanging. Although her attorney argued that the laws of Missouri concerning crimes of ravishment embraced slave women as well as white women and that Celia was acting to defend herself, this argument was rejected by the court. *Missouri v. Celia* raises critical questions about sexuality, agency, and subjectivity. Perhaps this is why the case was never reported or published. Certainly the fact that this case was neglected for over 145 years because it was not cited in any legal index but abandoned in a file drawer at the Callaway County Courthouse is significant. Cases involving cruelty of a sexual nature were often not reported or were omitted from the report of cases.¹⁰ The few cases involving issues of rape and sexual violence that are available in legal indexes, not surprisingly, are civil cases concerned with the recovery of damages for the loss of slave property or criminal cases in which the enslaved and their "crimes," usually efforts to resist, defend, or flee from such violations, are on trial. For example, *Humphrey v. Utz*, a case in which a slave owner sued his overseer for the death of a slave brutally beaten by the overseer and subjected to a range of cruelties that included having his penis nailed to a bedpost, was also omitted from the state report of cases like *Missouri v. Celia*. Similarly, it illuminates the regularity of sexual violence directed at the enslaved and the obscene way in which these atrocities entered the legal record as suits for damage to property or criminal charges made against the enslaved.

As *Missouri v. Celia* demonstrated, the enslaved could neither give nor refuse consent, nor offer reasonable resistance, yet they were criminally responsible and liable. The slave was recognized as a reasoning subject who possessed intent and rationality solely in the context of criminal liability; ironically, the slave's will was acknowledged only as it was prohibited or punished. It was generally the slave's crimes that were on trial, not white offense and violation, which were enshrined as legitimate and thereby licensed, or, obviously, the violence of the law, which in the effort to shift the locus of culpability is conceptualized here in terms of the crimes of the state.¹¹ In positing the black as criminal, the state obfuscated its instrumental role in terror by projecting all culpability and wrongdoing onto the enslaved. The black body was simply the site on which the "crimes" of the dominant class and of the state were externalized in the form of a threat. The criminality imputed to blacks disavowed white violence as a necessary response to the threatening agency of

blackness. I employ the terms "white culpability" and "white offense" because the absolute submission mandated by law was not simply that of slave to her owner but the submission of the enslaved to all whites.¹²

The assignation of right and blame and privilege and punishment was a central element in the construction of racial difference and the absolute distinctions of status between free white persons and black captives. As the case of *State v. Tackett* made clear, "The relation between a white man and a slave differs from that which subsists between free persons." In this case, the Supreme Court of North Carolina reversed a lower court ruling that convicted a non-slave-owning white for the murder of a slave. (*State v. Tackett* also involved the sexual arrangements of slavery and the conjugal relations of the enslaved, although they were considered incidental to the case. Daniel, the murdered slave, had accused Tackett of "keeping his [Daniel's] wife," Lotty, and threatened to kill him if he did not leave Lotty alone.) The court held that common-law standards of provocation and mitigation were not applicable to the relation between a white man and a slave: "The homicide of a slave may be extenuated by acts, which would not produce a legal provocation if done by a white person."¹³ The extenuating circumstances included arrogance, insult, trespass, and troublesome deportment. Acts of homicide, battery, and mayhem were sanctioned if not deemed essential to proper relations of free white persons and black captives and the maintenance of black submission.¹⁴

White culpability was displaced as black criminality, and violence was legitimated as the ruling principle of the social relations of racial slavery, just as Newsome's constant violations were eclipsed by the criminal agency of Celia. *Missouri v. Celia* illustrates how difficult it is to uncover and articulate the sexual violation of enslaved women exactly because the crime surfaces obliquely and only as the captive confesses her guilt. Ultimately the motive for Celia's act was deemed inadmissible, and her voice was usurped and negated for her white inquisitors spoke for her during the trial. As neither slaves nor free blacks were allowed to testify against whites, the "crime" that precipitated the murder of Newsome was denied.

To assert that Celia was raped is to issue a provocation. It is a declaration intended to shift our attention to another locus of crime. It is to envision the unimaginable, excavate the repressed, and discern the illegible. It is to reveal sentiment and protection as the guise of violence in the legal construction of the captive person and, in particular, the slippage of desire and domination in the loosely constructed term "sexual intercourse." In the trial record, the "sexuality" of Celia was ensnared in the web of others' demands, and the trace of what I risk calling her "desire" was only discernible in the compliance and defiance of these competing claims.¹⁵ As the trial record stated, Newsome had been having "sexual intercourse" with Celia, he "forced her" on the day he purchased her, and, last, George, Celia's enslaved companion, "would have nothing to do with her if she did not quit the old man." "Coercion," "desire," "submission," and "complicity" are the circulating terms that come to characterize the sexuality of Celia, or the enslaved female, less than the way in which she is inhabited by sexuality and her body possessed.¹⁶ Simply put, Celia embodied the vested rights of others.

The abjection of the captive body exceeds that which can be conveyed by the designation of or difference between "slave" women and "free" women. In this

case, what is at issue is the difference between the deployment of sexuality in the contexts of white kinship—the proprietorial relation of the patriarch to his wife and children, the making of legitimate heirs, and the transmission of property—and black captivity—the reproduction of property, the relations of mastery and subjection, and the regularity of sexual violence—rather than the imputed “freedom” of white women or free black women. The engendering of race occurs within these different economies of constraint and by way of divergent methods of sexual control. Kinship and captivity designate radically different conditions of embodiment that reveal the determinacy of race in the deployment of sexuality and underline the particular mechanisms through which bodies are disciplined and regulated.

The (re)production of enslavement and the legal codification of racial subordination depended upon various methods of sexual control and domination: anti-miscegenation statutes, rape laws that made the rape of white women by black men a capital offense, the sanctioning of sexual violence against slave women by virtue of the law’s calculation of negligible injury, the negation of kinship, and the commercial vitiation of motherhood as a means for the reproduction and conveyance of property and black subordination.¹⁷ *Alfred v. State* illuminates the convergence of these varied techniques in maintaining the domination of the enslaved and cultivating the pained and burdened personhood of the enslaved. In *Alfred v. State*, Alfred, a slave, was indicted for the murder of his overseer, Coleman. A witness testified that Alfred admitted having killed the overseer: “The defendant wanted to introduce a witness on his behalf, a slave named Charlotte, who stated that she was the wife of the prisoner. . . . Prisoner’s counsel then proposed to prove, by Charlotte, that about nine or ten o’clock in the morning . . . Coleman ‘had forced her to submit to sexual intercourse with him’; and that she had communicated the fact to the prisoner before the killing.”¹⁸ Although the defense attempted to introduce Charlotte as a witness and thereby prove that Alfred’s action was motivated by the rape of his wife, the district attorney objected to Charlotte’s testimony. The court sustained the objection; the prisoner was convicted and sentenced to death by hanging.¹⁹

What is at issue here are the ways in which various mechanisms of sexual domination—the repression of rape, the negation of kinship, and the legal invalidation of slave marriage—act in concert. In this instance, sexuality is a central dimension of the power exercised over and against the slave population and entails everything from compulsory couplings to the right to manage life.²⁰ Charlotte’s testimony was rejected because her relation to Alfred had no legal status, and thus it could not provide an alibi or motive for Alfred’s action. The disallowance of the marital relation, in turn, rendered superfluous Charlotte’s sexual violation.²¹ In the rejection of Charlotte as witness, her status as wife and partner of Alfred was negated, her rape displaced as adultery and then dismissed, and the violence that precipitated the overseer’s murder repressed.

It is also significant that the rape of Charlotte is interpreted narrowly within the frame of “outrages of conjugal affections” and as adultery. The defense’s argument focused on the violation of Alfred’s rights as a “husband” rather than on the rape of Charlotte. Alfred’s counsel unsuccessfully argued that “the humanity of our law . . . regards with as much tenderness the excesses of outraged conjugal affections in the negro as in the white man. The servile condition . . . has not deprived

him of his social or moral instincts, and he is as much entitled to the protection of the laws, when acting under their influence, as if he were freed.” The discussion of a husband’s conjugal rights, even if that “husband” is a slave, supplants the rape of the “wife.”²² In all likelihood, the court denied Alfred the right to vindicate this outrage because the decedent was white. However, in cases of this nature involving other slaves, the court sometimes recognized the husband’s exclusive sexual rights in his wife and “the sudden fury excited by finding a man in the very act of shame with his wife.”²³ Ultimately, the motive for Alfred’s act was deemed irrelevant because of the need to maintain black subordination and the presumably negligible status of the injury.

Alfred v. State illuminates the legal mechanisms by which sexuality and subordination were yoked in securing the social relations of slavery. On the one hand, the management of slave sexuality indifferently translated the rape of slave women into adultery or sexual intercourse; on the other, it refused to recognize or grant any legitimacy to relations forged among the enslaved. The rape of black women existed as an unspoken but normative condition fully within the purview of everyday sexual practices, whether within the implied arrangements of the slave enclave or within the plantation household. This is evidenced in myriad ways, from the disregard for polite discourse and the evasion and indirection that euphemized rape as ravishment or sex as carnal knowledge to the utter omission and repression of the crime in slave statute and case law. In this case, the normativity of rape is to be derived from the violence of the law—the identity or coincidence of legitimate uses of slave property and what Hortense Spillers terms “high crimes against the flesh.” In this case, the normativity of sexual violence establishes an inextricable link between racial formation and sexual subjection.²⁴ As well, the virtual absence of prohibitions or limitations in the determination of socially tolerable and necessary violence sets the stage for the indiscriminate use of the body for pleasure, profit, and punishment.

The legal transposition of rape as sexual intercourse shrouds this condition of violent domination with the suggestion of complicity. Sexual intercourse, regardless of whether it is coerced or consensual, comes to describe the arrangements, however violent, between men and enslaved women. (Enslaved women were also raped by slave men. Women were not protected in these cases either.) What does sexuality designate when rape is a normative mode of its deployment? What set of effects does it produce? How can rape be differentiated from sexuality when “consent” is intelligible only as submission? How can we discern the crime when it is a legitimate use of property or when the black captive is made the originary locus of liability?²⁵ Does the regularity of violation transform it into an arrangement or a liaison from which the captive female can extract herself, if she chooses, as a lover’s request or adultery would seem to imply?²⁶ Can she use or wield sexuality as a weapon of the weak? Do four years and two children later imply submission, resignation, complicity, desire, or the extremity of constraint?²⁷

It is this slippage that Celia’s act brings to a standstill through the intervention of her will or what inadequately approximates desire. To speak of will or desire broaches a host of issues that revolve upon the terms, dimensions, and conditions of action. Moreover, the term “will” is an overextended approximation of the agency of the dispossessed subject/object of property or perhaps simply unrecognizable in a

context in which agency and intentionality are inseparable from the threat of punishment. It is possible to read this act as a liberation of the captive body, however transient this liberation, or as a decisive shift in embodiment, a movement from Newsome's Celia to Celia's body, though my intention is merely to underscore the act's complexity. The full dimensions of this act and the resignation, courage, or glimpse of possibility that might have fueled it defy comprehensive analysis since we have access to Celia's life only as it has been recorded by her interrogators and rendered as crime. The fateful negotiation of autonomy at the site of the expended and exploited body affirms both the impossibility of consent and the struggle to mitigate the brutal constraints of captivity through an entitlement denied the captive—"no," the prerogative of refusal. Ultimately, Celia was hanged for this refusal. This effort to reclaim the body and experience embodiment as full, inviolate, and pleasurable, not as an extension of another's will or right or as a condition of expenditure or defilement, led Celia to construct a boundary at the threshold of her cabin that would shield her from the tacit violence seen as "befitting" the relation of slave owner and enslaved female. As Leon Higginbotham remarks, the Missouri court in pronouncing Celia's guilt "held that the end of slavery is not merely 'the [economic] profit of the master' but also the joy of the master in the sexual conquest of the slave."²⁸ Thus, Celia's declaration of the limit was an emancipatory articulation of the desire for a different economy of enjoyment.

The Bonds of Affection

The effacement of rape in the context of enslavement concerns matters of necessary and tolerable violence, the full enjoyment of the slave as thing, and the form of captive embodiment. The eliding of rape must also be considered in relation to what is callously termed the recognition of slave humanity and the particular mechanisms of tyrannical power that converge on the black body. In this instance, tyranny is not a rhetorical inflation but a designation of the absoluteness of power. Gender, if at all appropriate in this scenario, must be understood as indissociable from violence, the vicious refiguration of rape as mutual and shared desire, the wanton exploitation of the captive body tacitly sanctioned as a legitimate use of property, the disavowal of injury, and the absolute possession of the body and its "issue." In short, black and female difference is registered by virtue of the extremity of power operating on captive bodies and licensed within the scope of the humane and the tolerable.²⁹

The violence commensurate with the exercise of property rights and essential to the making of perfect submission was dissembled in regard to sexual violation by black female "excesses"—immoderate and overabundant sexuality, bestial appetites and capacities that were most often likened to those of the orangutan, and an untiring readiness that was outstripped only by the black females' willingness.³⁰ Lasciviousness made unnecessary the protection of rape law, for insatiate black desire presupposed that all sexual intercourse was welcomed, if not pursued. The state's crimes of omission and proaction—the failure to extend protection and the sanctioning of violence in the name of rights of property—disappeared before the

spectacle of black concupiscence. The nonexistence of rape as a category of injury pointed not to the violence of the law but to the enslaved woman as a guilty accomplice and seducer. However, the omissions of law must be read symptomatically within an economy of bodies in which the full enjoyment of the slave as thing depended upon unbounded authority and the totalizing consumption of the body in its myriad capacities.³¹

The construction of black subjectivity as will-less, abject, insatiate, and pained and the instrumental deployment of sexuality in the reproduction of property, subordination, and racial difference usurped the category of rape. Sexuality formed the nexus in which black, female, and chattel were inextricably bound and acted to intensify the constraints of slave status by subjecting the body to another order of violations and whims.³² The despotic ravages of power made violence indistinguishable from the full enjoyment of the thing. The tensions generated by the law's dual invocation of property and person, or by "full enjoyment" and limited protection to life and limb, were masked by the phantasmal ensnaring agency of the lascivious black.³³ Rape disappeared through the intervention of seduction—the assertion of the slave woman's complicity and willful submission. Seduction was central to the very constitution and imagination of the antebellum South for it provided a way of masking the antagonistic fissures of the social by ascribing to the object of property an ensnaring and criminal agency that acted to dissimulate the barbarous forms of white enjoyment permitted within the law.

The discourse of seduction enabled those disgusted and enraged by the sexual arrangements of slavery, like Mary Boykin Chesnut, to target slave women as the agents of their husbands' downfall. The complicity of slave women displaced the act of sexual violence. According to Chesnut, decent white women were forced to live with husbands degraded by the lowliness of their enslaved "mistresses": "Under slavery, we lived surrounded by prostitutes, yet an abandoned woman is sent out of any decent house. Who thinks any worse of a Negro or mulatto woman for being a thing we can't name?"³⁴ The sexual exploitation of the enslaved female, incredulously, served as evidence of her collusion with the master class and as evidence of her power, the power both to render the master weak and, implicitly, to be the mistress of her own subjection. The slave woman not only suffered the responsibility for her sexual (ab)use but also was blameworthy because of her purported ability to render the powerful weak.

Even those like Fanny Kemble, who eloquently described the "simple horror and misery" that slave women regularly experienced, were able to callously exclaim, when confronted with the inescapable normativity of rape and the "string of detestable details" that comprised the life of enslaved women, after yet another woman, Sophy, shared her experience of violation: "Ah! but don't you know—did nobody ever teach any of you that it is a sin to live with men who are not your husbands?"³⁵ Sophy, appropriately and vehemently, responded, "Oh, yes, missis, we know—we know all about dat well enough; but we do anything to get our poor flesh some rest from the whip; when he made me follow him into de bush, what use me tell him no? He have strength to make me."³⁶

The equivocations that surround issues of consensual sexual relations under domination, the eliding of sexual violence by the imputation of the slave woman's

ensnaring sexual agency or lack of virtue, and the presumption of consent as a consequence of the utter powerlessness of her "no" (the "no means yes" philosophy) are important constituents of the discourse of seduction. In a more expansive or generic sense, seduction denotes a theory of power that demands the absolute and "perfect" submission of the enslaved as the guiding principle of slave relations and yet seeks to mitigate the avowedly necessary brutality of slave relations through the shared affections of owner and captive. The doctrine of "perfect submission" reconciled violence and the claims of mutual benevolence between master and slave as necessary in maintaining the harmony of the institution. The presumed mutuality of feelings in maintaining domination enchanted the brutal and direct violence of master-slave relations. Bearing this in mind, the term "seduction" is employed here to designate this displacement and euphemization of violence, for seduction epitomizes the discursive alchemy that shrouds direct forms of violence under the "veil of enchanted relations"—that is, the reciprocal and mutual relations of master and slave.³⁷ This mining of the discourse of seduction attempts to illuminate the violence obscured by the veil through an interrogation of the language of power and feelings, specifically the manipulations of the weak and the kindheartedness and moral instruction of the powerful.

The benign representation of the paternal institution in slave law depicted the master-slave relationship as typified by the bonds of affection and thereby transformed relations of violence and domination into those of affinity. This benignity depended upon a construction of the enslaved black as one easily inclined to submission, a skilled maneuverer wielding weakness masterfully and a potentially threatening insubordinate who could only be disciplined through violence. If what is at stake in social fantasy is the construction of a nonantagonistic, organic, and complementary society, then the ability of the South to imagine slavery as a paternal and benign institution and master-slave relations as bound by feelings depended on the specter of the obsequious and threatening slave, for this Manichaean construction undergirded both the necessary violence and the bonds of affection set forth in slave law. As well, this fantasy enabled a vision of whiteness defined primarily by its complementary relation to blackness and by the desire to incorporate and regulate black excess.³⁸ Seduction thus provided a holistic vision of social order, not divided by antagonisms and precariously balancing barbarism and civilization, violence and protection, mutual benevolence and absolute submission, and brutality and sentiment. This harmonious vision of community was made possible by the exercise of violence, the bonds of affection, and the consonance of the weak and the powerful.

How does seduction uphold perfect submission and, at the same time, assert the alluring, if not endangering, agency of the dominated? It does so by forwarding the strength of weakness. As a theory of power, seduction contends that there is an ostensible equality between the dominant and the dominated. The dominated acquire power based upon the identification of force and feeling. As Jean Baudrillard writes, "Seduction play[s] triumphantly with weakness."³⁹ The artifice of weakness not only provides seduction with its power but also defines its essential character, for the enactment of weakness and the "impenetrable obscurity" of femininity and blackness harbor a conspiracy of power.⁴⁰ The dominated catalyze reversals of power, not by challenges presented to the system but by succumbing to the system's logic. Thus

power comes to be defined not by domination but by the manipulations of the dominated. The reversibility of power and the play of the dominated discredit the force of violence through the assertion of reciprocal and intimate relations. In this regard, the recognition of the agency of the dominated and the power of the weak secures the fetters of subjection, while proclaiming the power and influence of those shackled and tethered.

The proslavery ideologue George Fitzhugh, like Baudrillard, also celebrated the reversibility of power enacted through surrender. In *Cannibals All! or, Slaves without Masters*, Fitzhugh argued that the strength of weakness disrupts the hierarchy of power within the family, as well as the master-slave relationship. Appearances conspire to contrary purposes; thus the seemingly weak slave, like the infant or (white) woman, exercises capricious dominion: "The dependent exercise, because of their dependence, as much control over their superiors, in most things, as those superiors exercise over them. Thus and thus only, can conditions be equalized."⁴¹ Seduction appears to be a necessary labor, one required to extend and reproduce the claims of power, though advanced in the guise of the subaltern's control and disruptions: "The humble and obedient slave exercises more or less control over the most brutal and hard-hearted master. It is an invariable law of nature, that weakness and dependence are elements of strength, and generally sufficiently limit that universal despotism, observable throughout human and animal nature."⁴² If, as Fitzhugh insists, the greatest slave is the master of the household, and the enslaved rule by virtue of the "strength of weakness," then, in effect, the slave is made the master of her subjection.

As Fitzhugh envisioned, kindness and affection undergirded the relations of subordination and dependency. As a model of social order, the patriarchal family depended upon duty, status, and protection rather than consent, equality, and civil freedom. Subjection was not only naturalized but also consonant with the sentimental equality of reciprocity, inasmuch as the power of affection licensed the strength of weakness. Essentially, "the strength of weakness" prevailed due to the goodness of the father, "The armor of affection and benevolence." The generosity of the father enabled the victory claimed by the slave, the tyrannical child, and the brooding wife. The bonds of affection within the slaveholding family circle permitted the tyranny of weakness and supplanted the stranglehold of the ruling father. Ironically, the family circle remained intact as much because of the bonds of affection as because of the tyranny of the weak. Literally, the forces of affection bound the interests of the master and those of the slave in a delicate state of equilibrium, as one form of strength modified the other.⁴³ Thus we are to believe that the exercise of control by the weak softens universal despotism, subdues the power of the father by commanding his care, and guarantees the harmony of slave relations.

Seduction erects a family romance—in this case, the elaboration of a racial and sexual fantasy in which domination is transposed into the bonds of mutual affection, subjection idealized as the pathway to equality, and perfect subordination declared the means of ensuring great happiness and harmony. The patriarchal model of social order erected by Fitzhugh marries equality and despotism through an explicit critique of consent, possessive individualism, and contractual relations.⁴⁴ Feelings rather than contract are the necessary corrective to universal despotism; therefore,

duty and reciprocity rather than consent become the basis for equality. The despotic and sovereign power celebrated by Fitzhugh could only be abated by the "bonds of affection," a phrase that resonates with the ambivalence attendant to the attachments and constraints that characterize the relation of owner and object.

If a conspiracy of power resides within seduction, then questions arise as to the exact nature of this conspiracy: Who seduces whom? Does the slave become entrapped in the enchanted web of the owner's dominion, lured by promises of protection and care? Does the guile and subterfuge of the dependent mitigate the effects of power? Are the manipulations and transgressions of the dominated fated to reproduce the very order presumably challenged by such actions? Or do such enactments on the part of the owner and the enslaved, the feigned concessions of power and the stylized performance of naïveté, effect any shifts or disruptions of force or compulsively restage power and powerlessness?

Seduction reifies the idea of submission by proclaiming it the pathway to ostensible equality, protection, and social harmony. As expounded by proslavery ideologues like Fitzhugh or as a legal principle guiding master-slave relations, seduction professed that power and protection were acquired through surrender. To reiterate the tautology, the dominated exert influence over the dominant by virtue of their weakness, and therefore more formal protections against despotism or guarantors of equality are redundant, if not unnecessary. The insinuation that the dominated were mutually invested in their subjugation recast violence in the ambiguous guise of affection and declared hegemony rather than domination the ruling term of order.⁴⁵ The assertion that coercion *and* consent characterized the condition of enslavement can be seen in the implied and explicit promises of protection extended by the law.

The incessant reiteration of the necessity of submission—the slave must be subject to the master's will in all things—upheld submission as the guiding principle of slave relations, if not the central element in the trinity of savagery, sentiment, and submission. Slave law ensured the rights of property and the absolute submission of the slave, while attending to limited forms of slave subjectivity. The law granted slave owners virtually absolute rights and militated against the abuses of such authority by granting limited protection to slaves against "callous and cold-blooded" murder, torture, and maiming, although procedural constraints, most notably the fact that a slave or free black could not act as witness against a white person, acted as safeguards against white liability and made these laws virtually impossible to enforce. In the effort to attend to the interests of master and slave, the law elaborated a theory of power in which the affection of slave owners and the influence of the enslaved compensated for its failures and omissions. It contended that affection and influence bridged the shortcomings of law concerning the protection of black life. The ethic of perfect submission recognized the unlimited dominion of the slave owner yet bounded this dominion by invoking the centrality of affections in regulating the asymmetries of power in the master-slave relation.⁴⁶ The dual existence of the slave as property and person and the interests and absolute dominion of the slave owner were to be maintained in precarious balance by forwarding the role of affection in mitigating brutality.

The case of *State v. Mann*, although it doesn't specifically involve issues of sexuality or rape, is important in considering the place of affection, violence, and surrender in the law. Mann was indicted for assault and battery upon Lydia, a slave of Elizabeth Jones whom he had hired for a year: "During the term, the slave had committed some small offence, for which the Defendant undertook to chastise her—that while in the act of so doing, the slave ran off, whereupon the Defendant called upon her to stop, which being refused, he shot and wounded her."⁴⁷ The lower court convicted Mann, finding him guilty of "cruel and unwarrantable punishment, and disproportionate to the offense committed by the slave." However, in an appeal to the North Carolina Supreme Court, the decision was reversed. While the liability of the hirer, Mann, to the owner for an injury presumably impairing the value of slave property was left to general rules of bailment, the charges of criminal battery were overturned. Even if the injury diminished the value of slave property, it was not indictable as cruel and unreasonable battery. The court held that the power of the master was absolute and not a subject for discussion.⁴⁸

The higher court ruling held that the master had absolute power to render the submission of the slave perfect; yet it was also argued that the harshness of such a principle would be regulated not by existing legislation but by feelings—the benevolence and affection between master and slave and the ruling moral code. In other words, the court considered affection to be an internal regulating principle of slave relations. The Supreme Court reversed the decision of the lower court on the following grounds: the power of the master had to be absolute in order "to render the submission of the slave perfect" although "as a principle of moral right, every person in his retirement must repudiate it. But in the actual condition of things it must be so." Yet the harshness implied by this difficult yet unavoidable decision would be regulated by "the protection already afforded by several statutes (which made it illegal to murder a slave in cold blood), . . . the private interest of the owner, the benevolence toward each other, seated in the hearts of those who have been born and bred together, [and] the . . . deep execrations of the community upon the barbarian, who is guilty of excessive cruelty to his unprotected slave" (emphasis mine).

Although the court acknowledged that the scope of such absolute rights of property left the enslaved open to violent abuses, it also recognized that the right to abuse had to be guaranteed for the perpetuation of the institution, since the amorphous "public good" mandated the absolute subordination of the enslaved. The opinion amended this brutal admission with the assurance that the rights of ownership generally precluded such abuses because of self-interest, that is, pecuniary considerations. The rights of ownership, even temporary rights of possession, permitted any and all means necessary to render perfect submission; however, it was hoped that the use of excessive force was unnecessary because of the reciprocal benevolence of master-slave relations.

Rather than distinguish between implied relations and absolute dominance or separate affection from violence, the court considered them both essential to the maintenance and longevity of the institution of slavery. In short, the ethic of submission indiscriminately included absolute power and human feelings, for on one hand, the court admitted that the obedience of the slave was "the consequence only of uncontrolled authority over the body." How else could perpetual labor and submis-

sion be guaranteed? The services of one "doomed in his person and his posterity" and "without knowledge or the capacity to make anything his own, and to toil that another may reap the fruits" could only be expected of "one who has no will of his own" and "who surrenders his will in perfect obedience to that of another."⁴⁹ To be sure, the power of the master had to be absolute to produce this surrender of the will.

Not only was perfect submission an ordering principle of the social, to be accomplished by whatever violent means necessary, regardless of how brutal, but also this conceptualization of power relations depended upon feelings, not law, to guarantee basic protections to the enslaved. Submission not only encompassed the acquisition of power but also explicitly addressed the power of affection in influencing relations between master and slave, although the court distinguished between the relationship of master and slave and other domestic relations it was frequently compared with, like those of a parent and child, tutor and pupil, and master and servant. The centrality ascribed to the role of feelings implicitly acknowledged the unrestricted violence the *Mann* opinion had licensed yet minimized the consequences of this through an appeal to "moral right" rather than the actual condition of things. Feelings were to balance the use and role of force. As Judge Ruffin states: "I must freely confess my sense of the harshness of this proposition; I feel it as deeply as any man can; and as a principle of moral right every person in his retirement must repudiate it. But in the actual condition of things it must be so."

The importance attributed to the intimacies of domination illustrates the role of seduction in the law. As the opinion clearly stated, power resided not only in the title to slave property but also in the bonds of affection. Feelings repudiated and corrected the violence legitimated by law. Material interests and mutual benevolence would "mitigat[e] the rigors of servitude and ameliorat[e] the condition of the slave" and protect the slave from the ravages of abuse unleashed by the ruling. In other words, the brutal dominion guaranteed by the law was to be regulated by the influence of the enslaved—their pull on the heartstrings of the master. Slave law contradictorily asserted that absolute dominion was both necessary and voluntary. The intimacy of the master and the slave purportedly operated as an internal regulator of power and ameliorated the terror indispensable to unlimited dominion. The wedding of intimacy and violent domination as regulatory norms exemplifies the logic through which violence is displaced as mutual and reciprocal desire.

The significance attributed to feelings, attachment, and the familiarity of domestic slavery rendered domination in a heartwarming light. The power of influence invested in the enslaved—the power of the weak to sway the powerful—and the place attributed to feeling in regulating the excesses of market relations refigured relations of domination and exploitation in the garb of affection, family, and reciprocal obligations. Such reasoning held that violence was both necessary and tolerable, while insisting that feelings determined the character of the master-slave relationship and informed social, familial, and political organization. In short, slave relations were dependent upon and determined by "the action taking place in individual hearts."⁵⁰

The contradictory appeal to the public good contended that public tranquillity required violence and, at the same time, served as the guarantee that this entitlement to virtually unlimited power need never be exercised. The invocation of the public

good authorized necessary violence and established minimal standards for the recognition of slave humanity. Just as the appeal to the public good mandated absolute submission, it also required that certain provisions or protections be granted to the enslaved, like housing, clothing, food, and support for elderly and infirm slaves. Yet this concern for the welfare of the enslaved and the provisions granted them should not be mistaken for a dispensation of rights. As a judge commented in another case that hinged on determining degrees of necessary and excessive violence, although excessive violence "disturbed the harmony of society, was offensive to public decency, and directly tended to a breach of peace," the rights of the slave were extraneous to such considerations: "The same would be the law, if a horse had been so beaten. And yet it would not be pretended that it was in respect to the rights of the horse, or the feelings of humanity, that this interposition would take place."⁵¹ The public good mandated absolute submission and minimal protections intent upon maintaining harmony and security. Even when the entreaty made in the name of the public good acted minimally on the behalf of the enslaved, it did so, not surprisingly, by granting these limited entitlements in a manner that "recognized" black humanity in accordance with minimal standards of existence. This truncated construction of the slave as person, rather than lessening the constraints of chattel status, enhanced them by making personhood conterminous with injury.

Although the public good served as the arbiter of care and coercion, the precarious status of the slave within this sphere raises questions about the meaning of the slave person, the protections advanced on the slave's behalf, and the limited concerns of public decency. Contrary to pronouncements that sentiment would abate brutality, feelings intensified the violence of law and posed dire consequences for the calculation of black humanity, for the dual existence of the slave as object of property and person required that the feelings endowed to the enslaved be greatly circumscribed. While the slave was recognized as a sentient being, the degree of sentience had to be cautiously calibrated in order to avoid intensifying the antagonisms of the social order. How could property and person be reconciled on the ground of mutual benevolence and affection? How could the dual invocation of humanity and interest be sustained?

The dual existence of the slave as person and property was generated by the slave mode of production.⁵² The law attempted to resolve the contradiction between the slave as property and the slave as person/laborer or, at the very least, to minimize this tension by attending to the slave as both a form of property and a person. This effort was instrumental in maintaining the dominance of the slave-owning class, particularly in a period of national crisis concerning the institution. The increasing recognition of the slave person in the period 1830–1860 was an effort to combat the abolitionist polemic about the degradations of chattel status and the slave's lack of rights.⁵³ In any case, the dual invocation of slave law was neither a matter of an essential ethical contradiction nor a conflict between bourgeois and slave relations but an expression of the multivalence of subjection. The dual invocation quite easily accommodated the restricted recognition of the slave as person and the violence necessary to the accumulation of profit and the management of a captive population, since the figuration of the humane in slave law was totally consonant with the domination of the enslaved. The constitution of the slave as person was not at odds

with the structural demands of the system, nor did it necessarily challenge the social relations of the antebellum world.

Rather, the dual invocation of law designated the limits of rights of ownership and extended and constricted these rights as was necessary for the preservation of the institution. On one hand, there was increased liability for white violence committed against slaves; and on the other, the law continued to decriminalize the violence thought necessary to the preservation of the institution and the submission and obedience of the slave. If anything, the dual invocation of law generated the prohibitions and interdictions designed to regulate the violent excesses of slavery and at the same time extended this violence in the garb of sentiment. The recognition of the slave as subject and the figuration of the captive person in law served to explicate the meaning of dominion. To be subject in this manner was no less brutalizing than being an object of property.⁵⁴

In the arena of affect, the body was no less vulnerable to the demands and the excesses of power. The bestowal that granted the slave a circumscribed and fragmented identity as person in turn shrouded the violence of such a beneficent and humane gesture. Bluntly stated, the violence of subjection concealed and extended itself through the outstretched hand of legislated concern. The slave was considered a subject only insofar as he was criminal(ized), wounded body, or mortified flesh. This construction of the subject seems rather at odds with a proclaimed concern for the "total person."⁵⁵ However, it does not mean that the efforts to regulate the abuses of slavery were any less "genuine" but that in the very efforts to protect the enslaved from the ravages of the institution, a mutilation of another order was set in motion. Protection was an exemplary dissimulation for it savagely truncated the dimensions of existence, inasmuch as the effort to safeguard slave life recognized the slave as subject only as he violated the law or was violated (wounded flesh or pained body). Thus rendered, "person" signified little more than a pained body or a recalcitrant in need of punishment.⁵⁶

The designation of person was inescapably bound to violence, and the effort to protect embodied a degree of violence no less severe than the excesses being regulated. Despite the law's proclaimed concern for slave life or recognition of black humanity, minimal standards of existence determined personhood, *for the recognition of the slave as person depended upon the calculation of interest and injury*. The law constituted the subject as a muted pained body or a trespasser to be punished; this agonized embodiment of subjectivity certainly intensified the dreadful objectification of chattel status. Paradoxically, this designation of subjectivity utterly negated the possibility of a nonpunitive, inviolate, or pleasurable embodiment, and instead the black captive vanished in the chasm between object, criminal, pained body, and mortified flesh.⁵⁷ The law's exposition of sentiment culminated in a violent shuttling of the subject between varied conditions of harm, juggled between the plantation and the state and dispersed across categories of property, injury, and punishment.

The Measure of Humanity

In *Inquiry into the Law of Negro Slavery*, Thomas Cobb explicated the conditions in which the dominion of the master and the person of the slave were to be

accommodated in the law. In examining the dual character of the slave as person and property and the particular dimensions of personhood in common law and slave statutes, Cobb contended that the slave was recognized first as person and second as property, largely because in all slaveholding states "the homicide of a slave is held to be murder, and in most of them, [this] has been so expressly declared by law"; and even when not expressly declared by law, the principles of Christian enlightenment extend protection to life and limb.⁵⁸ Notwithstanding, he argued that slaves were not proper subjects of common law and proposed a minimal definition of protection of life and limb.

The calculation of slave existence was determined by base conditions necessary for functioning as an effective laborer, and the extent of protection to life and limb was decided by diminutions in the value of capital. Within these boundaries, degrees of injury and magnitudes of labor decided the meaning of the slave person. It is difficult to acknowledge this savage quantification of life and person as a recognition of black humanity, for as argued earlier, this restricted stipulation of humanity intensified the pained existence of the enslaved. This scale of subjective value was a complement rather than a corrective to the decriminalization of white violence that was the foundation of slave law.⁵⁹ Although this recognition of slave humanity was intended to establish criminal liability for acts of violence committed upon slaves, in the end it relied upon the diminutions in the value of property in determining and recognizing injury. In other words, the "corrective" resembled the ailment in that the effort to recognize humanity resulted in the reinscription of black life as property, for the scale of subjective value was inescapably bound to the use and value of property. The consequences of this construction of person intensified injury in the very name of redress. Moreover, the selective inclusion of the slave into the web of rights and duties that comprised the common law demonstrated the tentativeness of this recognition of personhood.

Not surprisingly, Cobb's calibrations and the law's severely circumscribed dimensions of person constituted "woman" as a condition of negligible and unredressed injury in its dismissal of sexual violence as an "offense not affecting the existence of the slave."⁶⁰ I argue that this constituted woman as a condition of negligible injury in slave law because unlike other forms of violence like maiming or battery, rape was not penalized by slave statute, nor were owners likely to pursue suits for "trespasses" on their property. This simultaneously made the body prey to sexual violence and disavowed this violence and injury. The ravished body, unlike a broken arm or leg, did not bestow any increment of subjectivity because it did not decrease productivity or diminish value—on the contrary, it might actually increase the captive's magnitude of value—nor did it, apparently, offend the principles of Christian enlightenment. It was declared to be inconsequential in the calculation of slave subjectivity and not within the rights and protections granted the enslaved:

If the general provision of the law against murder should be held to include slaves, why not all other penal enactments, by the same course of reasoning, be held to include similar offences when committed on slaves, without their being specifically named? . . . The law, by recognizing the existence of the slave as person, thereby confers no rights or privileges except such as are necessary to protect that existence. All other rights should be granted specially. Hence, the penalties for rape would not and should not, by such implication, be made to extend to carnal forcible knowledge of a

slave, that offense *not affecting the existence* of the slave, and that existence being the extent of the right which the implication of the law grants.⁶¹

Cobb, concerned with the neglect of sexual injury and the failure to protect slave women from rape in slave law, stated that "although worthy of consideration by legislators," it need not cause undue concern because "the occurrence of such an offense is almost unheard of; and the known lasciviousness of the negro, renders the possibility of its occurrence very remote."⁶² As the black male's nature made "rape too often an occurrence," the black female's imputed lasciviousness removed it entirely from consideration. It is not simply fortuitous that gender emerges in relation to violence—that is, gender is constituted in terms of negligible and unredressed injury and the propensity for violence. The en-gendering of race, as it is refracted through Cobb's scale of subjective value, entails the denial of sexual violation as a form of injury while asserting the prevalence of sexual violence due to the rapacity of the Negro. While Cobb's consideration of sexual violation initially posits gender differences within the enslaved community in terms of female victim and male perpetrator, ultimately the "strong passions" of the Negro—in this instance, lust and lasciviousness—ultimately annul such distinctions and concomitantly any concerns about "the violation of the person of a female slave." Since, according to Cobb, blacks were endowed less with sexuality than with criminality, they were in need of discipline rather than protection, since as sexual subjects they were beyond the pale of the law and outside the boundaries of the decent and the nameable.

In *George v. State*, George, a slave, was indicted for rape under a statute making it a crime to have sex with a child under ten years of age. The Mississippi Supreme Court overturned a lower-court ruling that convicted George for the rape of a female slave under ten years old and sentenced him to death by hanging. The attorney for George cited Cobb's *Law of Slavery* in his argument before the court, declaring that "the crime or rape does not exist in this State between African slaves. Our laws recognize no marital rights as between slaves; their sexual intercourse is left to be regulated by their owners. The regulations of law, as to the white race, on the subject of sexual intercourse, do not and cannot, for obvious reasons, apply to slaves; their intercourse is promiscuous, and the violation of a female slave by a male slave would be mere assault and battery."⁶³ According to George's attorney, the sexual arrangements of the captive community were so different from those of the dominant order that they were beyond the reach of the law and best left to the regulation of slave owners. The Mississippi Supreme Court concluded that based on a "careful examination of our legislation on this subject, we are satisfied that there is no act which embraces either the attempted or actual commission of a rape by a slave on a female slave. . . . Masters and slaves cannot be governed by the same common system of laws; so different are their positions, rights, and duties." The lower court's judgment was reversed, the indictment quashed, and the defendant discharged on the grounds that "this indictment cannot be sustained, either at common law or under our statutes. It charges no offence known to either system." The opinion held that slaves were not subject to the protection of common law and that earlier cases in which whites were prosecuted for the murder of slaves under common law were founded on "unmeaning twaddle. . . . 'natural law,' 'civilization

and Christian enlightenment,' in amending *proprio vigore*, the rigor of the common law."

If subjectivity is calculated in accordance with degrees of injury and sexual violation is not within the scope of offenses that affected slave existence, what are the consequences of this repression and disavowal in regard to gender and sexuality? Does this callous circumscription of black sentience define the condition of the slave female, or does it challenge the adequacy of gender as a way of making sense of the inscription and exploitation of captive bodies? Put differently, what place does the enslaved female occupy within the admittedly circumscribed scope of black existence or slave personhood? As a consequence of this disavowal of offense, is her scope of existence even more restricted? Does she exist exclusively as property? Is she insensate? What are the repercussions of this construction of person for the meaning of "woman"?

The "too common occurrence of offence" and an "offence not effecting existence" differentiated what Cobb described as the strongest passion of blacks—lust—into gendered categories of ubiquitous criminality and negligible injury. Such designations illuminate the concerted processes of racialization, accumulation, en-genderment, domination, and sexual subjection. Here it is not my intention to reproduce a heteronormative view of sexual violence as only and always directed at women or to discount the "great pleasure in whipping a slave" experienced by owners and overseers or eliminate acts of castration and genital mutilation from the scope of sexual violence but rather to consider the terms in which gender—in particular, the category "woman"—becomes meaningful in a legal context in which subjectivity is tantamount to injury. The disavowal of sexual violence is specific not only to engendering "woman" in this particular instance but also to the condition of enslavement in general. In cases like *Humphrey v. Utz* and *Werley v. State*, essentially what was being decided was whether acts of genital mutilation and castration (legally defined as acts of mayhem) were crimes when perpetuated against the enslaved or acts of just and reasonable violence. Obviously, the quotidian terror of the antebellum world made difficult the discernments of socially tolerable violence versus criminal violence. How did one identify "cruel" treatment in a context in which routine acts of barbarism were considered not only reasonable but also necessary?

To return to the central issues, the law's selective recognition of slave personhood in regard to issues of injury and protection failed to acknowledge the matter of sexual violation, specifically rape, and thereby defined the identity of the slave female by the negation of sentience, an invulnerability to sexual violation, and the negligibility of her injuries. However, it is important that the decriminalization of rape not be understood as dispossessing the enslaved of female gender, but in terms of differential production of gendered identity or, more specifically, the adequacy or meaning of gender in this context. Therefore, what is at stake here is not maintaining gender as an identitarian category but rather examining gender formation in relation to property relations, the sexual economy of slavery, and the calculation of injury.

The weighing of person and property—the limited recognition of the slave as person, to the extent that it did not interfere with the full enjoyment of the slave as

thing—endowed the enslaved with limited protections and made them vulnerable to injury, precisely because the recognition of person and the calibration of subjectivity were consonant with the imperatives of the institution. The protection of property (defined narrowly by work capacity and the value of capital), the public good (the maintenance of black subordination), and the maintenance and reproduction of the institution of slavery determined the restricted scope of personhood and the terms of recognition.⁶⁴ These concerns also governed the regulation and nullification of mothering and the protections extended to white women in order to control their sexual conduct and consolidate black subordination.⁶⁵ The affiliation of sexuality, property, and injury and the particular determination of “offences to existence” and alienable or extricable features of the slave person are illuminated by the negation of black parenting and the law’s protection of white women.

In the case of motherhood, the reproduction and conveyance of property decided the balance between the limited recognition of slave humanity and the owner’s rights of property in favor of the latter. The maternal function was not enshrined with minimal or restricted rights but indistinguishable from the condition of enslavement and its reproduction. Motherhood was critical to the reproduction of property and black subjection, but parental rights were unknown to the law. This negation was effected in instances that ranged from the sale and separation of families to the slave owner’s renaming of black children as a demonstration of his power and dominion. The issue of motherhood concerned the law only in regard to the disposition and conveyance of property and the determination and reproduction of subordinate status. The concept of “injury” did not encompass the loss of children, natal alienation, and enforced kinlessness. The law’s concern with mothering exclusively involved questions of property: diminutions in the value of slave property if the slave female was unable to reproduce or disputes regarding the conveyance and loss of property—lest we forget, we are talking about children here. Motherhood, specifically, and parenting, in general, were social relations without legal recognition in terms of either positive or negative entitlements.⁶⁶

The relations between protection, injury, and property and the constitutents and entitlements of “woman” are also illuminated by the laws concerning miscegenation, seduction, and rape, for the protection extended white women reveals not only the indeterminacy of rights but also the way in which these entitlements are used to secure, if not intensify, subordination. In this case, “protection” operated in concert with the maintenance of racial and gender hierarchies and as an instrument of social control. For example, the civil remedy for seduction required an action by the father in which the suit for damages was conducted under the guise of the master-servant relationship. Damages were awarded on the basis of lost services.⁶⁷ In cases of seduction, the protection extended women was articulated not in the form of their embodied rights but in terms of the master’s entitlement to his servant’s services and the right to compensation for the injury or impairing of his servant. These laws sheltered white women from harm as they intensified the regulation and control of white female sexuality, since this security depended upon chaste and virtuous behavior and an allegiance to racist regulatory norms. The selective protection of the law only encompassed “respectable” women, and this respect ultimately depended upon the legitimate proprietary rights of men over female sexuality. (As neither

black fathers nor husbands bore any sanctioned or lawful relation to black women, they existed outside the circle of protection in this regard, too.)

Proper and legitimate relations determined a white woman’s respectability. In cases of rape involving white women and black men, the charges were sometimes dismissed if these women were known to associate with blacks. White women’s interracial liaisons with black men denied them the protection of the law. As well, the fact that the rape of black women was not a crime had important consequences for white women. The minimal conditions of existence deemed tolerable for slave women made it necessary to secure whiteness in order to guarantee that only white women received certain protections. The fact that slave women were not subject to the protection of common law (or slave law) regarding rape mandated that the whiteness of white women raped by slave men or by free black men had to be established in order to prosecute the assailant. Cases were dismissed in which the race of white women was not explicitly declared.

In *Commonwealth v. Jerry Mann*, Mann had been indicted, tried, and convicted for “feloniously making an assault upon a woman, with intent to ravish her. The law declares that if a slave shall attempt to ravish a white woman, he shall be adjudged a felon.”⁶⁸ However, the judgment was arrested because “it was nowhere in the indictment stated, that Mary M’Causland was a white woman.” In *Grandison (a Slave) v. State*, Grandison was convicted of assault and battery with intent to ravish Mary Douglass.⁶⁹ He was sentenced to death. But the judgment was reversed and arrested, and the prisoner was remanded to jail because “such an act committed on a black woman, would not be punished with death. . . . This fact [that the woman assaulted was white] gives to the offence its enormity. . . . [It] must be charged in the indictment and proved on trial.” Yet the “enormity of offence” and “offences not effecting existence” are neither endowments nor dispossessions of gender but instead demonstrate the manner in which deployments of sexuality act concertedly with processes of racialization, accumulation, and domination.

It is necessary to belabor the issue because too often it has been argued that the enslaved female existed outside the gendered universe because she was not privy to the entitlements of bourgeois women within the white patriarchal family. As a consequence, gender becomes a descriptive for the social and sexual arrangements of the dominant order rather than an analytic category. As well, it naturalizes the discourse of protection and mystifies its instrumental role in the control and disciplining of body, and, more important, maintains the white normativity of the category “woman.” What I am attempting to explore here is the divergent production of the category woman rather than a comparison of black and white women that implicitly or inadvertently assumes that gender is relevant only to the degree that generalizable and universal criteria define a common identity. Can we employ the term “woman” and yet remain vigilant that “all women do not have the same gender?”⁷⁰ Or “name as ‘woman’ that disenfranchised woman whom we strictly, historically, geopolitically *cannot imagine* as a literal referent” rather than reproduce the very normativity that has occluded an understanding of the differential production of gender?⁷¹ By assuming that woman designates a known referent, an a priori unity, a precise bundle of easily recognizable characteristics, traits, and dispositions, we fail to attend to the contingent and disjunctive production of the category.

In other words, woman must be disassociated from the white middle-class female subject who norms the category. Thus the disregard for the sexual violation of enslaved women, the reproduction of subordination, and the negation of kinship cannot simply be explained or explained away as the absence of normative conditions of womanhood, for the work of feminist criticism is precisely the interrogation and deconstruction of this normativity rather than the determination of who is or is not woman in accordance with this measure. How can we understand the racialized engenderment of the black female captive in terms other than deficiency or lack in relation to normative conditions and instead understand this production of gender in the context of very different economies of power, property, kinship, race, and sexuality?

As well, if we approach this disavowal of violence and disregard of injury as specific to female engenderment and as largely defining the category "woman" rather than "captive," do we reproduce the presumed masculinity of the categories "person" and "slave"? What happens if we assume that the female subject serves as a general case for explicating social death, property relations, and the pained and punitive construction of blackness? What would be made possible if, rather than assuming the subject, we began our inquiry with a description of subjectification that did not attempt to name or interpret anything but to simply describe its surfaces? How would woman be cast in this process? Could we, in fact, release the category of woman from its fixity and white normativity and likewise examine racial subjection in articulation with engenderment? What possibilities of resignification would then be possible?⁷²

The disregard of sexual injury does not divest slave women of gender but reveals the role of property relations—the possession of the enslaved—and racial subjugation in the constitution of gender and sexuality. In this case, possession occurs not via the protections of the patriarchal family and its control of female sexuality but via absolute rights of property. Therefore terms like "protection," "domesticity," and "honor" need to be recognized as specific articulations of racial and class location. The captive female does not possess gender as much as she is possessed by gender—that is, by way of a particular investment in and use of the body. What "woman" designates in the context of captivity is not to be explicated in terms of domesticity or protection but in terms of the disavowed violence of slave law, the sanctity of property and the necessity of absolute submission, the pathologizing of the black body, the restriction of black sentience, the multifarious use of property, and the precarious status of the slave within the public sphere. For example, the instrumental deployment of sexuality operated in disregard of white regulatory norms like chastity and marriage because of the civil status of the enslaved, the strategies of domination, and the constituent features of slavery as a mode of production—the fungibility of life, the ownership of labor, and the value of the slave as both a direct producer and a commodity. Within this economy, legitimate and proper relations were foreclosed. The particular investment in and exploitation of the captive body dissolved all networks of alliance and affiliation not defined by property ownership. This was evidenced by the courts' description of slave children neither as illegitimate nor bastards but as simply "not legitimate."⁷³

At issue here is the construction of "woman" not as a foundational category with given characteristics, attributes, or circumstances but within a particular racial

economy of property that intensified its control over the object of property through the deployment of sexuality. Despite the proclaimed ties of affinity between those born and bred together, the enslaved female was subjected to violence within the plantation household and within the public arena. Within the private realm of the plantation household, she was subject to the absolute dominion of the owner and also experienced abuse within the slave enclave, and in the public sphere absolute submission defined the relation of the "public" to the black body. The law's failure to recognize rape as neither crime nor injury can be related to the prerogatives and entitlements of the private sphere, the full enjoyment of property that defined the rights of slave owners, and, in the public sphere, the necessity of black submission and the decriminalization of white violence requisite to preserving the public good.

What becomes clear is the contingency of woman as a category. While in the context of slave law, woman is figured, in this instance, in relation to the negation of injury, in the context of slave relations, men are also subject to forms of sexual violation and, notwithstanding, the enslaved fashion themselves as gendered subjects in accordance with their own norms of masculinity and femininity. Therefore, I do not claim or think it is possible to establish the constancy of woman across these varied territories. In many respects, the exploitation of the captive body makes the experience of men and women more similar than different, yet the enslaved recognized themselves as gendered subjects and the law also constructed gendered subjects, if only in regard to the severity of punishment and disavowal of injury.⁷⁴ In light of these remarks, what does the name "woman" designate within Cobb's restricted scope of subjective value? Does it merely mark the disavowed violence and pained condition of enslavement or make palpable the negligible injury? Does the condition of the enslaved female suggest an obtuseness to pain and injury? By interrogating gender within the purview of "offenses to existence" and examining female subject-formation at the site of sexual violence, I am not positing that forced sex constitutes the meaning of gender but that the erasure or disavowal of sexual violence engendered black femaleness as a condition of unredressed injury, which only intensified the bonds of captivity and the deadening objectification of chattel status.⁷⁵ Unlike the admittedly indispensable and requisite violence of *State v. Mann*, or the protections extended to other forms of injury, and the criminalization of particular acts of violence—homicide, mayhem, and battery—despite the procedural restrictions that made prosecution extremely difficult, if not nearly impossible, rape was unredressed and disavowed. Ironically, the intervention of affection and the calculation of black sentience intensified the violence legitimated within the scope of the law, and, in this way, the effort to regulate violence simply underscored the categories of unredressed injury. In the very effort to recognize the slave as person, blackness was reinscribed as pained and punitive embodiment and black humanity was constituted as a state of injury and punishment.

The Shadow of the Law

The failure to recognize the damage of sexual violation, the negation of the captive's will except as an incitement to punishment, and the cynical recognition of slave humanity fashioned female gender so as to relegate the aforementioned

crimes against the flesh to the category of negligible injury and thereby reduce the already brutally circumscribed scope of black humanity. Moreover, this neglect of injury comes to represent the pained and punitive calculation of subjectivity not only in its various nominations—black, chattel, woman—but also in ways that defy a singular or sovereign axis of dispossession. The negligible injury of the violated female body exemplifies the differential production of domination as it concerns the engenderment of blackness, the defiling conditions of enslavement, the racialization of gender, and the varied inroads of power. In the confines of chattel slavery, gender is discernible primarily in terms of the uses and conveyances of property, calculations of sentience, evaluations of injury, and determinations of punishment.

The indifference to injury, the extended use and dispossession of the captive body, the negation of motherhood, and the failures and omissions of law are explored in Harriet A. Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, as Written by Herself* as primary determinations of gender and as the very elements that inaugurate the crisis of consent or consensual sexual relations under domination. Jacobs requires that we consider not only the restricted scope of black humanity but also the effort to act as a desiring subject in a context in which consent inadequately designates the enactment of possibility and the constraints of agency.⁷⁶ By exploring these issues within the frame of seduction, the narrative precludes facile distinctions that would enable us to disentangle desire and domination or purportedly willed exchange from coercion. By underlining the unwieldiness of sexuality—the entanglements of instrumentality and pleasure—and the crisis induced by this contradictory state of affairs, *Incidents* challenges conventional interpretations that deem issues of desire and consent irrelevant in the context of enslavement or celebrate desire as the triumph of the captive will. To the contrary, the narrative illuminates the equivocations that surround agency, the unavoidable linkages of desire and domination, and the dangers of seduction. The nexus of desire, consent, and coercion that situates the discussion of the slave girl's sexuality perhaps entails a reconsideration of seduction that attends to the agency of the dominated in terms other than those we have previously considered, for if not a conspiracy of power, seduction in this instance enables opportunities for disruption and offers a glimpse of possibility in the context of peril.

The dangers of seduction, as stated earlier, concern the insinuation and simulation of the subordinate's will and the containment of agency within a repressive problematic of consent in order to legitimate the arrangements of power and dominance. This repressive problematic of consent enacts the captive will through the displacement of culpability and the designation of the enslaved as the originary locus of transgression, liability, and shame. The question that we have yet to decide is whether there is more at stake in seduction than the legitimation and disavowal of despotic power and the displacement of culpability via the simulation of the slave's agency. However, *Incidents*, by utilizing seduction and inquiring into its dangers, suggests the possible gains to be had by "making do" with or "using" seduction. Such an effort is fraught with perils precisely because there is no secure or autonomous exteriority from which the enslaved can operate or to which they can retreat. The double-edged nature of this gaming with power threatens to intensify constraints, rend the body, or

result in inevitable losses since within this domain the chances of safeguarding gains are already foreclosed. Therefore, how does one act without exacerbating the constraints of captivity or the violation of surrender?

The question arises as to whether seduction can provide a way of acquiring power or remains the exclusive purchase of the dominant—that is, a strategic disavowal of power that masks the violence of property relations and the despotism of the domestic institution behind the guise of the subaltern's willed surrender and consent to subjection. Can seduction also serve as a weapon of the weak or a vehicle for the articulation of needs and desires? Is it possible to consider the contested interaction of the captive female and white man/owner within this frame? Do points of resistance inhabit the enactment of willed surrender, or is it a surrender of another order? If the latter is the case, then the delineations of power are murky and uncertain. This does not mitigate the brutality or instrumentality of seduction but signals a use of tactics or possibilities previously unconsidered. As deployed in Jacobs's narrative, seduction suggests both agency and subjection. However, the exploration of seduction in *Incidents*, unlike that of slave law, strives to differentiate between the constraints of circumstance, which render consent inadequate as an explication of the negotiation and manipulation of power enacted by the enslaved, and the coercive annexation of the captive body, which makes it prey to the unrestricted uses and whims of the other. As well, the relation of injury and subjectivity is revisited at crucial sites of the law's repression and omission—the sexual violation of the captive female, the negation of kinship, and the (dis)possession of the body and its issue. These elements or "incidents" determine the condition of enslavement and engenderment. Unlike the law's discourse of seduction, in which the equivocations of will and submission are taken as the guarantees of reciprocity and possible reversals of power, the equivocations of seduction in *Incidents* concern issues of calculation, coercion, and the rendering of fact in the law's domain. More important, the textual staging of the scenario of seduction provides an opportunity to explore the meaning of consent from the perspective of the dispossessed and non-contractual subject. This exploration of consent specifically addresses the possibilities for action, recognition, and relationality that exist in the default of consent, for "deliberate calculation" reckons with the possibilities for agency that exist under conditions of duress, coercion, dispossession, manipulation, and constraint. Seduction, as the vehicle of this exploration, raises the question of whether a noncontractual subject can give consent and, if so, under what terms?

The Narrative of Seduction

Incidents makes use of seduction and recasts it by emphasizing the degradations of enslavement, the perverse domesticity of the paternal institution, and the violence enacted on the captive body within an arena purportedly defined by ties of sentiment, mutual affection, and interest. The narrative recounts endless episodes of violence as a way of exposing the tacit entitlements of property relations and the "living death" of slavery and attending to the unredressed injury of the enslaved. In this deployment of seduction, the law's production of injury is roundly condemned,

precisely as the inadequacy of consent and the enactment of desire in the context of domination is considered. This exploration implicitly renders a more complex vision of power and the possible and circumscribed terms of agency by refusing to pose the question of desire in terms of compulsion versus unhindered choice. By doing so, the text represents the complicated terrain of the sexual and the limited possibilities for action under constraint and duress. This is accomplished by demystifying virtue and disclosing the legal mechanisms that secure and safeguard it. Virtue and consent are resituated through an analysis of the sexual contract—marriage, paternity, and the protection of the daughter's purity.⁷⁷ The textual performance of seduction historicizes virtue by revealing the role of the law in sustaining and defiling virtue. The work of narrative entails making visible the mechanisms that deny, repress, and redescribe injury and that produce and sustain chastity as a racial and class entitlement. Furthermore, it strives to grapple with the risky enterprise of desire and the pleasures of inviolate and nonpunitive embodiment.

"A Perilous Passage in the Slave Girl's Life" enacts the dilemma of seduction in the navigation of fated surrender and compulsion. As the following passage makes clear, the "deliberate calculation" of interest and the hope to avoid degrading and coerced submission rather than the freedom to choose the objects of one's affection determine what might be described as an "exchange" for freedom: "It seems less degrading to give one's self, than to submit to compulsion. There is something akin to freedom in having a lover who has no control over you, except what he gains by kindness and attachment. A master may treat you as rudely as he pleases, and you dare not speak. . . . Revenge and articulations of interest were added to flattered vanity and sincere gratitude for kindness. I knew nothing would enrage Dr. Flint so much as to know that I favored another; and it was something to triumph over my tyrant even in that small way."⁷⁸ Although "giv[ing] one's self" occurs without the coercion of violent threats, ownership, and direct control and is described as "akin to freedom," it is within the scope of power and domination that invariably structure the relations between white man and slave woman. It is important to note that it is not equality or the absence of constraint that is celebrated in this inscription of "calculation" but the possible gains to be made within the context of domination. Jacobs emphasizes this by describing Linda Brent's (Jacobs's pseudonymous identity) act as "something akin to freedom" but different from the freedom to choose the object of one's affection enjoyed by white women because of the legitimate/legal domestic arrangements of the white family (54).

Linda's choice cannot be explicated within the range of options available to white women. "Akin to freedom" expresses the limited possibilities, constraint, despair, and duress that condition the giving of the self, not unlimited options, freedom, or unencumbered choice. Even if we understand protection as an idealization of the control and regulation of white female sexuality, the point is that the "fall from virtue" is only intelligible in a context in which there is customary and legal protection of women, whether realized through the legitimation of marriage, the recognition of paternal right, or the criminalization of sexual violence. The status of this act, whether a "headlong plunge" or a revengeful and interested bid for freedom, matters less than the exercise of quite restricted agency over and against coercion and compulsion. It is an option that is the "less degrading" and intelligible

only within the scope of "laws [that] reduce you to the condition of chattel" and that make slaves "entirely subject to the will of another" (55).

Thus the issue of consent is framed by the law's negation of the captive will and the violent domination of slave relations.⁷⁹ Yet if this restricted or truncated state of consent is determined by the law's failures and omissions, it also critically refracts the nonconsent that ever and always stipulates the willingness of the captive female. Certainly the belabored comparison between the domestic arrangements of free white Northern women and those of slavery is intended to expose the role of the law in the construction and negation of consent in the patriarchal family and in the plantation household. In this regard, it is appropriate that Dr. Flint can only make sense of Linda's calculated defiance, this "acting out" or acting on behalf of hoped-for freedom, revenge, kindness, and affection, as a crime, thereby reinscribing any limited exertion of will, outside the scope of the master's dominion and not for his use, as crime: "Linda . . . you have been criminal towards me." The sovereignty endowed to the slave owner extends itself in this inversion of crime and law in which the law acts to inflict injury and then deny it, and crime, in its elasticity, encompasses all efforts to escape, expose, and redress injury. The repeated use of the term "crime" throughout the narrative documents the displacement of culpability onto the enslaved and crime as a predominant mode of black subjection.⁸⁰

The feat of *Incidents* is not simply its representation of the normativity of sexual violence but also the endeavor to actualize something "akin to freedom" in this context, even if it affords little more than having a lover whom one is thankful not to despise. The narrative's reconsideration of virtue and attention to injury serve to expose not only the violence of law and the inadequacy of consent but also the fact that consent is predicated on the presumption of virtue and chastity, since it is impossible for an unchaste woman to be raped. The entitlement and negation of choice thus come to depend not only on one's civil status but also on the presumption of virtue. If, as I have argued above, virtue designates a racial entitlement not accorded to the enslaved, then consent is nullified not only on the grounds of one's civil status but also on the basis of presumed sexual predilections, which in the case of slave women come to be defined by default.

The Seduction of the Reader

The seduction enacted in "A Perilous Passage" recounts the slave girl's "fall from virtue" in order to recontextualize virtue within the economy of slavery and trouble distinctions between the virtuous and the fallen. The enactment of seduction encompasses Linda's deliberate calculations and Sands's (Linda's white lover and the father of her two children) temptations and flattery and overcomes the resistances of the reader by an orchestrated display of weakness. The shamefaced appeals to the reader and the narrative's confessional tone ultimately expose the contingency of virtue. More important they effect a reversal in which the standards of virtue are deemed inappropriate in measuring the lives of enslaved women.⁸¹ The chapter's language of guilty prostration lures the reader by manipulating her investments and desires. The seemingly naive and apologetic declarations work their

designs upon the reader. This enactment of seduction exemplifies the necessary cunning required to survive slavery.⁸² As Jacobs writes elsewhere, "Who can blame slaves for being cunning? They are constantly compelled to resort to it. It is the only weapon of the weak and oppressed against the strength of their tyrants" (100-101). The exercise of cunning ensnares the reader at precisely the point in the narrative where the contemporaneous readership was most likely to sever identification with the slave girl because of her "recklessness." However, with the aid of the "weapon[s] of the weak," the narrator masterfully exercises her authority and sustains the reader's empathic identification.

The narrator guides us through the perilous passage in the slave girl's life by documenting the constant obstacles that confront the enslaved female and the inevitability of her violation. It is the cumulative effects of these "adverse circumstances" that are responsible for her "degraded condition." The narrator's appeal situates the reader in the position of the slave girl and implores the implied reader not to judge from the virtuous perspective of those whose homes are protected by law.⁸³ After all, it is desperation, despair, and "living death" that drive Linda into the arms of Sands. Her recklessness registers the inexorability of her undoing, as well as her despair. The naïveté of a fifteen-year-old girl and the slave's longing for freedom facilitate Linda's seduction by Sands's eloquent words. By detailing the defilements that characterize the slave girl's life, the narrator instructs the reader that the "degraded condition" of the slave woman must be contextualized within the tyranny of the master-slave relationship and not naturalized as a racial predilection or propensity for sexual excess. The inescapability of this violated condition provides the narrator with the license to speak the indelicate, within defined limits, and, at the same time, forestalls the condemnation of white Northern women. The narrative creates a dramatic vortex that engulfs the reader and vividly displays the relentless forces of sexual undoing; even the most obdurate reader cannot resist such entreaties.

As is most of the narrative, "A Perilous Passage" is narrated in the mode of recollection. However, the metered mode of recollection is disrupted here by the narrator's urgency. "And now, reader, I come to a period in my unhappy life, which I would gladly forget if I could" (emphasis mine).⁸⁴ The use of "now" in Linda's recollection seems to indicate that the entire narrative had been leading to this point. "Now" reflects the urgency of the effort to keep the reader's empathy and refers to the relationship between narrative and reader, at a place where narrative control is in jeopardy. It signals an endangered moment of negotiation between reader and narrator. It indicates not only the narrative location but also the self-reflexivity of the narrative about the crisis of its authority as it attempts to navigate the contemporaneous readership through the perilous passage.⁸⁵ The revisited event of crisis flashes before the reader by way of this temporal eruption, which figures the fall as the imperiled present, thereby placing the reader in the moment of danger and enabling her to apprehend the enormity of the crisis and the fatedness of the slave girl's undoing. This instant of peril flashes before the reader, beckoning her to fully experience this moment of danger, this "hour of extremity" (57). The reader, overwhelmed by the pain, shame, sorrow, pleas, and guilt, falls prey to the narrator's eloquent words just as Linda fell prey to Sands.

"There may be sophistry in all this," acknowledges the narrator; however, sophistry is essential to the seduction of the reader. Though concealed by the confessional tenor and proclaimed naïveté of the narrative, the duplicity of the narrative lies in its appeal to the reader for sympathy and understanding, while actually deposing the reader as judge. While seemingly conceding the higher moral ground to the good women of the North, it introduces them to the situational ethics of the enslaved and the necessary practices of cunning, duplicity, and sophistry: "Slaves, being surrounded by mysteries, deceptions, and dangers, early learn to be suspicious and watchful, and prematurely cautious and cunning" (155). As a narrative strategy, this duplicity involves conforming to the reader's desire in order to advance contrary arguments and transform the reader's incredulity and resistance into identification and empathy.⁸⁶

The crisis of seduction is ameliorated by the seductiveness of the narrative.⁸⁷ Conforming to the readers' desires includes pandering to their sense of moral superiority only to topple the pedestal on which they stand and unmooring them in the storm of events. The narrative explicitly states that white Northern women cannot judge the slave girl by the same standards with which they judge themselves. The narrator's humbling appeal to the reader covertly forwards her own desires and secures a recognition of those desires. The identification of the slave girl as "victim" does not negate her role as agent.

However, the narrative's negotiating of desire and violation does not entirely escape the displacement of violence and omission of injury that characterize the discourse of seduction in slave law. The displacement of violence is inscribed as what the narrator "dares not speak." The urgent and desperate effort to keep the reader within the narrator's authority creates disruptions in the narrative and provides a line of exit that enables brutal facts to be avoided. On the one hand, we are to believe that Linda eludes her master, despite the extremity of violence exercised by Flint to force her "to change this line of policy."⁸⁸ On the other hand, the narrator's recurring maxim—that she dare not tell the worst—the author's constant reminders that "no pen can give adequate description of the all-pervading corruption produced by slavery," and the slave girl's belief that "resistance is hopeless" would seem to make escape impossible.⁸⁹

The impossibility of adequately representing the violence of slavery is due not only to the enormity of the degradation and the unwillingness of the reader to believe the extremity or obscenity of violence but also to the fact that by speaking of these crimes the narrator carries the burden of the indecent and the obscene (28). On those occasions within the frame of the narrative when Linda tries to disclose her abuse to her mistress, confide in her grandmother, or act to escape Flint's assault, she becomes the object of reproach and is encumbered with guilt, crime, and disgrace. The double bind is that she must offer testimony about these degradations in order to help her sisters in bondage but that speaking of these crimes places the burden of guilt upon her. To speak of the foul wrongs committed against her is to enact the indecent and unveil the unspeakable. As a consequence of this double bind, rape is only represented in terms of its effects—mute, pregnant women and near-white offspring. This is also the case in Elizabeth Keckley's narrative, *Behind the Scenes or Thirty Years a Slave and Four Years in the White House*, in which children stand as the

embodiment of undisclosed and unspoken sexual violence: "Suffice it to say, that he prosecuted me for four years, and I—I—became a mother." The elisions articulate both the literal absence of rape in the law, "the edicts of that society which deemed it no crime to undermine the virtue of [slave] girls," and the textual crisis engendered by the effort to represent it.⁹⁰

The unspoken and the censored haunt the narrative: "The degradations, the wrongs, the vices, that grow out of slavery are more than I can describe. They are greater than you would willingly believe."⁹¹ The constraints on what can be said, the impossibility of representing the magnitude of slavery's violence, and the pain of recollection account for the selective character of the narrative: "I know that some are too much brutalized by slavery to feel the humiliation of their position; but many slaves feel it most acutely, and shrink from the memory of it."⁹² Is the evasion of rape in the narrative thus an evasion of memory? Does anticipated disbelief on the part of the reader and the pain of recollection prohibit a full disclosure? Or can Jacobs's evasion be attributed to a concern for the reader's sensibility and delicacy? The avowedly fragmentary character of the narrative and the inhibitions to full disclosure prevent us from easily championing Linda's purported escape from Dr. Flint's sexual assault(s).

The anxiety and withholding that characterize the accounts of sexual violence in the narrative are determined by a complex of factors: the law's disavowal of violence, the strictures of decency, the pain of recollection, the resistance of the reader, and the conventions of sentimental literature.⁹³ In a letter to Amy Post, Jacobs described the difficulty involved in presenting a full account of her past because of the degradations she experienced and the pain of remembrance: "I have striven faithfully to give a true and just account of my own life in slavery. There are some things that I might have made plainer—Woman can whisper her cruel wrongs into the ear of a dear friend much easier than she could record them." The dashes in Jacobs's letter to Post, like the admittedly selective incidents of the narrative, obscure the materiality of violence in order to avoid the pain and humiliation necessarily a part of its retelling. If one thinks of these dashes and elisions as literal and figurative cuts in the narrative, then they display and displace the searing wounds of the violated and mute body, a body that acts out its remembrances without the symbolic endowments to articulate its history of injury. The dashes, ellipses, and circumlocutions hint at the excluded term by way of the bodies of slave women. The bodies of these women are textual enigmas to be interpreted by the reader since they are literally pregnant with the secrets of slavery. These figures dramatize the predicament of embodiment. This is not uncommon in sentimental fiction, where "bodily signs are adamantly and repeatedly presented as the preferred and most potent mechanisms both for communicating meaning and marking the fact of its transmission."⁹⁴ The sheer magnitude of violence exceeds the scope of the representable and prevents a full disclosure of slavery's crimes. Even descriptions that "fall far short of the facts" risk prurience and entail a Sisyphean effort to unveil that which is said not to exist in the law's domain of fact.

The anxiety that attends Jacobs's understated and avowedly selective narration of these crimes must also be attributed to the ensnaring character of crime—its ability to engulf its object and dislodge responsibility onto its victim. In the absence of a

licit space for the captive female's desire, it, too, becomes engulfed as crime. Not only do the enslaved bear the burden of crime, the onus of guilt indissociable from speaking of the foul wrongs of slavery, and the punishment essential to the constitution of the subject, but also the inability to marry renders all desire illegitimate, as it is unlicensed, extralegal, and without a sanctioned domain. Consequently, the defilements and violations of slavery are incorporated as shame. Just as sophistry articulates the constraints of agency, shame reveals the legal predicament of the subject, defined by the negation of will and illicit and unlawful willfulness. Shame symptomatically articulates the inevitable construction of desire, willfulness, and agency in terms of the illicit, the dishonorable, and the unlawful. Within the economy of slavery, neither love nor desire is legitimated through the formal recognition of relationality, as in marriage, consensual relations, or parenting. They are simply not legitimate. In short, they are neither recognized nor endowed with legal right. In order to create a space for desire, fully cognizant of this absence of right, the narrative emphasizes the role of law in determining the (il)legitimacy of desire and the inevitability of wrongdoing. As a structure of feeling, shame expresses the devaluation of chattel status, the dissolution experienced in being absolutely subject to another, and the recognition of one's abjection. It denotes the affective dimension of the general condition of dishonor constitutive of enslavement.⁹⁵ In this regard, being "shamefaced at the telling" cannot be explained solely by contrasting it with virtue or true womanhood; it registers the particular mechanisms of subjection.

Ironically, Linda's feelings of disgrace are conditioned by the very act that grants a limited and provisional freedom. If deliberate calculation is unable to effect an "event," a reversal of forces in the relations of domination, it is clearly double-edged, for the bid for freedom culminates in another "tie" or "link" to bondage. The same act both holds out the possibility of freedom and intensifies the burdens and constraints of enslavement. If this negotiation of desire is eclipsed by shame, it is also important to recognize the transience of this desire and its resolutely ambivalent character. It is renounced and justified. It is fueled by the need for recognition, protection, and reciprocity and by revenge, yet it can be neither sustained nor actualized because of the absence of a proper domain. As a consequence, desire presupposes guilt. However, since Jacobs foregrounds the role of the law in the construction of the "not legitimate," guilt must be seen as the social production of wrongdoing due to the absence of lawful networks of exchange, the inability to form contracts, and the negation of sociality, and as a result, calculation rather than courtship, purchase rather than proposal, manumission rather than marriage delimit the circuits of desire in the economy of slavery.

These circuits or perilous passages occur in the default of legal, sound, or suitable arrangements. Outside the shadow of law, compulsion eclipses choice, as neither right nor protection secures the line between consent and nonconsent. Therefore, the effort to distinguish between being compelled to submit and "giving oneself" relies on Flint's vile proposals and assaults in order to define choice by contradistinction. Nonetheless, the line between something akin to choice and nonconsent is permeable and uncertain because an absolute distinction between them cannot be sustained in the context of slave relations. This uncertainty expresses the dilemma of consent for the noncontractual subject. The very term "deliberate calculation," in contrast

o "free choice," illuminates the incommensurability of consent and its indebtedness to a contractual model of social relations. Choice is a legal entitlement beyond the scope of the enslaved, who are reduced to chattel, unprotected by law, and "entirely subject to the will of another" (55). At the same time, the narrative endeavors to represent Linda's choice, precisely in order to make claims for freedom, claims that are only intelligible within the terms of willed exchange, self-possession, and the alienability of the self as property definitive of liberty.

Despite the effort to differentiate between compulsion and "giving oneself," coercion and calculation become interwoven in the narrative as in the law. Largely because the assertion of consent requires an impossible approximation, it assumes a space of desire defined neither by white dominance ("a lover who has no control over you") nor by coercion, but by kindness and willed exchange ("it seems less degrading to give one's self"). In addition, this "giving of the self" presupposes a degree of autonomy over the self in order to be able to facilitate this transaction. This "deliberate calculation" acts as a transmutation of property in which chattel, absolutely subject to the will of another, gives way to property in the self. As in the case of "stealing away," the slave's property in the self is defined not by possession or legal title, customarily understood as inalienable rights, but by appropriation and theft. The relation of the enslaved to the self is possible only by way of wrongful possession or possession without right or permission. Thus the deliberate calculation reinscribes the status of the self as property in order to undo it. This is true on a formal and substantive level in that Linda hopes this exchange will result in freedom for herself and her children. Consequently, this state "akin to freedom," like freedom itself, reveals the indebtedness of liberty to property and to an alienable and exchangeable self.

The effort to represent desire and momentarily grant it a space requires that a degree of choice, however constrained, be exercised, or else there is no basis on which to differentiate Linda's relation with Sands from her relation with Flint or choice from nonconsent. Yet in the effort to distinguish between "giving one's self" and "submit[ing] to compulsion," the narrative reinscribes the paradox of seduction. Force, will, and submission become entangled in ways that obscure violence and disavow injury. This is particularly attenuated in regard to the slave girl's resistance and Linda's refusal to "yield" to Flint. Jacobs repeatedly asserts that the slave girl's resistance to her master's violation is hopeless and her degradation inevitable. However, unlike other slave girls whipped and starved into submission, Linda eludes this fate. This is attributed to her determined will.

This assertion seems to contradict the main thrust of Jacobs's argument, which maintains that being forced to submit to the will of the master in all things defines the predicament of enslavement, yet this condition of subjection, resignation, and enforced will-lessness imposed by domination should not be mistaken for compliance or assent. It simply registers the fact that resistance is hopeless. This, coupled with the demystification of virtue, dislodges the burden of guilt that had been foisted onto the slave girl in the course of her violation. Nonetheless, in depicting Flint's assault and Linda's seemingly successful evasions of his intended rape, Jacobs contravenes this argument and inadvertently reinforces the idea that if determined enough, one can escape violation, thereby implicitly suggesting that submission is to some degree

an act of compliance and that utmost resistance establishes the meaning of nonconsent. Clearly, she does not intend to imply that the absence of physical resistance instantiates consent or that utmost resistance exclusively defines nonconsent. Nonetheless, when moving from the general to the specific, from the slave girl to Linda, she attempts to establish her innocence by strict adherence to this formula. The inability to resist one's master does not imply consent, but utmost resistance is required to establish nonconsent. These assertions are at cross-purposes and act to displace and extend the discourse of seduction, while fully illuminating the double bind of agency. This is compounded by the representation of Flint's assaults that are directed at securing Linda's submission precisely as an admission of her consent and willful participation in the coerced arrangements. Thus rather than illustrating the utter negation of consent and the triumph of violence, the event of rape would be taken as the very emblem of willful submission.

In the effort to reveal the violence requisite to acquiring submission and to document resistance, Jacobs must resort to extreme measures in order to hypothesize an exercise of will not yoked to submission. In other words, utmost resistance becomes the means by which she extricates will-lessness and willfulness or perfect submission and consent. If the possibility of refusing or evading Flint is precluded, then Linda's choice of Sands cannot be differentiated from the indiscriminate use of her body by Flint. As well, the presumption that only a chaste woman can exercise nonconsent requires that coercion be actively resisted in order to disentangle non-consent and consent.⁹⁶

The opportunity for nonconsent is required to establish consent, for consent is meaningless if refusal is not an option. Nonetheless, the very effort to demonstrate consent reveals its impossibility if consent is understood as a voluntary agreement free from constraint or compulsion or as unimpinged by relations of power and dominance. After all, if desperation, recklessness, and hopelessness determine "choosing one's lover," absolute distinctions between compulsion and assent cannot be sustained. Yielding to another or giving one's self is no less subject to constraint, though it is certainly different from and preferable to being forced to submit. Consent is unseemly in a context in which the very notion of subjectivity is predicated upon the negation of will. The impossibility of an absolute disassociation of choice and compulsion and the inability to escape the entanglements of will-lessness and willfulness constitutive of the subject of slave law condition the ambiguous representation of sexual violence in the narrative and culminate in the displacement of rape as seduction.

In light of this, how can one account for the force of determined will without reproducing the dilemmas of seduction—facile declarations of reciprocity and reversal that serve to obscure the violence of law, the extremity of domination, and the regularity of injury or reproduce injurious norms in the very effort to elude violence? It appears that seduction inevitably entails a calculated misreading or misrecognition of the state of domination, which presumes a degree of latitude in directing the conduct of others predicated upon reciprocity and the ties of mutual affection or, conversely, upon withholding and calculated action. Whether for the instrumental ends of securing subordination or in order to seize opportunities to protect oneself and further one's aims under conditions that one does not control, it assumes that the

enslaved possess the power to withhold and/or exercise influence by giving or withholding. Do the provisional forms of action available to the enslaved necessarily entail utopian premises that assume a greater degree of power and possibility than usually exists? Are these misreadings necessary and purposeful? Can these impossible approximations of the desired and the longed for be refused, or are they simply in aspect of the arduous and imaginative labor required in advancing claims for freedom? If these tactics are unable to effect reversals of power and instead evidence the provisionality of resistance and the magnitude of domination, at the very least, they are guided by the yearning to refashion and transform the given.⁹⁷

Contrary to the instrumental will that produces the docile body or the simulated will of the enslaved that underwrites the brutality and beneficence of the master-slave relation in cases like *State v. Mann*, the determined will that enables Linda to elude Flint is not a form of action or can-do-ness guaranteed by volition or self-possession but a rudimentary form of action harnessed by constraint. It is an exercise of will estranged from the assured and univocal expressive capacity of the intending subject. Rather, it is constrained and contradictory. Nonetheless, Jacobs's invocation of the determined will is an effort to enact and imagine the will in terms other than the reproduction of subordination or the incitement to punishment; it is an occasion for action and change.

In order to act, Linda must to a degree "assume the self," not only in order to "give herself" but also to experience something akin to freedom. This deliberate calculation enables the experience of a limited freedom; however, it requires that she make possession and offer herself to another. This act also intensifies the constraints of slavery and reinscribes her status as property, even if figuratively property of another order, at the very moment in which she tries to undo and transform her status. If she must enter this exchange in a bid for freedom, then it serves to reveal the indebtedness of freedom to notions of property, possession, and exchange.⁹⁸ This order of property, although markedly different from that of chattel slavery, essentially constructs the self as alienable and exchangeable, and notably sexuality is at the heart of this exchange. In "giving herself to another," Linda hoped to achieve her freedom and that of her children. Ultimately, what is revealed in the course of Linda's "deliberate calculation" is that the very effort to "liberate" the slave positions the self in a network of exchange underwritten by the extrications of constraint, property, and freedom.

At the conclusion of the narrative, Jacobs writes: "Reader, my story ends with freedom; not in the usual way, with marriage. I and my children are now free! We are as free from the power of slaveholders as are the white people of the north; and though that, according to my ideas, is not saying a great deal, it is a vast improvement in *my* condition." This implicit critique of the limits of formal freedom without independence, prefigured by the "loophole of retreat," anticipated the burdened individuality that awaited the emancipated masses whose only resource was newly acquired property in the self.

PART TWO

The Subject of Freedom

queer ultra vi lence

BASH BACK!
Anthology

Fray Baroque
& Tegan Eanelli





Toward The Queerest Insurrection

By The Mary Nardini Gang

I

Some will read “queer” as synonymous with “gay and lesbian” or “LGBT”. This reading falls short. While those who would fit within the constructions of “L”, “G”, “B” or “T” could fall within the discursive limits of queer, queer is not a stable area to inhabit. Queer is not merely another identity that can be tacked onto a list of neat social categories, nor the quantitative sum of our identities. Rather, it is the qualitative position of opposition to presentations of stability—an identity that problematizes the manageable limits of identity. Queer is a territory of tension, defined against the dominant narrative of white-hetero-monogamous-patriarchy, but also by an affinity with all who are marginalized, otherized and oppressed. Queer is the abnormal, the strange, the dangerous. Queer involves our sexuality and our gender, but so much more. It is our desire and fantasies and more still. Queer is the cohesion of everything in conflict with the heterosexual capitalist world. Queer is a total rejection of the regime of the Normal.

II

As queers we understand Normalcy. Normal, is the tyranny of our condition; reproduced in all of our relationships. Normalcy is violently reiterated in every minute of every day. We understand this Normalcy as the Totality. The Totality being the interconnection and overlapping of all oppression and misery. The Totality is the state. It is capitalism. It is civilization and empire. The totality is fence-post crucifixion. It is rape and murder at the hands of police. It is “Str8 Acting” and “No Fatties or Femmes”. It is Queer Eye for the Straight Guy. It is the brutal lessons taught to those who can’t achieve Normal. It is every way we’ve limited ourselves or learned to hate our bodies. We understand Normalcy all too well.

III

When we speak of social war, we do so because purist class analysis is not enough for us. What does a marxist economic worldview mean to a survivor of bashing? To a sex worker? To a homeless, teenage runaway? How can class analysis, alone as paradigm for a revolution, promise liberation to those of us journeying beyond our assigned genders and sexualities? The Proletariat as revolutionary subject marginalizes all whose lives don’t fit in the model of heterosexual-worker.

Lenin and Marx have never fucked the ways we have.

We need something a bit more thorough—something equipped to come with teeth-gnashing to all the intricacies of our misery. Simply put, we want to make ruins of domination in all of its varied and interlacing forms. This struggle inhabiting every social relationship is what we know as social war. It is both the process and the condition of a conflict with this totality.

IV

In the discourse of queer, we are talking about a space of struggle against this totality—against normalcy. By “queer”, we mean “social war”. And when we speak of queer as a conflict with all domination, we mean it.

V

See, we've always been the other, the alien, the criminal. The story of queers in this civilization has always been the narrative of the sexual deviant, the constitutional psychopathic inferior, the traitor, the freak, the moral imbecile. We've been excluded at the border, from labor, from familial ties. We've been forced into concentration camps, into sex slavery, into prisons.

The normal, the straight, the american family has always constructed itself in opposition to the queer. Straight is not queer. White is not of color. Healthy does not have HIV. Man is not woman. The discourses of heterosexuality, whiteness, and capitalism reproduce themselves into a model of power. For the rest of us, there is death.

In his work, Jean Genet asserts that the life of a queer is one of exile—that all of the totality of this world is constructed to marginalize and exploit us. He posits the queer as the criminal. He glorifies homosexuality and criminality as the most beautiful and lovely forms of conflict with the bourgeois world. He writes of the secret worlds of rebellion and joy inhabited by criminals and queers.

Quoth Genet, *Excluded by my birth and tastes from the social order, I was not aware of its diversity. Nothing in the world was irrelevant: the stars on a general's sleeve, the stock-market quotations, the olive harvest, the style of the judiciary, the wheat exchange, flower-beds. Nothing. This order, fearful and feared, whose details were all inter-related, had a meaning: my exile.*

VI

A fag is bashed because his gender presentation is far too femme. A poor transman can't afford his life-saving hormones. A sex worker is murdered by their client. A genderqueer persyn is raped because ze just needed to be "fucked straight". Four black lesbians are sent to prison for daring to defend themselves against a straight-male attacker. Cops beat us on the streets and our bodies are being destroyed by pharmaceutical companies because we can't give them a dime.

Queers experience, directly with our bodies, the violence and domination of this world. Class, Race, Gender, Sexuality, Ability; while often these interrelated and overlapping categories of oppression are lost to abstraction, queers are forced to physically understand each. We've had our bodies and desires stolen from us, mutilated and sold back to us as a model of living we can never embody.

Foucault says that power must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization; as the processes which, through ceaseless struggles and confrontations, transforms, strengthens or reverses them; as the support which these force relations find in one another, thus forming a chain or system, or on the contrary, the disjunctions and contradictions which isolate them from one another; and lastly, as the strategies in which they take effect, whose general design or institutional crystallization is embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulation of the law, in the various social hegemonies.

We experience the complexity of domination and social control amplified through heterosexuality. When police kill us, we want them dead in turn. When prisons entrap our bodies and rape us because our genders aren't similarly contained, of course we want fire to them all. When borders are erected to construct a national

identity absent of people of color and queers, we see only one solution: every nation and border reduced to rubble.

VII

The perspective of queers within the heteronormative world is a lens through which we can critique and attack the apparatus of capitalism. We can analyze the ways in which Medicine, the Prison System, the Church, the State, Marriage, the Media, Borders, the Military and Police are used to control and destroy us. More importantly, we can use these cases to articulate a cohesive criticism of every way that we are alienated and dominated.

Queer is a position from which to attack the normative—more, a position from which to understand and attack the ways in which normal is reproduced and reiterated. In destabilizing and problematizing normalcy, we can destabilize and become a problem for the Totality.

The history of organized queers was borne out of this position. The most marginalized—transfolk, people of color, sex workers—have always been the catalysts for riotous explosions of queer resistance. These explosions have been coupled with a radical analysis wholeheartedly asserting that the liberation for queer people is intrinsically tied to the annihilation of capitalism and the state. It is no wonder, then, that the first people to publicly speak of sexual liberation in this country were anarchists, or that those in the last century who struggled for queer liberation also simultaneously struggled against capitalism, racism, patriarchy, and empire. This is our history.

VIII

If history proves anything, it is that capitalism has a treacherous recuperative tendency to pacify radical social movements. It works rather simply, actually. A group gains privilege and power within a movement, and shortly thereafter sells their comrades out. Within a

couple years of stonewall, affluent-gay-white-males had thoroughly marginalized everyone who had made their movement possible, and abandoned their revolution with them.

It was once that to be queer was to be in direct conflict with the forces of control and domination. Now, we are faced with a condition of utter stagnation and sterility. As always, Capital recuperated brick-throwing street queens into suited politicians and activists. There are log-cabin-Republicans and “stonewall” refers to gay Democrats. There are gay energy drinks and a “queer” television station that wages war on the minds, bodies, and esteem of impressionable youth. The “LGBT” political establishment has become a force of assimilation, gentrification, capital, and state power. Gay identity has become both a marketable commodity and a device of withdrawal from struggle against domination.

Now they don’t critique marriage, military, or the state. Rather we have campaigns for queer assimilation into each. Their politics is advocacy for such grievous institutions, rather than the annihilation of them all. “Gays can kill poor people around the world as well as straight people!” “Gays can hold the reigns of the state and capital as well straight people!” “We are just like you”.

Assimilationists want nothing less than to construct the homosexual as normal—white, monogamous, wealthy, 2.5 children, SUVs with a white picket fence. This construction, of course, reproduces the stability of heterosexuality, whiteness, patriarchy, the gender binary, and capitalism itself.

If we genuinely want to make ruins of this totality, we need to make a break. We don’t need inclusion into marriage, the military and the state. We need to end them. No more gay politicians, CEOs, and cops. We need to swiftly and immediately articulate a wide gulf between the politics of assimilation and the struggle for liberation.

We need to rediscover our riotous inheritance as queer anarchists. We need to destroy constructions of normalcy, and create instead a position based in our alienation from this normalcy,

and one capable of dismantling it. We must use these positions to instigate breaks, not just from the assimilationist mainstream, but from capitalism itself. These positions can become tools of a social force ready to create a complete rupture with this world.

Our bodies have been born into conflict with this social order. We need to deepen that conflict and make it spread.

IX

Susan Stryker writes that the State acts to *regulate bodies, in ways both great and small, by enmeshing them within norms and expectations that determine what kinds of lives are deemed livable or useful and by shutting down the space of possibility and imaginative transformation where peoples' lives begin to exceed and escape the state's use for them.*

We must create space wherein it is possible for desire to flourish. This space, of course, requires conflict with this social order. To desire, in a world structured to confine desire, is a tension we live daily. We must understand this tension so that we can become powerful through it—we must understand it so that it can tear our confinement apart.

This terrain, born in rupture, must challenge oppression in its entirety. This of course, means total negation of this world. We must become bodies in revolt. We need to delve into and indulge in power. We can learn the strength of our bodies in struggle for space for our desires. In desire we'll find the power to destroy not only what destroys us, but also those who aspire to turn us into a gay mimicry of that which destroys us. We must be in conflict with regimes of the normal. This means to be at war with everything.

If we desire a world without restraint, we must tear this one to the ground. We must live beyond measure and love and desire in ways most devastating. We must come to understand the feeling of social war. We can learn to be a threat, we can become the queerest of insurrections.



To be clear:

We've despaired that we could never be as well-dressed or cultured as the Fab Five. We found nothing in Brokeback Mountain. We've spent far too long shuffling through hallways with heads-hung-low. We don't give a shit about marriage or the military. But oh we've had the hottest sex—everywhere—in all the ways we aren't supposed to and the other boys at school definitely can't know about it.

And when I was sixteen a would-be-bully pushed me and called me a faggot. I hit him in the mouth. The intercourse of my fist and his face was far sexier and more liberating than anything MTV ever offered our generation. With the pre-cum of desire on my lips I knew from then on that I was an anarchist.

In short, this world has never been enough for us. We say to it, “we want everything, motherfucker, try to stop us!”

FILTH IS OUR POLITICS!
FILTH IS OUR LIFE!

APPENDIX ONE: RELEVANT QUEER MYTHOLOGY

1. Cooper's Donuts was an all night donut shop on a seedy stretch of Main Street in Los Angeles. It was a regular hangout for street queens and queer hustlers at all hours of the night. Police harassment was a regular fixture of the Cooper's, but one May night in 1959, the queers fought back. What started with customers throwing donuts at the police escalated into full-on street fighting. In the ensuing chaos, all of the donut-wielding rebels escaped into the night.

2. One weekend in August of 1966, Compton's—a twenty-four-hour cafeteria in San Francisco's Tenderloin neighborhood—was buzzing with its usual late-night crowd of drag queens, hustlers, slummers, cruisers, runaway teens and neighborhood regulars. The restaurant's management became annoyed by a noisy young crowd of queens at one table who seemed to be spending a lot of time without spending a lot of money, and it called the police to roust them. A surly police officer, accustomed to manhandling Compton's clientele with impunity, grabbed the arm of one of the queens and tried to drag her away. She unexpectedly threw her coffee in his face, however, and a melee erupted: Plates, trays, cups, and silverware flew through the air at the startled police who ran outside and called for backup. The customers turned over the tables, smashed the plate-glass windows, and poured onto the streets. When the police reinforcements arrived, street fighting broke out all throughout the Compton's vicinity. Drag queens beat the police with their heavy purses and kicked them with their high-heeled shoes. A police car was vandalized, a newspaper box was burnt to the ground, and general havoc was raised all throughout the Tenderloin.

3. What began as an early morning raid on June 28th, 1969, at New York's Stonewall Inn, escalated to four days of rioting throughout Greenwich Village. Police conducted the raid as usual; targeting people of color, transpeople, and gender variants for harassment and violence. It all changed, though, when a bull-dyke resisted her arrest and several street queens began throwing bottles and rocks at the police. The police began beating folks, but soon people from all over the neighborhood rushed to the scene, swelling the rioters' numbers to over 2,000. The vastly outnumbered police barricaded themselves inside the bar, while an uprooted parking meter was used as a battering ram by the crowd. Molotov cocktails were thrown at the bar. Riot police arrived on scene, but were unable to regain control of the situation. Drag queens danced a conga line and sang songs amidst the street fighting to mock the inability of the police to re-establish order. The rioting continued until dawn, only to be picked up again at nightfall of the subsequent days.

4. On the night of May 21st 1979, in what has come to be known as the White Night Riots, the queer community of San Francisco was outraged and wanted justice for the murder of Harvey Milk. The outraged queers went to city hall where they smashed the windows and glass door of the building. The riotous crowd took to the streets, disrupting traffic, smashing storefronts and car windows, disabling buses, and setting twelve San Francisco Police cruisers on fire. The rioting spread throughout the city as others joined in on the fun!

5. In 1970, Stonewall veterans, Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera founded STAR—Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries. They opened the STAR house, a radical version of the “house” culture of black and latina queer communities. The house provided a safe and free place for queer and trans street kids to stay. Marsha and Sylvia as the “House Mothers” hustled to pay rent so that the kids would not be

forced to. Their “children” scavenged and stole food so that everyone in the house could eat. That’s what we call mutual aid!

6. In the time between the Stonewall Riots and the outbreak of HIV, the queer community of New York saw the rise of a culture of public sex. Queers had orgies in squatted buildings, in abandoned semi-trucks, on the piers and in bars and clubs all along Christopher street. This is our idea of voluntary association of free individuals! Many mark this as the most sexually liberated time this country has ever seen. Though the authors of this essay wholeheartedly believe we can outdo them.



Queers are marked as victims while violence is understood to be only the tool of the masters. The queer anarchist project embodied by Bash Back! is first and foremost a refusal of victimhood and a reclamation of the violence taken from us by progressive ideology and used against us by queerbashers and the State. It was a crucial shift for Bash Back! to break with those who refused to recognize the importance of this reclamation. It served to cohere and solidify the insurrectional queer tendency around the question of violence...



Feminist pacifism or passive-ism?

[Dilar Dirik](#)

When some [white women celebrate the non-violence of women's marches against Trump](#) and then pose for photographs with police officers while police violence specifically targets people of colour, when [Nazi-punchers](#) are accused of being no different from fascists, when feminists in relative safety accuse militant women in the Middle East facing sex slavery under ISIS of militarism, we must problematize the liberal notion of non-violence which disregards intersecting power systems and mechanisms of structural violence. By dogmatically clinging onto a pacifism (or passive-ism?) that has a classed and racial character, and demonising violent anti-system rage, feminists exclude themselves from a much needed debate on alternative forms of self-defence whose objective and aesthetic serve liberationist politics. In a global era of femicide, sexual violence and rape culture, who can afford not to think about women's self-defence?

Feminism has played an important role in anti-war movements and achieved political victories in peace-building. The feminist critique of militarism as a patriarchal instrument renders understandable the rejection of women's participation in state-armies as being 'empowering'. But liberal feminists' blanket rejection of women's violence, no matter the objective, fails to qualitatively distinguish between statist, colonialist, imperialist, interventionist militarism and necessary, legitimate self-defence.

The monopoly on violence as a fundamental characteristic of the state protects the latter from accusations of injustice, while criminalising people's basic attempts at self-preservation. Depending on strategies and politics, non-state actors are labelled as 'disruptive to public order' at best, or 'terrorists' at worst. The tendency to uphold examples like Mahatma Gandhi or Martin Luther King to make the case for non-violent resistance often blurs historical facts to the point of sanitising the radical and sometimes violent elements of legitimate anti-colonial or anti-racist resistance.

Simultaneously, the traditional association of violence with masculinity and the systematic exclusion of women from politics, economy, war, and peace, reproduce patriarchy through a sexual division of roles in the realm of power. The feminist critique of violence is based in well-intentioned, yet deeply essentialist, reasoning of a gender-based morality, which can also reproduce portrayals of women as passive, inherently apolitical, and in need of protection. Such gender-reductionism fails to understand that inclination to violence is not inherently gender-specific but determined by interconnected systems of hierarchy and power as the case of [white American women torturing Iraqi men in Abu Ghraib prison](#) demonstrates.

Kurdish women have a tradition of resistance; their philosophy of self-defence ranges from autonomous guerrilla women's armies to the development of self-managed women's cooperatives. In recent years, the victories of the [Women's Defence Units \(YPJ\)](#) in Rojava-Northern Syria and the [YJA Star Guerrillas](#) of the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) against ISIS have been inspiring. Kurdish women, along with their Arab and Syriac Christian sisters, liberated thousands of square miles from ISIS, creating scenes of beauty of women liberating women. At the same time, they were also building the foundations of a [woman's revolution inside society](#). However, some [western feminists](#) questioned its legitimacy and dismissed it as militarism or co-optation by political groups. [Western media narratives](#) have portrayed this struggle in a de-politicised, exotic way, or by making generalised assumptions about women's 'natural' disinclination to violence. If the media reporting was dominated

by a male gaze, it was partly due to feminists' refusal to engage with this relevant topic. One cannot help but think that militant women taking matters into their own hands impairs western feminists' ability to speak on behalf of women in the Middle East, projected as helpless victims, may be one of the reasons for this hostility.

The Kurdish women's struggle developed a woman-centred [philosophy of self-defence](#) and is situated in an intersectional analysis of colonialism, racism, nation-statism, capitalism, and patriarchy. The *Rose Theory* is a part of the unapologetically [women-liberationist political thought](#) of PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan. He suggests that in order to come up with non-statist forms of self-defence, we need to look no further than nature itself. Every living organism, a rose, a bee, has its mechanisms of self-defence in order to protect and express its existence – with thorns, stings, teeth, claws, etc. not to dominate, exploit or unnecessarily destroy another creature but to preserve itself and meet its vital needs. Among humans, entire systems of exploitation and domination perpetuate violence beyond necessary physical survival. Against this abuse of power, *legitimate self-defence* must be based on social justice and communal ethics with particular respect to women's autonomy. If we let go of social Darwinist notions of survivalism and competition which under capitalist modernity have reached deadly dimensions and focus on the interplay of life within ecological systems, we can learn from nature's ways of resistance and formulate a self-defence philosophy. In order to fight the system, self-defence must embrace direct action, participatory radical democracy, and self-managed social, political and economic structures.

Alongside Democratic Confederalism led by the Kurdish freedom movement, an autonomous Women's Democratic Confederalist system has been built up through thousands of communes, councils, cooperatives, academies and defence units in Kurdistan and beyond. Through the creation of an autonomous women's commune in a rural village, the identity, existence, and will of its members find their expression in practice and challenge the authority of the patriarchal, capitalist state. Furthermore, economic autonomy and communal economy based on solidarity through the establishment of [cooperatives](#) are crucial to society's self-defence as they guarantee self-sustenance through mutualism and shared responsibility, rejecting dependence on states and men. Care for water, lands, forests, historic and natural heritage are vital parts of self-defence against the nation-state and profit-oriented environmental destruction.

Defending oneself also means to be and know oneself. This implies the overcoming of sexist, racist knowledge production that capitalist modernity advocates and which excludes the oppressed from history. Political consciousness constitutes a fight against assimilation, alienation from nature, and genocidal state policies. The answer to positivist, male-centred, colonialist history-writing and social science is thus the establishment of grassroots women's academies promoting liberationist epistemologies.

A fight without ethics cannot protect society. In the eyes of Kurdish women fighters, ISIS cannot be defeated by weapons only but by a social revolution. This is why Yazidi women, after experiencing a traumatic genocide under ISIS, formed an autonomous women's council for the first time in their history with the slogan 'The organization of Yazidi women will be the answer to all massacres', alongside [women's military organisations](#). In Rojava, alongside the YPJ, even grandmothers learn how to handle AK47s and rotate among themselves the responsibility to protect their communities within the Self-Defence Forces (HPC), while thousands of women's centres, cooperatives, communes, and academies aim to dismantle male domination. Against the [Turkish state's hyper-masculine war](#), Kurdish women constitute one of [the main challenges](#) to Erdogan's one-man rule through their autonomous mobilisation. Crucially, women [from different communities](#) have joined them in constructing women's alternatives to male domination in all spheres of life. An alternative self-defence

concept which does not reproduce statist militarism must of course be anti-nationalist.

Unlike violence which aims to subjugate the 'other', self-defence is a complete dedication and responsibility to life. To exist means to resist. And in order to exist meaningfully and freely, one must be politically autonomous. Put bluntly, in an international system of sexual and racial violence, legitimised by capitalist nation-states, the cry for non-violence is a luxury for those in privileged positions of relative safety, believing that they will never end up in a situation where violence will become necessary to survive. While theoretically sound, pacifism does not speak to the reality of masses of women and thus assumes a rather elitist first world character.

If our claims to social justice are genuine, in a world system of intersecting forms of violence, we have to fight back.

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/dilar-dirik/feminist-pacifism-or-passive-ism>

Feminism and the Kurdish Freedom Movement

[Dilar Dirik](#)

This article is an edited version of a presentation at the “Dissecting Capitalist Modernity–Building Democratic Confederalism” Conference at Hamburg University, April 3-5th, 2015.

The fact that we are discussing the Kurdish freedom movement’s approaches, ideas, and re-conceptualizations of freedom today at this conference with people from so many diverse backgrounds is quite telling of the larger impacts of the Kobanê resistance, which go far beyond its military aspects.

The World Women’s March this year was launched at the border between North (Bakur) and West Kurdistan (Rojava), the artificial line which separates the twin cities Qamişlo and Nisêbin from each other. The committee took this decision in order to pay tribute to the resistance of the Women’s Defense Units YPJ in Kobanê against the Islamic State (ISIS). This, among many other examples, illustrates the increasing interest of feminists around the world in the Kurdish women’s movement.

So, at this crucial period in which Kurdish women contributed to a re-articulation of women’s liberation by rejecting to comply with the premises of the global patriarchal capitalist nation-state order, by breaking the taboo of women’s militancy (which is a taboo everywhere in the world, as it breaks social boundaries), by reclaiming legitimate self-defense, by dissociating the monopoly of power from the state, and by fighting a brutal force not on behalf of imperialist forces, but in order to create their own terms of liberation, not only from the state or fascist organizations, but also their own community, what can feminist movements learn from the experience of Kurdish women?

First, it should be mentioned that Kurdish women’s relationship to the feminisms in the region has often been quite complicated. Turkish feminists for instance had the tendency to marginalize Kurdish women, which they perceived as backward, and tried to forcefully

assimilate them into their nationalist “modernization project”. In practice, this meant that all women first had to be “Turkish” in order to qualify for liberation. Their political struggle, especially when armed, was often met with harsh state violence, which used a gross combination of racism and sexism, centered around sexualized torture, systematic rape, and propaganda campaigns that portrayed militant women as prostitutes, because they dared to pose themselves as enemies of hyper-masculine armies. In the Western discourse, Kurdish women’s agency in their struggle was often denied by claims that they are “being instrumentalized for the national cause” or that they participate in the liberation struggle in order to escape their sad lives as “victims of a backward culture”. Apart from being inherently chauvinistic and sexist, these kinds of arguments are further unable to explain the fact that the Kurdish movement created a popular grassroots feminist movement which challenged tradition and transformed society to a striking extent. Today, when we look at how the mainstream treats the Kurdish women’s resistance against ISIS, we can see very simplistic and problematic approaches that focus on the war in terms of a physical military fight only, even a certain Schadenfreude that ISIS is being defeated by women, a classical “girls beat boys” type of attitude. The women’s political motivations, their ideologies are ignored or co-opted within this context, even by feminists. Not many investigate the ideals that drive their struggle, barely anyone questions the fact that the ideology with which the women are fighting against ISIS is in fact on the terrorist list of many Western countries.

The aim of this talk is not to imply that feminism and the Kurdish women’s movement are two separate things. Rather, I want to investigate their relationships and focus on the original approaches of the Kurdish women’s movement that could provide some perspectives for other movements.

Of course there is not one singular feminism, but several strands which sometimes differ greatly from each other. The specifics of the experience of Kurdish women which created direct lived consciousness of the fact that different forms of oppression are inter-related, due to their multiply-oppressed position as members of a stateless nation in a world ruled by states, socio-economic exclusion, and patriarchal violence by the state and the community, as well as the Kurdish freedom movement’s critique of colonialism, capitalism, and the state, perhaps suggest anarchist, socialist and anti-colonial feminist movements to be the closest to the Kurdish women’s movement’s experience.

Yet, while claiming feminism as an important part of historical society and its legacy as a heritage, the discussions within the Kurdish women's movement today aim to investigate the limits of feminism and move beyond it. This is not at all a classical post-feminist approach, nor does it reject feminism. Moving beyond means to systematize an alternative to the dominant system through a radical systemic critique and the communalization of the multi-front struggle, especially by politicizing the grassroots, leading a mental revolution, and transforming or figuratively killing the masculine and its multitudinous expressions, as well as questioning and resisting the entire global order, the stage of this violence and oppression. Kobanê, as well as the two other cantons of Rojava –Cizîre and Afrîn- are an example of the practical implementation of this. As I argue, the resistance of Kobanê, where courageous women defeated the most fascist forces of our day, has a lot to do with the people's political ideology and envisioned model. The victory of Kobanê is a direct result of the social and political organization of the cantons, as well as the movement's concept of freedom, far beyond nationalism, power, and the state.

Abdullah Öcalan, the ideological representative of the PKK, explicitly states that patriarchy, along with capitalism and the state lie at the roots of oppression, domination, and power and makes the connection between them clear: *"All the power and state ideologies stem from sexist attitudes and behaviour[...]. Without women's slavery none of the other types of slavery can exist let alone develop. Capitalism and nation-state denote the most institutionalized dominant male. More boldly and openly spoken: capitalism and nation-state are the monopolism of the despotic and exploitative male".* [1] He further claims: *"Nothing in the Middle East is as gruesome as the social status of the woman. The enslavement of the woman is similar to the enslavement of the peoples, except it is even older".* [2] Elsewhere: *"The project of women's liberation goes far beyond the equality of the sexes, but moreover describes the essence of general democracy, of human rights, of harmony with nature and communal equality"* (Öcalan, 2010, 203).

The Kurdish freedom movement's outlook on women's liberation is of an explicit communalist nature. Rather than deconstructing gender roles to infinity, it treats the conditions behind current concepts of womanhood as sociological phenomena and aims to redefine such concepts by formulating a new social contract. It criticizes mainstream feminism's common

analysis of sexism in terms of gender only, as well as its failure to achieve wider social change and justice by limiting the struggle to the framework of the persisting order. One of feminism's main tragedies is its falling into the trap of liberalism. Under the banner of liberation, extreme individualism and consumerism are often propagated as emancipation and empowerment, posing clear obstacles to any collective action or to even touch the issues of real people. Of course individual liberties are crucial to democracy, but failure to mobilize in a grassroots manner requires a fundamental self-critique of feminism. The feminist term "intersectionality" of course underlines that forms of oppression are interlinked and that feminism needs to take a holistic approach to tackle them. But often, the feminist circles that engage in these debates fail to touch the real lives of millions of affected women, generating yet another vacuumed discussion on radicalism, inaccessible to most. How radical or intersectional is a struggle that fails to spread?

These attitudes, according to the Kurdish women's movement, are linked to the subscription to positivist science and the relationship between knowledge and power, which blurs the explicit links between forms of domination, thus eliminating the belief in a different world by portraying the global system as the natural, immutable order of things. Due to its specific socio-political and economic conditions, as well as a firm ideological stance, accompanied by much sacrifice, the Kurdish women's movement was able to mobilize into a mass movement by arriving at certain conclusions not just through theoretical debates, but actual lived experiences and practices, which not only created direct political consciousness but also an attachment to collectively find solutions, against all odds.

Thus, encouraged by Öcalan's suggestion to develop a scientific method that challenges the hegemonic understanding of the sciences, especially the social sciences, which reproduce mechanisms of violence, exclusion, and oppression -one that does not limit itself to categorizing phenomena around humans and community without considering the fact that these are alive and potentially able to solve their problems, and that split areas of life from each other by creating myriads of scientific branches, but instead proposes a science that practically seeks to provide solutions to social problems, a "sociology of freedom", centered around the voices and experiences of the oppressed- the women's movement has been engaging in theoretical debates and proposed the concept of "jineology" (jin, Kurdish: "woman"). Discussions and debates are held in the Qandil mountains, at the frontlines in

Rojava, as well as in poor neighborhoods in Diyarbakir – every street corner can be turned into an academy. Questions like “How to re-read and re-write women’s history? How is knowledge attained? What methods can be used in a liberationist quest for truth, when today’s science and knowledge productions take knowledge away from us and serve to maintain the status quo?” arise in intensive discussions. The *deconstruction* of patriarchy and other forms of subjugation, domination, and violence are accompanied by discussions on the *construction* of alternatives based on liberationist values and solutions to freedom issues.

While defining itself as a women’s science or women’s quest for knowledge itself, an objection that jineology poses to feminism is that it often occupies itself with analyzing social issues merely through gender lenses. While deconstructing gender roles and patriarchy has immensely contributed to our understanding of sexism and other forms of violence and oppression, this has not always successfully proposed what kind of alternative we can collectively create instead. If concepts such as man and woman, no matter how socially constructed they may be, look like they will persist in the minds of people for a while, should we perhaps try to set new terms of existence, provide them with a liberationist essence in the attempt to overcome them? Let us not forget the background behind which these discussions are being held – in and around ultra-conservative societies with limited room for individual self-expression that deem women as unworthy, voiceless servants of men, a context of normalized, overtly institutionalized violence against women. If it is possible to re-imagine concepts of identity such as the “nation” by disassociating it from ethnic implications and aiming at forming a unity based on principles, in other words, a unity of thought, consisting of political subjects rather than objects serving the state (which is the idea that is advocated in multi-cultural Rojava, the “democratic nation” as articulated by Öcalan), can we also create a new free, radically empowering women’s identity, based on autonomy and freedom to shape a new sense of community, free from hierarchy and domination? Jineology does not aim to perpetuate an essentialist concept of womanhood, a new assigning of a social role with limited room for movement, neither does it regard itself as a provider of answers, but proposes itself as a method to explore such arising questions in a collectivist manner. By researching history and history writing, jineology tries to learn from ruptures in mythologies and religions, understand the communalist forms of organization in the Neolithic age and beyond, investigate the relationships between means of production and social organization, and the rise of patriarchy with the emergence of accumulation and property.

And yet, while criticizing feminism's fixation on gender, the Kurdish women's movement at the same time, due to its own experience, recognizes the urgent need to pay attention to specific oppressions. In fact, the core element of this movement's organizational structure is the autonomous self-organization of groups and communities in order to enhance radical democracy. Unlike most leaders of classical national liberation movements, Öcalan emphasizes the need for autonomous and conscious feminist struggle^[3] and even prioritizes women's liberation: "The twenty first century must be the era of awakening; the era of the liberated, emancipated woman [...]. I believe [women's liberation] should have priority over the liberation of homelands and labour" (Öcalan, 2013, p.59). There are plenty of examples of how the Kurdish women's movement tries to live this autonomy in practice here and now, rather than projecting it to a time in the future – even one brief look at Kurdish women's participation and power in Turkey's politics would speak volumes. Women's liberation is not just seen as an aim, but as a method that needs to be practiced on an everyday basis. It is not something that will be achieved in a democracy, but it is democracy in practice.

Today, the movement splits power equally between one woman and one man from party presidencies to neighborhood councils through its co-chair principle. Beyond providing women and men with equal decision-making power, the co-chair concept aims to decentralize power, prevent monopolism, and promote consensus-finding. This again demonstrates the association of liberation with communalist decision-making. The women's movement is autonomously organized, socially, politically, militarily. While these organizational principles seek to guarantee women representation, massive social and political mobilization raises society's consciousness, which requires a radical mentality revolution, because hierarchy and domination first establish themselves in thought.

Inspired by these principles, the Rojava cantons enforce co-presidencies and quotas, and created women's defense units, women's communes, academies, tribunals, and cooperatives in the midst of war and under the weight of an embargo. The women's movement Yekîtiya Star is autonomously organized in all walks of life, from defense to economy to education to health. Autonomous women's councils exist parallel to the people's councils and can veto the latter's decisions. Men committing violence against women are not supposed to be part of the administration. Gender-based discrimination, forced marriages, domestic violence, honor

killings, polygamy, child marriage, and bride price are criminalized. Many non-Kurdish women, especially Arabs and Assyrians, join the armed ranks and administration in Rojava and are encouraged to organize autonomously as well. In all spheres, including the internal security forces (asayish) and the People's Defense Units YPG and Women's Defense Units YPJ, gender equality is a central part of education and training. As Ruken, an activist of the women's movement in Rojava said: "We don't knock on people's doors and tell them they are wrong. Instead, we try to explain to them that they can organize themselves and give them the means to determine their own lives".

Interestingly, though women's liberation was always part of the PKK's ideology, the women's autonomous organization emerged simultaneous to the general shift of the political aim from the nation-state towards local grassroots-democratic mobilization. As the relationship between different forms of oppression was identified, as the oppressive assumptions and mechanisms of the statist system were exposed, alternative solutions were sought, resulting in the articulation of women's liberation as an uncompromising principle.

Rather than aspiring to quest for justice within state-granted concepts such as legal rights, which is one of the pre-occupations of mainstream feminism, the Kurdish women's movement came to the conclusion that the road to liberation requires a fundamental critique of the system. Instead of putting the burden on women, women's liberation becomes a matter of responsibility for all of society, because it becomes a measure for society's ethics and freedom. For a meaningful freedom struggle, women's liberation must be an aim, but also an active method in the liberation process. In fact, expecting any meaningful social change from the very mechanisms that perpetuate rape culture and violence against women, such as the state, would mean to resort to liberalism with its feminist and democratic pretensions. A slogan I have seen in Rojava quite often, "We will defeat the attacks of the Islamic State by securing the liberation of women in the Middle East" is quite telling of this. Because one cannot just defeat ISIS militarily without also defeating the mentality that underlies it, the persisting global rape culture that gives it a platform. That mentality is not just embodied by ISIS, but is also partly expressed in our own minds, in our own communities – liberal state violence, ISIS's violence, and honor killings in our own community are not that different from each other. Against all odds, after decades-long struggles and sacrifices, Kurdish women have established a political culture in and around the PKK in which sexism and violence

against women will meet social ostracism.

The women's movement independently produces sophisticated theories and critiques, but it is striking that a male leader of a Middle Eastern movement places women's liberation as a critical measure of freedom. This has led to many feminists –who often haven't actually read Öcalan's books- to criticize that the Kurdish women's movement is centered around a man in a leadership position. But if we analyze women's freedom problem beyond narrow understandings within the gender framework, but instead treat it as society's freedom issue, as fundamentally linked to centuries-old reproductions of power and hierarchy, when we rearticulate our understandings of liberation outside of the parameters of the dominant system with its patriarchal assumptions and behaviours, but seek to pose a radical alternative to it, if we thus stop regarding women's liberation as a side effect of a perceived general revolution or liberation that may never come, but instead recognize that the radical fight for women's freedom and their autonomous self-organization must be a central method and mechanism of the process towards freedom here and now, if we link the radical critique of the very methods we use to make sense of the world to the process of designing a more just life, in short – if we broaden and hence systematize our struggle for liberation, and recognize that the road to freedom requires self-reflection and internalization of democratic liberationist values, perhaps it would not be surprising after all that one of the most outspoken feminists can in fact be a man. Rather than concerning ourselves with Öcalan's sex or gender, we should perhaps try to understand what it means for a man from an extremely feudal-patriarchal society to take such a position regarding women's enslavement. What does it mean when a person in such a leading position calls to "kill the man"? Perhaps this is the radicalism that we need to solve our issues...

The World Women's March that I had mentioned in the introduction joined this year's 8th March celebrations in Amed (Diyarbakir). While photos of martyred Kurdish women militants were waving in the wind, I saw a group of singing people forming a circle of traditional Kurdish dances. One woman was playing the daf on which she had drawn the Anarchism A, while a veiled elderly woman in traditional clothes with fingers forming the victory sign was dancing to her rhythm, next to a young man accompanying her joy by waving a large LGBT flag. Quite an unusual sight to say the least, but indeed telling of the character of the Kurdish women's movement.

Those wondering whether the Kurdish women's movement "is actually feminist or not" need to realize the radicalism that swings between the two fingers raised to the victory sign by elderly women in colorful robes with traditional tattoos on their faces in Rojava today. That these women now participate in TV programs, people's councils, the economy, that they now learn to read and write in their own language, that, once a week, a 70-year old woman recites traditional folk tales at the newly established Mesopotamia Academy of Social Sciences to challenge the history-writing of hegemonic powers and positivist science, is a radical act of defiance against the former monist regime, because rather than replacing the person on top, it refuses the parameters of the system altogether and constructs its own standards. And this platform will eventually defeat ISIS in the long-run.

The struggling women in Kobanê have become an inspiration for women around the world. In this sense, if we want to challenge the global patriarchal, nation-statist, racist, militarist, neo-colonialist and capitalist systemic order, we should ask which kinds of feminism this system can accept and which ones it cannot. An imperialist "feminism" can justify wars in the Middle East to "save women from barbarism", while the same forces that fuel this so-called barbarism by their foreign policies or arms trades label the women who defend themselves in Kobanê today as terrorist.

The dominant system considers one of the most mobilized and empowering women's movements as an inherent threat to its status quo. Thus, it becomes clear that the Kurdish freedom movement does not pose a threat to the international order due to its potential capability of creating a new state – in fact, it opposes the state paradigm-, but because of its radical alternative to it, an alternative life explicitly centred on abolishing 5000 years of systematic mental and physical slavery.

When we look at the two sides that fight in Kobanê today – smiling, hopeful women on one side, and murderous, violent rapists, who build their hegemony of darkness on destruction and fascist brutality on the other side, it looks like a movie script, the storyline of a novel. But it is in no way a coincidence that these two lines are fighting in Rojava. The current order may be the legacy of millennia-old systems of domination and subjugation, there may have always been oppression, but at the same time, there have also always been revolutionary, rebellious,

resistance struggles. The Islamic State is not a coincidental evil, but a result of the world order, and this order, with all of its mercenaries, meets its biggest enemy in the radical smiles of struggling women. Smiling is an ideological act. And these women are the guardians of our option of freedom.

Kurdish women have always been excluded from history-writing, but now their power has gone down in history. We are proud to belong to a generation of young Kurdish women, who will grow up having witnessed and identified with such a glorious struggle. It is not an empty pride in meaningless things such as nationalism, but a pride in resisting and sacrificing oneself for fundamental principles, for life. We do not need any myths or romanticizations to justify our demands for freedom. And I cannot imagine any mythology, any religious text, any fairy tale that could be more epic, liberating, and empowering than the resistance displayed by Kobanê's women against fascism. We were all reborn with the resistance of Kobanê.

NOTES

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[1](Öcalan, 2011, p.17)

[2](Öcalan, 2010, p.267)

[3](Öcalan, 2013, p.53)

Anti-Colonial Struggle

CONCERNING VIOLENCE

National liberation, national renaissance, the restoration of nationhood to the people, commonwealth: whatever may be the headings used or the new formulas introduced, decolonization is always a violent phenomenon. At whatever level we study it—relationships between individuals, new names for sports clubs, the human admixture at cocktail parties, in the police, on the directing boards of national or private banks—decolonization is quite simply the replacing of a certain “species” of men by another “species” of men. Without any period of transition, there is a total, complete, and absolute substitution. It is true that we could equally well stress the rise of a new nation, the setting up of a new state, its diplomatic relations, and its economic and political trends. But we have precisely chosen to speak of that kind of *tabula rasa* which characterizes at the outset all decolonization. Its unusual importance is that it constitutes, from the very first day, the minimum demands of the colonized. To tell the truth, the proof of success lies in a whole social structure being changed from the bottom up. The extraordinary importance of this change is that it is willed, called for, demanded. The need for this change exists in its crude state, impetuous and compelling, in the consciousness and in the

lives of the men and women who are colonized. But the possibility of this change is equally experienced in the form of a terrifying future in the consciousness of another "species" of men and women: the colonizers.

Decolonization, which sets out to change the order of the world, is, obviously, a program of complete disorder. But it cannot come as a result of magical practices, nor of a natural shock, nor of a friendly understanding. Decolonization, as we know, is a historical process: that is to say that it cannot be understood, it cannot become intelligible nor clear to itself except in the exact measure that we can discern the movements which give it historical form and content. Decolonization is the meeting of two forces, opposed to each other by their very nature, which in fact owe their originality to that sort of substantification which results from and is nourished by the situation in the colonies. Their first encounter was marked by violence and their existence together—that is to say the exploitation of the native by the settler—was carried on by dint of a great array of bayonets and cannons. The settler and the native are old acquaintances. In fact, the settler is right when he speaks of knowing "them" well. For it is the settler who has brought the native into existence and who perpetuates his existence. The settler owes the fact of his very existence, that is to say, his property, to the colonial system.

Decolonization never takes place unnoticed, for it influences individuals and modifies them fundamentally. It transforms spectators crushed with their inessentiality into privileged actors, with the grandiose glare of history's floodlights upon them. It brings a natural rhythm into existence, introduced by new men, and with it a new language and a new humanity. Decolonization is the veritable creation of new men. But this creation owes nothing of its legitimacy to any supernatural power; the

"thing" which has been colonized becomes man during the same process by which it frees itself.

In decolonization, there is therefore the need of a complete calling in question of the colonial situation. If we wish to describe it precisely, we might find it in the well-known words: "The last shall be first and the first last." Decolonization is the putting into practice of this sentence. That is why, if we try to describe it, all decolonization is successful.

The naked truth of decolonization evokes for us the searing bullets and bloodstained knives which emanate from it. For if the last shall be first, this will only come to pass after a murderous and decisive struggle between the two protagonists. That affirmed intention to place the last at the head of things, and to make them climb at a pace (too quickly, some say) the well-known steps which characterize an organized society, can only triumph if we use all means to turn the scale, including, of course, that of violence.

You do not turn any society, however primitive it may be, upside down with such a program if you have not decided from the very beginning, that is to say from the actual formulation of that program, to overcome all the obstacles that you will come across in so doing. The native who decides to put the program into practice, and to become its moving force, is ready for violence at all times. From birth it is clear to him that this narrow world, strewn with prohibitions, can only be called in question by absolute violence.

The colonial world is a world divided into compartments. It is probably unnecessary to recall the existence of native quarters and European quarters, of schools for natives and schools for Europeans; in the same way we need not recall apartheid in South Africa. Yet, if we examine closely this system of compartments, we will at

least be able to reveal the lines of force it implies. This approach to the colonial world, its ordering and its geographical layout will allow us to mark out the lines on which a decolonized society will be reorganized.

The colonial world is a world cut in two. The dividing line, the frontiers are shown by barracks and police stations. In the colonies it is the policeman and the soldier who are the official, instituted go-betweens, the spokesmen of the settler and his rule of oppression. In capitalist societies the educational system, whether lay or clerical, the structure of moral reflexes handed down from father to son, the exemplary honesty of workers who are given a medal after fifty years of good and loyal service, and the affection which springs from harmonious relations and good behavior—all these aesthetic expressions of respect for the established order serve to create around the exploited person an atmosphere of submission and of inhibition which lightens the task of policing considerably. In the capitalist countries a multitude of moral teachers, counselors and “bewilderers” separate the exploited from those in power. In the colonial countries, on the contrary, the policeman and the soldier, by their immediate presence and their frequent and direct action maintain contact with the native and advise him by means of rifle butts and napalm not to budge. It is obvious here that the agents of government speak the language of pure force. The intermediary does not lighten the oppression, nor seek to hide the domination; he shows them up and puts them into practice with the clear conscience of an upholder of the peace; yet he is the bringer of violence into the home and into the mind of the native.

The zone where the natives live is not complementary to the zone inhabited by the settlers. The two zones are opposed, but not in the service of a higher unity. Obedient to the rules of pure Aristotelian logic, they both

follow the principle of reciprocal exclusivity. No conciliation is possible, for of the two terms, one is superfluous. The settlers' town is a strongly built town, all made of stone and steel. It is a brightly lit town; the streets are covered with asphalt, and the garbage cans swallow all the leavings, unseen, unknown and hardly thought about. The settler's feet are never visible, except perhaps in the sea; but there you're never close enough to see them. His feet are protected by strong shoes although the streets of his town are clean and even, with no holes or stones. The settler's town is a well-fed town, an easygoing town; its belly is always full of good things. The settlers' town is a town of white people, of foreigners.

The town belonging to the colonized people, or at least the native town, the Negro village, the medina, the reservation, is a place of ill fame, peopled by men of evil repute. They are born there, it matters little where or how; they die there, it matters not where, nor how. It is a world without spaciousness; men live there on top of each other, and their huts are built one on top of the other. The native town is a hungry town, starved of bread, of meat, of shoes, of coal, of light. The native town is a crouching village, a town on its knees, a town wallowing in the mire. It is a town of niggers and dirty Arabs. The look that the native turns on the settler's town is a look of lust, a look of envy; it expresses his dreams of possession—all manner of possession: to sit at the settler's table, to sleep in the settler's bed, with his wife if possible. The colonized man is an envious man. And this the settler knows very well; when their glances meet he ascertains bitterly, always on the defensive, “They want to take our place.” It is true, for there is no native who does not dream at least once a day of setting himself up in the settler's place.

This world divided into compartments, this world cut

in two is inhabited by two different species. The originality of the colonial context is that economic reality, inequality, and the immense difference of ways of life never come to mask the human realities. When you examine at close quarters the colonial context, it is evident that what parcels out the world is to begin with the fact of belonging to or not belonging to a given race, a given species. In the colonies the economic substructure is also a superstructure. The cause is the consequence; you are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich. This is why Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched every time we have to do with the colonial problem.

Everything up to and including the very nature of pre-capitalist society, so well explained by Marx, must here be thought out again. The serf is in essence different from the knight, but a reference to divine right is necessary to legitimize this statutory difference. In the colonies, the foreigner coming from another country imposed his rule by means of guns and machines. In defiance of his successful transplantation, in spite of his appropriation, the settler still remains a foreigner. It is neither the act of owning factories, nor estates, nor a bank balance which distinguishes the governing classes. The governing race is first and foremost those who come from elsewhere, those who are unlike the original inhabitants, "the others."

The violence which has ruled over the ordering of the colonial world, which has ceaselessly drummed the rhythm for the destruction of native social forms and broken up without reserve the systems of reference of the economy, the customs of dress and external life, that same violence will be claimed and taken over by the native at the moment when, deciding to embody history in his own person, he surges into the forbidden quarters. To wreck the colonial world is henceforward a mental picture of action

which is very clear, very easy to understand and which may be assumed by each one of the individuals which constitute the colonized people. To break up the colonial world does not mean that after the frontiers have been abolished lines of communication will be set up between the two zones. The destruction of the colonial world is no more and no less that the abolition of one zone, its burial in the depths of the earth or its expulsion from the country.

The natives' challenge to the colonial world is not a rational confrontation of points of view. It is not a treatise on the universal, but the untidy affirmation of an original idea propounded as an absolute. The colonial world is a Manichean world. It is not enough for the settler to delimit physically, that is to say with the help of the army and the police force, the place of the native. As if to show the totalitarian character of colonial exploitation the settler paints the native as a sort of quintessence of evil.* Native society is not simply described as a society lacking in values. It is not enough for the colonist to affirm that those values have disappeared from, or still better never existed in, the colonial world. The native is declared insensible to ethics; he represents not only the absence of values, but also the negation of values. He is, let us dare to admit, the enemy of values, and in this sense he is the absolute evil. He is the corrosive element, destroying all that comes near him; he is the deforming element, disfiguring all that has to do with beauty or morality; he is the depository of maleficent powers, the unconscious and irretrievable instrument of blind forces. Monsieur Meyer could thus state seriously in the French National Assembly that the Republic must not be prostituted by allowing

* We have demonstrated the mechanism of this Manichean world in *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1967).

the Algerian people to become part of it. All values, in fact, are irrevocably poisoned and diseased as soon as they are allowed in contact with the colonized race. The customs of the colonized people, their traditions, their myths—above all, their myths—are the very sign of that poverty of spirit and of their constitutional depravity. That is why we must put the DDT which destroys parasites, the bearers of disease, on the same level as the Christian religion which wages war on embryonic heresies and instincts, and on evil as yet unborn. The recession of yellow fever and the advance of evangelization form part of the same balance sheet. But the triumphant *communiqués* from the missions are in fact a source of information concerning the implantation of foreign influences in the core of the colonized people. I speak of the Christian religion, and no one need be astonished. The Church in the colonies is the white people's Church, the foreigner's Church. She does not call the native to God's ways but to the ways of the white man, of the master, of the oppressor. And as we know, in this matter many are called but few chosen.

At times this Manicheism goes to its logical conclusion and dehumanizes the native, or to speak plainly, it turns him into an animal. In fact, the terms the settler uses when he mentions the native are zoological terms. He speaks of the yellow man's reptilian motions, of the stink of the native quarter, of breeding swarms, of foulness, of spawn, of gesticulations. When the settler seeks to describe the native fully in exact terms he constantly refers to the bestiary. The European rarely hits on a picturesque style; but the native, who knows what is in the mind of the settler, guesses at once what he is thinking of. Those hordes of vital statistics, those hysterical masses, those faces bereft of all humanity, those distended bodies which are like nothing on earth, that mob without beginning or

end, those children who seem to belong to nobody, that laziness stretched out in the sun, that vegetative rhythm of life—all this forms part of the colonial vocabulary. General de Gaulle speaks of "the yellow multitudes" and François Mauriac of the black, brown, and yellow masses which soon will be unleashed. The native knows all this, and laughs to himself every time he spots an allusion to the animal world in the other's words. For he knows that he is not an animal; and it is precisely at the moment he realizes his humanity that he begins to sharpen the weapons with which he will secure its victory.

As soon as the native begins to pull on his moorings, and to cause anxiety to the settler, he is handed over to well-meaning souls who in cultural congresses point out to him the specificity and wealth of Western values. But every time Western values are mentioned they produce in the native a sort of stiffening or muscular lockjaw. During the period of decolonization, the native's reason is appealed to. He is offered definite values, he is told frequently that decolonization need not mean regression, and that he must put his trust in qualities which are well-tried, solid, and highly esteemed. But it so happens that when the native hears a speech about Western culture he pulls out his knife—or at least he makes sure it is within reach. The violence with which the supremacy of white values is affirmed and the aggressiveness which has permeated the victory of these values over the ways of life and of thought of the native mean that, in revenge, the native laughs in mockery when Western values are mentioned in front of him. In the colonial context the settler only ends his work of breaking in the native when the latter admits loudly and intelligibly the supremacy of the white man's values. In the period of decolonization, the colonized masses mock at these very values, insult them, and vomit them up.

This phenomenon is ordinarily masked because, during the period of decolonization, certain colonized intellectuals have begun a dialogue with the bourgeoisie of the colonialist country. During this phase, the indigenous population is discerned only as an indistinct mass. The few native personalities whom the colonialist bourgeois have come to know here and there have not sufficient influence on that immediate discernment to give rise to nuances. On the other hand, during the period of liberation, the colonialist bourgeoisie looks feverishly for contacts with the elite and it is with these elite that the familiar dialogue concerning values is carried on. The colonialist bourgeoisie, when it realizes that it is impossible for it to maintain its domination over the colonial countries, decides to carry out a rearguard action with regard to culture, values, techniques, and so on. Now what we must never forget is that the immense majority of colonized peoples is oblivious to these problems. For a colonized people the most essential value, because the most concrete, is first and foremost the land: the land which will bring them bread and, above all, dignity. But this dignity has nothing to do with the dignity of the human individual: for that human individual has never heard tell of it. All that the native has seen in his country is that they can freely arrest him, beat him, starve him: and no professor of ethics, no priest has ever come to be beaten in his place, nor to share their bread with him. As far as the native is concerned, morality is very concrete; it is to silence the settler's defiance, to break his flaunting violence—in a word, to put him out of the picture. The well-known principle that all men are equal will be illustrated in the colonies from the moment that the native claims that he is the equal of the settler. One step more, and he is ready to fight to be more than the settler. In fact, he has already decided to eject him and to take his place; as

we see it, it is a whole material and moral universe which is breaking up. The intellectual who for his part has followed the colonialist with regard to the universal abstract will fight in order that the settler and the native may live together in peace in a new world. But the thing he does not see, precisely because he is permeated by colonialism and all its ways of thinking, is that the settler, from the moment that the colonial context disappears, has no longer any interest in remaining or in co-existing. It is not by chance that, even before any negotiation* between the Algerian and French governments has taken place, the European minority which calls itself "liberal" has already made its position clear: it demands nothing more nor less than twofold citizenship. By setting themselves apart in an abstract manner, the liberals try to force the settler into taking a very concrete jump into the unknown. Let us admit it, the settler knows perfectly well that no phraseology can be a substitute for reality.

Thus the native discovers that his life, his breath, his beating heart are the same as those of the settler. He finds out that the settler's skin is not of any more value than a native's skin; and it must be said that this discovery shakes the world in a very necessary manner. All the new, revolutionary assurance of the native stems from it. For if, in fact, my life is worth as much as the settler's, his glance no longer shrivels me up nor freezes me, and his voice no longer turns me into stone. I am no longer on tenterhooks in his presence; in fact, I don't give a damn for him. Not only does his presence no longer trouble me, but I am already preparing such efficient ambushes for him that soon there will be no way out but that of flight.

We have said that the colonial context is characterized by the dichotomy which it imposes upon the whole peo-

* Fanon is writing in 1961.—*Trans.*

ple. Decolonization unifies that people by the radical decision to remove from it its heterogeneity, and by unifying it on a national, sometimes a racial, basis. We know the fierce words of the Senegalese patriots, referring to the maneuvers of their president, Senghor: "We have demanded that the higher posts should be given to Africans; and now Senghor is Africanizing the Europeans." That is to say that the native can see clearly and immediately if decolonization has come to pass or not, for his minimum demands are simply that the last shall be first.

But the native intellectual brings variants to this petition, and, in fact, he seems to have good reasons: higher civil servants, technicians, specialists—all seem to be needed. Now, the ordinary native interprets these unfair promotions as so many acts of sabotage, and he is often heard to declare: "It wasn't worth while, then, our becoming independent . . ."

In the colonial countries where a real struggle for freedom has taken place, where the blood of the people has flowed and where the length of the period of armed warfare has favored the backward surge of intellectuals toward bases grounded in the people, we can observe a genuine eradication of the superstructure built by these intellectuals from the bourgeois colonialist environment. The colonialist bourgeoisie, in its narcissistic dialogue, expounded by the members of its universities, had in fact deeply implanted in the minds of the colonized intellectual that the essential qualities remain eternal in spite of all the blunders men may make: the essential qualities of the West, of course. The native intellectual accepted the cogency of these ideas, and deep down in his brain you could always find a vigilant sentinel ready to defend the Greco-Latin pedestal. Now it so happens that during the struggle for liberation, at the moment that the native intellectual comes into touch again with his people, this

artificial sentinel is turned into dust. All the Mediterranean values—the triumph of the human individual, of clarity, and of beauty—become lifeless, colorless knickknacks. All those speeches seem like collections of dead words; those values which seemed to uplift the soul are revealed as worthless, simply because they have nothing to do with the concrete conflict in which the people is engaged.

Individualism is the first to disappear. The native intellectual had learnt from his masters that the individual ought to express himself fully. The colonialist bourgeoisie had hammered into the native's mind the idea of a society of individuals where each person shuts himself up in his own subjectivity, and whose only wealth is individual thought. Now the native who has the opportunity to return to the people during the struggle for freedom will discover the falseness of this theory. The very forms of organization of the struggle will suggest to him a different vocabulary. Brother, sister, friend—these are words outlawed by the colonialist bourgeoisie, because for them my brother is my purse, my friend is part of my scheme for getting on. The native intellectual takes part, in a sort of auto-da-fé, in the destruction of all his idols: egoism, recrimination that springs from pride, and the childish stupidity of those who always want to have the last word. Such a colonized intellectual, dusted over by colonial culture, will in the same way discover the substance of village assemblies, the cohesion of people's committees, and the extraordinary fruitfulness of local meetings and groupments. Henceforward, the interests of one will be the interests of all, for in concrete fact *everyone* will be discovered by the troops, *everyone* will be massacred—or *everyone* will be saved. The motto "look out for yourself," the atheist's method of salvation, is in this context forbidden.

Self-criticism has been much talked about of late, but

few people realize that it is an African institution. Whether in the *djemaas* * of northern Africa or in the meetings of western Africa, tradition demands that the quarrels which occur in a village should be settled in public. It is communal self-criticism, of course, and with a note of humor, because everybody is relaxed, and because in the last resort we all want the same things. But the more the intellectual imbibes the atmosphere of the people, the more completely he abandons the habits of calculation, of unwonted silence, of mental reservations, and shakes off the spirit of concealment. And it is true that already at that level we can say that the community triumphs, and that it spreads its own light and its own reason.

But it so happens sometimes that decolonization occurs in areas which have not been sufficiently shaken by the struggle for liberation, and there may be found those same know-all, smart, wily intellectuals. We find intact in them the manners and forms of thought picked up during their association with the colonialist bourgeoisie. Spoilt children of yesterday's colonialism and of today's national governments, they organize the loot of whatever national resources exist. Without pity, they use today's national distress as a means of getting on through scheming and legal robbery, by import-export combines, limited liability companies, gambling on the stock exchange, or unfair promotion. They are insistent in their demands for the nationalization of commerce, that is to say the reservation of markets and advantageous bargains for nationals only. As far as doctrine is concerned, they proclaim the pressing necessity of nationalizing the robbery of the nation. In this arid phase of national life, the so-called period of austerity, the success of their depredations is

* Village assemblies.—*Trans.*

swift to call forth the violence and anger of the people. For this same people, poverty-stricken yet independent, comes very quickly to possess a social conscience in the African and international context of today; and this the petty individualists will quickly learn.

In order to assimilate and to experience the oppressor's culture, the native has had to leave certain of his intellectual possessions in pawn. These pledges include his adoption of the forms of thought of the colonialist bourgeoisie. This is very noticeable in the inaptitude of the native intellectual to carry on a two-sided discussion; for he cannot eliminate himself when confronted with an object or an idea. On the other hand, when once he begins to militate among the people he is struck with wonder and amazement; he is literally disarmed by their good faith and honesty. The danger that will haunt him continually is that of becoming the uncritical mouthpiece of the masses; he becomes a kind of yes-man who nods assent at every word coming from the people, which he interprets as considered judgments. Now, the *fellah*, the unemployed man, the starving native do not lay a claim to the truth; they do not say that they represent the truth, for they are the truth.

Objectively, the intellectual behaves in this phase like a common opportunist. In fact he has not stopped maneuvering. There is never any question of his being either rejected or welcomed by the people. What they ask is simply that all resources should be pooled. The inclusion of the native intellectual in the upward surge of the masses will in this case be differentiated by a curious cult of detail. That is not to say that the people are hostile to analysis; on the contrary, they like having things explained to them, they are glad to understand a line of argument and they like to see where they are going. But at the beginning of his association with the people the native

intellectual over-stresses details and thereby comes to forget that the defeat of colonialism is the real object of the struggle. Carried away by the multitudinous aspects of the fight, he tends to concentrate on local tasks, performed with enthusiasm but almost always too solemnly. He fails to see the whole of the movement all the time. He introduces the idea of special disciplines, of specialized functions, of departments within the terrible stone crusher, the fierce mixing machine which a popular revolution is. He is occupied in action on a particular front, and it so happens that he loses sight of the unity of the movement. Thus, if a local defeat is inflicted, he may well be drawn into doubt, and from thence to despair. The people, on the other hand, take their stand from the start on the broad and inclusive positions of *bread and the land*: how can we obtain the land, and bread to eat? And this obstinate point of view of the masses, which may seem shrunken and limited, is in the end the most worthwhile and the most efficient mode of procedure.

The problem of truth ought also to be considered. In every age, among the people, truth is the property of the national cause. No absolute verity, no discourse on the purity of the soul, can shake this position. The native replies to the living lie of the colonial situation by an equal falsehood. His dealings with his fellow-nationals are open; they are strained and incomprehensible with regard to the settlers. Truth is that which hurries on the break-up of the colonialist regime; it is that which promotes the emergence of the nation; it is all that protects the natives, and ruins the foreigners. In this colonialist context there is no truthful behavior: and the good is quite simply that which is evil for "them."

Thus we see that the primary Manicheism which governed colonial society is preserved intact during the period of decolonization; that is to say that the settler never

ceases to be the enemy, the opponent, the foe that must be overthrown. The oppressor, in his own sphere, starts the process, a process of domination, of exploitation and of pillage, and in the other sphere the coiled, plundered creature which is the native provides fodder for the process as best he can, the process which moves uninterruptedly from the banks of the colonial territory to the palaces and the docks of the mother country. In this becalmed zone the sea has a smooth surface, the palm tree stirs gently in the breeze, the waves lap against the pebbles, and raw materials are ceaselessly transported, justifying the presence of the settler: and all the while the native, bent double, more dead than alive, exists interminably in an unchanging dream. The settler makes history; his life is an epoch, an Odyssey. He is the absolute beginning: "This land was created by us"; he is the unceasing cause: "If we leave, all is lost, and the country will go back to the Middle Ages." Over against him torpid creatures, wasted by fevers, obsessed by ancestral customs, form an almost inorganic background for the innovating dynamism of colonial mercantilism.

The settler makes history and is conscious of making it. And because he constantly refers to the history of his mother country, he clearly indicates that he himself is the extension of that mother country. Thus the history which he writes is not the history of the country which he plunders but the history of his own nation in regard to all that she skims off, all that she violates and starves.

The immobility to which the native is condemned can only be called in question if the native decides to put an end to the history of colonization—the history of pillage—and to bring into existence the history of the nation—the history of decolonization.

A world divided into compartments, a motionless, Manicheistic world, a world of statues: the statue of the

general who carried out the conquest, the statue of the engineer who built the bridge; a world which is sure of itself, which crushes with its stones the backs flayed by whips: this is the colonial world. The native is a being hemmed in; apartheid is simply one form of the division into compartments of the colonial world. The first thing which the native learns is to stay in his place, and not to go beyond certain limits. This is why the dreams of the native are always of muscular prowess; his dreams are of action and of aggression. I dream I am jumping, swimming, running, climbing; I dream that I burst out laughing, that I span a river in one stride, or that I am followed by a flood of motorcars which never catch up with me. During the period of colonization, the native never stops achieving his freedom from nine in the evening until six in the morning.

The colonized man will first manifest this aggressiveness which has been deposited in his bones against his own people. This is the period when the niggers beat each other up, and the police and magistrates do not know which way to turn when faced with the astonishing waves of crime in North Africa. We shall see later how this phenomenon should be judged.* When the native is confronted with the colonial order of things, he finds he is in a state of permanent tension. The settler's world is a hostile world, which spurns the native, but at the same time it is a world of which he is envious. We have seen that the native never ceases to dream of putting himself in the place of the settler—not of becoming the settler but of substituting himself for the settler. This hostile world, ponderous and aggressive because it fends off the colonized masses with all the harshness it is capable of, represents not merely a hell from which the swiftest flight

* See the section: "Colonial War and Mental Disorders."

possible is desirable, but also a paradise close at hand which is guarded by terrible watchdogs.

The native is always on the alert, for since he can only make out with difficulty the many symbols of the colonial world, he is never sure whether or not he has crossed the frontier. Confronted with a world ruled by the settler, the native is always presumed guilty. But the native's guilt is never a guilt which he accepts; it is rather a kind of curse, a sort of sword of Damocles, for, in his innermost spirit, the native admits no accusation. He is overpowered but not tamed; he is treated as an inferior but he is not convinced of his inferiority. He is patiently waiting until the settler is off his guard to fly at him. The native's muscles are always tensed. You can't say that he is terrorized, or even apprehensive. He is in fact ready at a moment's notice to exchange the role of the quarry for that of the hunter. The native is an oppressed person whose permanent dream is to become the persecutor. The symbols of social order—the police, the bugle calls in the barracks, military parades and the waving flags—are at one and the same time inhibitory and stimulating: for they do not convey the message "Don't dare to budge"; rather, they cry out "Get ready to attack." And, in fact, if the native had any tendency to fall asleep and to forget, the settler's hauteur and the settler's anxiety to test the strength of the colonial system would remind him at every turn that the great showdown cannot be put off indefinitely. That impulse to take the settler's place implies a tonicity of muscles the whole time; and in fact we know that in certain emotional conditions the presence of an obstacle accentuates the tendency toward motion.

The settler-native relationship is a mass relationship. The settler pits brute force against the weight of numbers. He is an exhibitionist. His preoccupation with security makes him remind the native out loud that there he alone

is master. The settler keeps alive in the native an anger which he deprives of outlet; the native is trapped in the tight links of the chains of colonialism. But we have seen that inwardly the settler can only achieve a pseudo petrification. The native's muscular tension finds outlet regularly in bloodthirsty explosions—in tribal warfare, in feuds between septs, and in quarrels between individuals.

Where individuals are concerned, a positive negation of common sense is evident. While the settler or the policeman has the right the livelong day to strike the native, to insult him and to make him crawl to them, you will see the native reaching for his knife at the slightest hostile or aggressive glance cast on him by another native; for the last resort of the native is to defend his personality vis-à-vis his brother. Tribal feuds only serve to perpetuate old grudges buried deep in the memory. By throwing himself with all his force into the vendetta, the native tries to persuade himself that colonialism does not exist, that everything is going on as before, that history continues. Here on the level of communal organizations we clearly discern the well-known behavior patterns of avoidance. It is as if plunging into a fraternal blood-bath allowed them to ignore the obstacle, and to put off till later the choice, nevertheless inevitable, which opens up the question of armed resistance to colonialism. Thus collective autodestruction in a very concrete form is one of the ways in which the native's muscular tension is set free. All these patterns of conduct are those of the death reflex when faced with danger, a suicidal behavior which proves to the settler (whose existence and domination is by them all the more justified) that these men are not reasonable human beings. In the same way the native manages to by-pass the settler. A belief in fatality removes all blame from the oppressor; the cause of misfortunes and of poverty is attributed to God: He is Fate. In this way

the individual accepts the disintegration ordained by God, bows down before the settler and his lot, and by a kind of interior restabilization acquires a stony calm.

Meanwhile, however, life goes on, and the native will strengthen the inhibitions which contain his aggressiveness by drawing on the terrifying myths which are so frequently found in underdeveloped communities. There are maleficent spirits which intervene every time a step is taken in the wrong direction, leopard-men, serpent-men, six-legged dogs, zombies—a whole series of tiny animals or giants which create around the native a world of prohibitions, of barriers and of inhibitions far more terrifying than the world of the settler. This magical superstructure which permeates native society fulfills certain well-defined functions in the dynamism of the libido. One of the characteristics of underdeveloped societies is in fact that the libido is first and foremost the concern of a group, or of the family. The feature of communities whereby a man who dreams that he has sexual relations with a woman other than his own must confess it in public and pay a fine in kind or in working days to the injured husband or family is fully described by ethnologists. We may note in passing that this proves that the so-called prehistoric societies attach great importance to the unconscious.

The atmosphere of myth and magic frightens me and so takes on an undoubted reality. By terrifying me, it integrates me in the traditions and the history of my district or of my tribe, and at the same time it reassures me, it gives me a status, as it were an identification paper. In underdeveloped countries the occult sphere is a sphere belonging to the community which is entirely under magical jurisdiction. By entangling myself in this inextricable network where actions are repeated with crystalline inevitability, I find the everlasting world which belongs to

me, and the perennality which is thereby affirmed of the world belonging to us. Believe me, the zombies are more terrifying than the settlers; and in consequence the problem is no longer that of keeping oneself right with the colonial world and its barbed-wire entanglements, but of considering three times before urinating, spitting, or going out into the night.

The supernatural, magical powers reveal themselves as essentially personal; the settler's powers are infinitely shrunk, stamped with their alien origin. We no longer really need to fight against them since what counts is the frightening enemy created by myths. We perceive that all is settled by a permanent confrontation on the phantasmic plane.

It has always happened in the struggle for freedom that such a people, formerly lost in an imaginary maze, a prey to unspeakable terrors yet happy to lose themselves in a dreamlike torment, such a people becomes unhinged, reorganizes itself, and in blood and tears gives birth to very real and immediate action. Feeding the *moudjahidines*,* posting sentinels, coming to the help of families which lack the bare necessities, or taking the place of a husband who has been killed or imprisoned: such are the concrete tasks to which the people is called during the struggle for freedom.

In the colonial world, the emotional sensitivity of the native is kept on the surface of his skin like an open sore which flinches from the caustic agent; and the psyche shrinks back, obliterates itself and finds outlet in muscular demonstrations which have caused certain very wise men to say that the native is a hysterical type. This sensitive emotionalism, watched by invisible keepers who are how-

* Highly-trained soldiers who are completely dedicated to the Moslem cause.—*Trans.*

ever in unbroken contact with the core of the personality, will find its fulfillment through eroticism in the driving forces behind the crisis' dissolution.

On another level we see the native's emotional sensibility exhausting itself in dances which are more or less ecstatic. This is why any study of the colonial world should take into consideration the phenomena of the dance and of possession. The native's relaxation takes precisely the form of a muscular orgy in which the most acute aggressivity and the most impelling violence are canalized, transformed, and conjured away. The circle of the dance is a permissive circle: it protects and permits. At certain times on certain days, men and women come together at a given place, and there, under the solemn eye of the tribe, fling themselves into a seemingly unorganized pantomime, which is in reality extremely systematic, in which by various means—shakes of the head, bending of the spinal column, throwing of the whole body backward—may be deciphered as in an open book the huge effort of a community to exorcise itself, to liberate itself, to explain itself. There are no limits—inside the circle. The hillock up which you have toiled as if to be nearer to the moon; the river bank down which you slip as if to show the connection between the dance and ablutions, cleansing and purification—these are sacred places. There are no limits—for in reality your purpose in coming together is to allow the accumulated libido, the hampered aggressivity, to dissolve as in a volcanic eruption. Symbolical killings, fantastic rides, imaginary mass murders—all must be brought out. The evil humors are undammed, and flow away with a din as of molten lava.

One step further and you are completely possessed. In fact, these are actually organized séances of possession and exorcism; they include vampirism, possession by djinns, by zombies, and by Legba, the famous god of the voodoo.

This disintegrating of the personality, this splitting and dissolution, all this fulfills a primordial function in the organism of the colonial world. When they set out, the men and women were impatient, stamping their feet in a state of nervous excitement; when they return, peace has been restored to the village; it is once more calm and unmoved.

During the struggle for freedom, a marked alienation from these practices is observed. The native's back is to the wall, the knife is at his throat (or, more precisely, the electrode at his genitals): he will have no more call for his fancies. After centuries of unreality, after having wallowed in the most outlandish phantoms, at long last the native, gun in hand, stands face to face with the only forces which contend for his life—the forces of colonialism. And the youth of a colonized country, growing up in an atmosphere of shot and fire, may well make a mock of, and does not hesitate to pour scorn upon the zombies of his ancestors, the horses with two heads, the dead who rise again, and the djinns who rush into your body while you yawn. The native discovers reality and transforms it into the pattern of his customs, into the practice of violence and into his plan for freedom.

We have seen that this same violence, though kept very much on the surface all through the colonial period, yet turns in the void. We have also seen that it is canalized by the emotional outlets of dance and possession by spirits; we have seen how it is exhausted in fratricidal combats. Now the problem is to lay hold of this violence which is changing direction. When formerly it was appeased by myths and exercised its talents in finding fresh ways of committing mass suicide, now new conditions will make possible a completely new line of action.

Nowadays a theoretical problem of prime importance is being set, on the historical plane as well as on the level of

political tactics, by the liberation of the colonies: when can one affirm that the situation is ripe for a movement of national liberation? In what form should it first be manifested? Because the various means whereby decolonization has been carried out have appeared in many different aspects, reason hesitates and refuses to say which is a true decolonization, and which a false. We shall see that for a man who is in the thick of the fight it is an urgent matter to decide on the means and the tactics to employ: that is to say, how to conduct and organize the movement. If this coherence is not present there is only a blind will toward freedom, with the terribly reactionary risks which it entails.

What are the forces which in the colonial period open up new outlets and engender new aims for the violence of colonized peoples? In the first place there are the political parties and the intellectual or commercial elites. Now, the characteristic feature of certain political structures is that they proclaim abstract principles but refrain from issuing definite commands. The entire action of these nationalist political parties during the colonial period is action of the electoral type: a string of philosophico-political dissertations on the themes of the rights of peoples to self-determination, the rights of man to freedom from hunger and human dignity, and the unceasing affirmation of the principle: "One man, one vote." The national political parties never lay stress upon the necessity of a trial of armed strength, for the good reason that their objective is not the radical overthrowing of the system. Pacifists and legalists, they are in fact partisans of order, the new order—but to the colonialist bourgeoisie they put bluntly enough the demand which to them is the main one: "Give us more power." On the specific question of violence, the elite are ambiguous. They are violent in their words and reformist in their attitudes.

When the nationalist political leaders say something, they make quite clear that they do not really *think* it.

This characteristic on the part of the nationalist political parties should be interpreted in the light both of the make-up of their leaders and the nature of their followings. The rank-and-file of a nationalist party is urban. The workers, primary schoolteachers, artisans, and small shopkeepers who have begun to profit—at a discount, to be sure—from the colonial setup, have special interests at heart. What this sort of following demands is the betterment of their particular lot: increased salaries, for example. The dialogue between these political parties and colonialism is never broken off. Improvements are discussed, such as full electoral representation, the liberty of the press, and liberty of association. Reforms are debated. Thus it need not astonish anyone to notice that a large number of natives are militant members of the branches of political parties which stem from the mother country. These natives fight under an abstract watchword: "Government by the workers," and they forget that in their country it should be *nationalist* watchwords which are first in the field. The native intellectual has clothed his aggressiveness in his barely veiled desire to assimilate himself to the colonial world. He has used his aggressiveness to serve his own individual interests.

Thus there is very easily brought into being a kind of class of enfranchised slaves, or slaves who are individually free. What the intellectual demands is the right to multiply the emancipated, and the opportunity to organize a genuine class of emancipated citizens. On the other hand, the mass of the people have no intention of standing by and watching individuals increase their chances of success. What they demand is not the settler's position of status, but the settler's place. The immense majority of natives want the settler's farm. For them, there is no question of

entering into competition with the settler. They want to take his place.

The peasantry is systematically disregarded for the most part by the propaganda put out by the nationalist parties. And it is clear that in the colonial countries the peasants alone are revolutionary, for they have nothing to lose and everything to gain. The starving peasant, outside the class system, is the first among the exploited to discover that only violence pays. For him there is no compromise, no possible coming to terms; colonization and decolonization are simply a question of relative strength. The exploited man sees that his liberation implies the use of all means, and that of force first and foremost. When in 1956, after the capitulation of Monsieur Guy Mollet to the settlers in Algeria, the Front de Libération Nationale, in a famous leaflet, stated that colonialism only loosens its hold when the knife is at its throat, no Algerian really found these terms too violent. The leaflet only expressed what every Algerian felt at heart: colonialism is not a thinking machine, nor a body endowed with reasoning faculties. It is violence in its natural state, and it will only yield when confronted with greater violence.

At the decisive moment, the colonialist bourgeoisie, which up till then has remained inactive, comes into the field. It introduces that new idea which is in proper parlance a creation of the colonial situation: non-violence. In its simplest form this non-violence signifies to the intellectual and economic elite of the colonized country that the bourgeoisie has the same interests as they and that it is therefore urgent and indispensable to come to terms for the public good. Non-violence is an attempt to settle the colonial problem around a green baize table, before any regrettable act has been performed or irreparable gesture made, before any blood has been shed. But if the masses, without waiting for the chairs to be arranged around the

baize table, listen to their own voice and begin committing outrages and setting fire to buildings, the elite and the nationalist bourgeois parties will be seen rushing to the colonialists to exclaim, "This is very serious! We do not know how it will end; we must find a solution—some sort of compromise."

This idea of compromise is very important in the phenomenon of decolonization, for it is very far from being a simple one. Compromise involves the colonial system and the young nationalist bourgeoisie at one and the same time. The partisans of the colonial system discover that the masses may destroy everything. Blown-up bridges, ravaged farms, repressions, and fighting harshly disrupt the economy. Compromise is equally attractive to the nationalist bourgeoisie, who since they are not clearly aware of the possible consequences of the rising storm, are genuinely afraid of being swept away by this huge hurricane and never stop saying to the settlers: "We are still capable of stopping the slaughter; the masses still have confidence in us; act quickly if you do not want to put everything in jeopardy." One step more, and the leader of the nationalist party keeps his distance with regard to that violence. He loudly proclaims that he has nothing to do with these Mau-Mau, these terrorists, these throat-slitters. At best, he shuts himself off in a no man's land between the terrorists and the settlers and willingly offers his services as go-between; that is to say, that as the settlers cannot discuss terms with these Mau-Mau, he himself will be quite willing to begin negotiations. Thus it is that the rear guard of the national struggle, that very party of people who have never ceased to be on the other side in the fight, find themselves somersaulted into the van of negotiations and compromise—precisely because that party has taken very good care never to break contact with colonialism.

Before negotiations have been set afoot, the majority of nationalist parties confine themselves for the most part to explaining and excusing this "savagery." They do not assert that the people have to use physical force, and it sometimes even happens that they go so far as to condemn, in private, the spectacular deeds which are declared to be hateful by the press and public opinion in the mother country. The legitimize excuse for this ultra-conservative policy is the desire to see things in an objective light; but this traditional attitude of the native intellectual and of the leaders of the nationalist parties is not, in reality, in the least objective. For in fact they are not at all convinced that this impatient violence of the masses is the most efficient means of defending their own interests. Moreover, there are some individuals who are convinced of the ineffectiveness of violent methods; for them, there is no doubt about it, every attempt to break colonial oppression by force is a hopeless effort, an attempt at suicide, because in the innermost recesses of their brains the settler's tanks and airplanes occupy a huge place. When they are told "Action must be taken," they see bombs raining down on them, armored cars coming at them on every path, machine-gunning and police action . . . and they sit quiet. They are beaten from the start. There is no need to demonstrate their incapacity to triumph by violent methods; they take it for granted in their everyday life and in their political maneuvers. They have remained in the same childish position as Engels took up in his famous polemic with that monument of puerility, Monsieur Duhring:

In the same way that Robinson [Crusoe] was able to obtain a sword, we can just as well suppose that [Man] Friday might appear one fine morning with a loaded revolver in his hand, and from then on the whole relationship of violence is reversed: Man Friday gives the orders and Crusoe is obliged

to work. . . . Thus, the revolver triumphs over the sword, and even the most childish believer in axioms will doubtless form the conclusion that violence is not a simple act of will, but needs for its realization certain very concrete preliminary conditions, and in particular the implements of violence; and the more highly developed of these implements will carry the day against primitive ones. Moreover, the very fact of the ability to produce such weapons signifies that the producer of highly developed weapons, in everyday speech the arms manufacturer, triumphs over the producer of primitive weapons. To put it briefly, the triumph of violence depends upon the production of armaments, and this in its turn depends on production in general, and thus . . . on economic strength, on the economy of the State, and in the last resort on the material means which that violence commands.*

In fact, the leaders of reform have nothing else to say than: "With what are you going to fight the settlers? With your knives? Your shotguns?"

It is true that weapons are important when violence comes into play, since all finally depends on the distribution of these implements. But it so happens that the liberation of colonial countries throws new light on the subject. For example, we have seen that during the Spanish campaign, which was a very genuine colonial war, Napoleon, in spite of an army which reached in the offensives of the spring of 1810 the huge figure of 400,000 men, was forced to retreat. Yet the French army made the whole of Europe tremble by its weapons of war, by the bravery of its soldiers, and by the military genius of its leaders. Face to face with the enormous potentials of the Napoleonic troops, the Spaniards, inspired by an unshakable national ardor, rediscovered the famous methods of guerilla warfare which, twenty-five years before, the American militia had tried out on the English forces. But the

* Friedrich Engels: *Anti-Dühring*, Part II, Chapter III, "Theory of Violence," p. 199.

native's guerilla warfare would be of no value as opposed to other means of violence if it did not form a new element in the worldwide process of competition between trusts and monopolies.

In the early days of colonization, a single column could occupy immense stretches of country: the Congo, Nigeria, the Ivory Coast, and so on. Today, however, the colonized countries' national struggle crops up in a completely new international situation. Capitalism, in its early days, saw in the colonies a source of raw materials which, once turned into manufactured goods, could be distributed on the European market. After a phase of accumulation of capital, capitalism has today come to modify its conception of the profit-earning capacity of a commercial enterprise. The colonies have become a market. The colonial population is a customer who is ready to buy goods; consequently, if the garrison has to be perpetually reinforced, if buying and selling slackens off, that is to say if manufactured and finished goods can no longer be exported, there is clear proof that the solution of military force must be set aside. A blind domination founded on slavery is not economically speaking worthwhile for the bourgeoisie of the mother country. The monopolistic group within this bourgeoisie does not support a government whose policy is solely that of the sword. What the factory-owners and finance magnates of the mother country expect from their government is not that it should decimate the colonial peoples, but that it should safeguard with the help of economic conventions their own "legitimate interests."

Thus there exists a sort of detached complicity between capitalism and the violent forces which blaze up in colonial territory. What is more, the native is not alone against the oppressor, for indeed there is also the political and diplomatic support of progressive countries and peo-

ples. But above all there is competition, that pitiless war which financial groups wage upon each other. A Berlin Conference was able to tear Africa into shreds and divide her up between three or four imperial flags. At the moment, the important thing is not whether such-and-such a region in Africa is under French or Belgian sovereignty, but rather that the economic zones are respected. Today, wars of repression are no longer waged against rebel sultans; everything is more elegant, less bloodthirsty; the liquidation of the Castro regime will be quite peaceful. They do all they can to strangle Guinea and they eliminate Mossadegh. Thus the nationalist leader who is frightened of violence is wrong if he imagines that colonialism is going to "massacre all of us." The military will of course go on playing with tin soldiers which date from the time of the conquest, but higher finance will soon bring the truth home to them.

This is why reasonable nationalist political parties are asked to set out their claims as clearly as possible, and to seek with their colonialist opposite numbers, calmly and without passion, for a solution which will take the interests of both parties into consideration. We see that if this nationalist reformist tendency which often takes the form of a kind of caricature of trade unionism decides to take action, it will only do so in a highly peaceful fashion, through stoppages of work in the few industries which have been set up in the towns, mass demonstrations to cheer the leaders, and the boycotting of buses or of imported commodities. All these forms of action serve at one and the same time to bring pressure to bear on the forces of colonialism, and to allow the people to work off their energy. This practice of therapy by hibernation, this 'sleep-cure' used on the people, may sometimes be successful; thus out of the conference around the green baize table comes the political selectiveness which enables Mon-

sieur M'ba, the president of the Republic of Gabon, to state in all seriousness on his arrival in Paris for an official visit: "Gabon is independent, but between Gabon and France nothing has changed; everything goes on as before." In fact, the only change is that Monsieur M'ba is president of the Gabonese Republic and that he is received by the president of the French Republic.

The colonialist bourgeoisie is helped in its work of calming down the natives by the inevitable religion. All those saints who have turned the other cheek, who have forgiven trespasses against them, and who have been spat on and insulted without shrinking are studied and held up as examples. On the other hand, the elite of the colonial countries, those slaves set free, when at the head of the movement inevitably end up by producing an ersatz conflict. They use their brothers' slavery to shame the slavedrivers or to provide an ideological policy of quaint humanitarianism for their oppressors' financial competitors. The truth is that they never make any real appeal to the aforesaid slaves; they never mobilize them in concrete terms. On the contrary, at the decisive moment (that is to say, from their point of view the moment of indecision) they brandish the danger of a "mass mobilization" as the crucial weapon which would bring about as if by magic the "end of the colonial regime." Obviously there are to be found at the core of the political parties and among their leaders certain revolutionaries who deliberately turn their backs upon the farce of national independence. But very quickly their questionings, their energy, and their anger obstruct the party machine; and these elements are gradually isolated, and then quite simply brushed aside. At this moment, as if there existed a dialectic concomitance, the colonialist police will fall upon them. With no security in the towns, avoided by the militants of their former party and rejected by its

leaders, these undesirable firebrands will be stranded in country districts. Then it is that they will realize bewilderedly that the peasant masses catch on to what they have to say immediately, and without delay ask them the question to which they have not yet prepared the answer: "When do we start?"

This meeting of revolutionaries coming from the towns and country dwellers will be dealt with later on. For the moment we must go back to the political parties, in order to show the nature of their action, which is all the same progressive. In their speeches the political leaders give a name to the nation. In this way the native's demands are given shape.

There is however no definite subject matter and no political or social program. There is a vague outline or skeleton, which is nevertheless national in form, what we describe as "minimum requirements." The politicians who make speeches and who write in the nationalist newspapers make the people dream dreams. They avoid the actual overthrowing of the state, but in fact they introduce into their readers' or hearers' consciousness the terrible ferment of subversion. The national or tribal language is often used. Here, once again, dreams are encouraged, and the imagination is let loose outside the bounds of the colonial order; and sometimes these politicians speak of "We Negroes, we Arabs," and these terms which are so profoundly ambivalent take on during the colonial epoch a sacramental signification. The nationalist politicians are playing with fire: for, as an African leader recently warned a group of young intellectuals, "Think well before you speak to the masses, for they flare up quickly." This is one of the terrible tricks that destiny plays in the colonies.

When a political leader calls a mass meeting, we may say that there is blood in the air. Yet the same leader very often is above all anxious to "make a show" of force, so

that in fact he need not use it. But the agitation which ensues, the coming and going, the listening to speeches, seeing the people assembled in one place, with the police all around, the military demonstrations, arrests, and the deportation of the leaders—all this hubbub makes the people think that the moment has come for them to take action. In these times of instability the political parties multiply their appeals to the left for calm, while on their right they scan the horizon, trying to make out the liberal intentions of colonialism.

In the same way the people make use of certain episodes in the life of the community in order to hold themselves ready and to keep alive their revolutionary zeal. For example, the gangster who holds up the police set on to track him down for days on end, or who dies in single combat after having killed four or five policemen, or who commits suicide in order not to give away his accomplices—these types light the way for the people, form the blueprints for action and become heroes. Obviously, it's a waste of breath to say that such-and-such a hero is a thief, a scoundrel, or a reprobate. If the act for which he is prosecuted by the colonial authorities is an act exclusively directed against a colonialist person or colonialist property, the demarcation line is definite and manifest. The process of identification is automatic.

We must also notice in this ripening process the role played by the history of the resistance at the time of the conquest. The great figures of the colonized people are always those who led the national resistance to invasion. Behanzin, Soundiata, Samory, Abdel Kader—all spring again to life with peculiar intensity in the period which comes directly before action. This is the proof that the people are getting ready to begin to go forward again, to put an end to the static period begun by colonization, and to make history.

The uprising of the new nation and the breaking down of colonial structures are the result of one of two causes: either of a violent struggle of the people in their own right, or of action on the part of surrounding colonized peoples which acts as a brake on the colonial regime in question.

A colonized people is not alone. In spite of all that colonialism can do, its frontiers remain open to new ideas and echoes from the world outside. It discovers that violence is in the atmosphere, that it here and there bursts out, and here and there sweeps away the colonial regime—that same violence which fulfills for the native a role that is not simply informatory, but also operative. The great victory of the Vietnamese people at Dien Bien Phu is no longer, strictly speaking, a Vietnamese victory. Since July, 1954, the question which the colonized peoples have asked themselves has been, "What must be done to bring about another Dien Bien Phu? How can we manage it?" Not a single colonized individual could ever again doubt the possibility of a Dien Bien Phu; the only problem was how best to use the forces at their disposal, how to organize them, and when to bring them into action. This encompassing violence does not work upon the colonized people only; it modifies the attitude of the colonialists who become aware of manifold Dien Bien Phus. This is why a veritable panic takes hold of the colonialist governments in turn. Their purpose is to capture the vanguard, to turn the movement of liberation toward the right, and to disarm the people: quick, quick, let's decolonize. Decolonize the Congo before it turns into another Algeria. Vote the constitutional framework for all Africa, create the French *Communauté*, renovate that same *Communauté*, but for God's sake let's decolonize quick. . . . And they decolonize at such a rate that they impose independence on Houphouët-Boigny. To the strategy of Dien Bien Phu, defined by the colonized peoples, the colonialist re-

plies by the strategy of encirclement—based on the respect of the sovereignty of states.

But let us return to that atmosphere of violence, that violence which is just under the skin. We have seen that in its process toward maturity many leads are attached to it, to control it and show it the way out. Yet in spite of the metamorphoses which the colonial regime imposes upon it in the way of tribal or regional quarrels, that violence makes its way forward, and the native identifies his enemy and recognizes all his misfortunes, throwing all the exacerbated might of his hate and anger into this new channel. But how do we pass from the atmosphere of violence to violence in action? What makes the lid blow off? There is first of all the fact that this development does not leave the settler's blissful existence intact. The settler who "understands" the natives is made aware by several straws in the wind showing that something is afoot. "Good" natives become scarce; silence falls when the oppressor approaches; sometimes looks are black, and attitudes and remarks openly aggressive. The nationalist parties are astir, they hold a great many meetings, the police are increased and reinforcements of soldiers are brought in. The settlers, above all the farmers isolated on their land, are the first to become alarmed. They call for energetic measures.

The authorities do in fact take some spectacular measures. They arrest one or two leaders, they organize military parades and maneuvers, and air force displays. But the demonstrations and warlike exercises, the smell of gunpowder which now fills the atmosphere, these things do not make the people draw back. Those bayonets and cannonades only serve to reinforce their aggressiveness. The atmosphere becomes dramatic, and everyone wishes to show that he is ready for anything. And it is in these circumstances that the guns go off by themselves, for nerves are jangled, fear reigns and everyone is trigger-happy. A

single commonplace incident is enough to start the machine-gunning: Sétif in Algeria, the Central Quarries in Morocco, Moramanga in Madagascar.

The repressions, far from calling a halt to the forward rush of national consciousness, urge it on. Mass slaughter in the colonies at a certain stage of the embryonic development of consciousness increases that consciousness, for the hecatombs are an indication that between oppressors and oppressed everything can be solved by force. It must be remarked here that the political parties have not called for armed insurrection, and have made no preparations for such an insurrection. All these repressive measures, all those actions which are a result of fear are not within the leaders' intentions: they are overtaken by events. At this moment, then, colonialism may decide to arrest the nationalist leaders. But today the governments of colonized countries know very well that it is extremely dangerous to deprive the masses of their leaders; for then the people, unbridled, fling themselves into *jacqueries*, mutinies, and "brutish murders." The masses give free rein to their "bloodthirsty instincts" and force colonialism to free their leaders, to whom falls the difficult task of bringing them back to order. The colonized people, who have spontaneously brought their violence to the colossal task of destroying the colonial system, will very soon find themselves with the barren, inert slogan "Release X or Y."* Then colonialism will release these men, and hold discussions with them. The time for dancing in the streets has come.

In certain circumstances, the party political machine may remain intact. But as a result of the colonialist repression and of the spontaneous reaction of the people the parties find themselves out-distanced by their militants.

* It may happen that the arrested leader is in fact the authentic mouthpiece of the colonized masses. In this case colonialism will make use of his period of detention to try to launch new leaders.

The violence of the masses is vigorously pitted against the military forces of the occupying power, and the situation deteriorates and comes to a head. Those leaders who are free remain, therefore, on the touchline. They have suddenly become useless, with their bureaucracy and their reasonable demands; yet we see them, far removed from events, attempting the crowning imposture—that of "speaking in the name of the silenced nation." As a general rule, colonialism welcomes this godsend with open arms, transforms these "blind mouths" into spokesmen, and in two minutes endows them with independence, on condition that they restore order.

So we see that all parties are aware of the power of such violence and that the question is not always to reply to it by a greater violence, but rather to see how to relax the tension.

What is the real nature of this violence? We have seen that it is the intuition of the colonized masses that their liberation must, and can only, be achieved by force. By what spiritual aberration do these men, without technique, starving and enfeebled, confronted with the military and economic might of the occupation, come to believe that violence alone will free them? How can they hope to triumph?

It is because violence (and this is the disgraceful thing) may constitute, in so far as it forms part of its system, the slogan of a political party. The leaders may call on the people to enter upon an armed struggle. This problematical question has to be thought over. When militarist Germany decides to settle its frontier disputes by force, we are not in the least surprised; but when the people of Angola, for example, decide to take up arms, when the Algerian people reject all means which are not violent, these are proofs that something has happened or is happening at this very moment. The colonized races, those

slaves of modern times, are impatient. They know that this apparent folly alone can put them out of reach of colonial oppression. A new type of relations is established in the world. The underdeveloped peoples try to break their chains, and the extraordinary thing is that they succeed. It could be argued that in these days of sputniks it is ridiculous to die of hunger; but for the colonized masses the argument is more down-to-earth. The truth is that there is no colonial power today which is capable of adopting the only form of contest which has a chance of succeeding, namely, the prolonged establishment of large forces of occupation.

As far as their internal situation is concerned, the colonialist countries find themselves faced with contradictions in the form of working-class demands which necessitate the use of their police forces. As well, in the present international situation, these countries need their troops to protect their regimes. Finally there is the well-known myth of liberating movements directed from Moscow. In the regime's panic-stricken reasoning, this signifies "If that goes on, there is a risk that the communists will turn the troubles to account and infiltrate into these parts."

In the native's eagerness, the fact that he openly brandishes the threat of violence proves that he is conscious of the unusual character of the contemporary situation and that he means to profit by it. But, still on the level of immediate experience, the native, who has seen the modern world penetrate into the furthest corners of the bush, is most acutely aware of all the things he does not possess. The masses by a sort of (if we may say so) child-like process of reasoning convince themselves that they have been robbed of all these things. That is why in certain underdeveloped countries the masses forge ahead very quickly, and realize two or three years after independ-

ence that they have been frustrated, that "it wasn't worth while" fighting, and that nothing could really change. In 1789, after the bourgeois revolution, the smallest French peasants benefited substantially from the upheaval. But it is a commonplace to observe and to say that in the majority of cases, for 95 per cent of the population of underdeveloped countries, independence brings no immediate change. The enlightened observer takes note of the existence of a kind of masked discontent, like the smoking ashes of a burnt-down house after the fire has been put out, which still threaten to burst into flames again.

So they say that the natives want to go too quickly. Now, let us never forget that only a very short time ago they complained of their slowness, their laziness, and their fatalism. Already we see that violence used in specific ways at the moment of the struggle for freedom does not magically disappear after the ceremony of trooping the national colors. It has all the less reason for disappearing since the reconstruction of the nation continues within the framework of cutthroat competition between capitalism and socialism.

This competition gives an almost universal dimension to even the most localized demands. Every meeting held, every act of repression committed, reverberates in the international arena. The murders of Sharpeville shook public opinion for months. In the newspapers, over the wavelengths, and in private conversations Sharpeville has become a symbol. It was through Sharpeville that men and women first became acquainted with the problem of apartheid in South Africa. Moreover, we cannot believe that demagoguery alone is the explanation for the sudden interest the big powers show in the petty affairs of underdeveloped regions. Each *jacquerie*, each act of sedition in the Third World makes up part of a picture framed by the Cold War. Two men are beaten up in Salisbury, and at

once the whole of a bloc goes into action, talks about those two men, and uses the beating-up incident to bring up the particular problem of Rhodesia, linking it, moreover, with the whole African question and with the whole question of colonized people. The other bloc however is equally concerned in measuring by the magnitude of the campaign the local weaknesses of its system. Thus the colonized peoples realize that neither clan remains outside local incidents. They no longer limit themselves to regional horizons, for they have caught on to the fact that they live in an atmosphere of international stress.

When every three months or so we hear that the Sixth or Seventh Fleet is moving toward such-and-such a coast; when Khrushchev threatens to come to Castro's aid with rockets; when Kennedy decides upon some desperate solution for the Laos question, the colonized person or the newly independent native has the impression that whether he wills it or not he is being carried away in a kind of frantic cavalcade. In fact, he is marching in it already. Let us take, for example, the case of the governments of recently liberated countries. The men at the head of affairs spend two-thirds of their time in watching the approaches and trying to anticipate the dangers which threaten them, and the remaining one-third of their time in working for their country. At the same time, they search for allies. Obedient to the same dialectic, the national parties of opposition leave the paths of parliamentary behavior. They also look for allies to support them in their ruthless ventures into sedition. The atmosphere of violence, after having colored all the colonial phase, continues to dominate national life, for as we have already said, the Third World is not cut off from the rest. Quite the contrary, it is at the middle of the whirlpool. This is why the statesmen of underdeveloped countries keep up

indefinitely the tone of aggressiveness and exasperation in their public speeches which in the normal way ought to have disappeared. Herein, also, may be found the reasons for that lack of politeness so often spoken of in connection with newly established rulers. But what is less visible is the extreme courtesy of these same rulers in their contacts with their brothers or their comrades. Discourtesy is first and foremost a manner to be used in dealings with the others, with the former colonists who come to observe and to investigate. The "ex-native" too often gets the impression that these reports are already written. The photos which illustrate the article are simply a proof that one knows what one is talking about, and that one has visited the country. The report intends to verify the evidence: everything's going badly out there since we left. Frequently reporters complain of being badly received, of being forced to work under bad conditions and of being fenced round by indifference or hostility: all this is quite normal. The nationalist leaders know that international opinion is formed solely by the Western press. Now, when a journalist from the West asks us questions, it is seldom in order to help us. In the Algerian war, for example, even the most liberal of the French reporters never ceased to use ambiguous terms in describing our struggle. When we reproached them for this, they replied in all good faith that they were being objective. For the native, objectivity is always directed against him. We may in the same way come to understand the new tone which swamped international diplomacy at the United Nations General Assembly in September, 1960. The representatives of the colonial countries were aggressive and violent, and carried things to extremes, but the colonial peoples did not find that they exaggerated. The radicalism of the African spokesmen brought the abcess to a head and showed up the inad-

missible nature of the veto and of the dialogue between the great powers, and above all the tiny role reserved for the Third World.

Diplomacy, as inaugurated by the newly independent peoples, is no longer an affair of nuances, of implications, and of hypnotic passes. For the nation's spokesmen are responsible at one and the same time for safeguarding the unity of the nation, the progress of the masses toward a state of well-being and the right of all peoples to bread and liberty. Thus it is a diplomacy which never stops moving, a diplomacy which leaps ahead, in strange contrast to the motionless, petrified world of colonization. And when Mr. Khrushchev brandishes his shoe at the United Nations, or thumps the table with it, there's not a single ex-native, nor any representative of an underdeveloped country, who laughs. For what Mr. Khrushchev shows the colonized countries which are looking on is that he, the *moujik*, who moreover is the possessor of spacerockets, treats these miserable capitalists in the way that they deserve. In the same way, Castro sitting in military uniform in the United Nations Organization does not scandalize the underdeveloped countries. What Castro demonstrates is the consciousness he has of the continuing existence of the rule of violence. The astonishing thing is that he did not come into the UNO with a machine-gun; but if he had, would anyone have minded? All the *jacqueries* and desperate deeds, all those bands armed with cutlasses or axes find their nationality in the implacable struggle which opposes socialism and capitalism.

In 1945, the 45,000 dead at Sétif could pass unnoticed; in 1947, the 90,000 dead in Madagascar could be the subject of a simple paragraph in the papers; in 1952, the 200,000 victims of the repression in Kenya could meet with relative indifference. This was because the international contradictions were not sufficiently distinct. Already the

Korean and Indo-Chinese wars had begun a new phase. But it is above all Budapest and Suez which constitute the decisive moments of this confrontation.

Strengthened by the unconditional support of the socialist countries, the colonized peoples fling themselves with whatever arms they have against the impregnable citadel of colonialism. If this citadel is invulnerable to knives and naked fists, it is no longer so when we decide to take into account the context of the Cold War.

In this fresh juncture, the Americans take their role of patron of international capitalism very seriously. Early on, they advise the European countries to decolonize in a friendly fashion. Later on, they do not hesitate to proclaim first the respect for and then the support of the principle of "Africa for the Africans." The United States is not afraid today of stating officially that they are the defenders of the right of all peoples to self-determination. Mr. Menen Williams' last journey is only the illustration of the consciousness which the Americans have that the Third World ought not to be sacrificed. From then on we understand why the violence of the native is only hopeless if we compare it in the abstract to the military machine of the oppressor. On the other hand, if we situate that violence in the dynamics of the international situation, we see at once that it constitutes a terrible menace for the oppressor. Persistent *jacqueries* and Mau-Mau disturbance unbalance the colony's economic life but do not endanger the mother country. What is more important in the eyes of imperialism is the opportunity for socialist propaganda to infiltrate among the masses and to contaminate them. This is already a serious danger in the cold war; but what would happen to that colony in case of real war, riddled as it is by murderous guerillas?

Thus capitalism realizes that its military strategy has everything to lose by the outbreak of nationalist wars.

Again, within the framework of peaceful co-existence, all colonies are destined to disappear, and in the long run neutralism is destined to be respected by capitalism. What must at all costs be avoided is strategic insecurity: the breakthrough of enemy doctrine into the masses and the deeprooted hatred of millions of men. The colonized peoples are very well aware of these imperatives which rule international political life; for this reason even those who thunder denunciations of violence take their decisions and act in terms of this universal violence. Today, peaceful co-existence between the two blocs provokes and feeds violence in the colonial countries. Tomorrow, perhaps we shall see the shifting of that violence after the complete liberation of the colonial territories. Perhaps we will see the question of minorities cropping up. Already certain minority groups do not hesitate to preach violent methods for resolving their problems and it is not by chance (so the story runs) that in consequence Negro extremists in the United States organize a militia and arm themselves. It is not by chance, either, that in the so-called free world there exist committees for the defense of Jewish minorities in the USSR, nor an accident if General de Gaulle in one of his orations sheds tears over the millions of Moslems oppressed by Communist dictatorship. Both capitalism and imperialism are convinced that the struggle against racialism and the movements toward national freedom are purely and simply directed by remote control, fomented from outside. So they decide to use that very efficacious tactic, the Radio Free Europe station, voice of the committee for the aid of overruled minorities. . . . They practice anti-colonialism, as did the French colonels in Algeria when they carried on subversive warfare with the SAS* or the psychological services. They "use the people

* Section Administrative Speciale: An officers' corps whose task was to strengthen contact with the Algerians in non-military matters.

against the people." We have seen with what results.

This atmosphere of violence and menaces, these rockets brandished by both sides, do not frighten nor deflect the colonized peoples. We have seen that all their recent history has prepared them to understand and grasp the situation. Between the violence of the colonies and that peaceful violence that the world is steeped in, there is a kind of complicit agreement, a sort of homogeneity. The colonized peoples are well adapted to this atmosphere; for once, they are up to date. Sometimes people wonder that the native, rather than give his wife a dress, buys instead a transistor radio. There is no reason to be astonished. The natives are convinced that their fate is in the balance, here and now. They live in the atmosphere of doomsday, and they consider that nothing ought to be let pass unnoticed. That is why they understand very well Phouma and Phoumi, Lumumba and Tshombe, Ahidjo and Moumie, Kenyatta, and the men who are pushed forward regularly to replace him. They understand all these figures very well, for they can unmask the forces working behind them. The native and the underdeveloped man are today political animals in the most universal sense of the word.

It is true to say that independence has brought moral compensation to colonized peoples, and has established their dignity. But they have not yet had time to elaborate a society, or to build up and affirm values. The warming, light-giving center where man and citizen develop and enrich their experience in wider and still wider fields does not yet exist. Set in a kind of irresolution, such men persuade themselves fairly easily that everything is going to be decided elsewhere, for everybody, at the same time. As for the political leaders, when faced with this situation, they first hesitate and then choose neutralism.

There is plenty to be said on the subject of neutralism. Some equate it with a sort of tainted mercantilism which

consists of taking what it can get from both sides. In fact, neutralism, a state of affairs created by the cold war, if it allows underdeveloped countries to receive economic help from both sides, does not allow either party to aid underdeveloped areas to the extent that is necessary. Those literally astronomical sums of money which are invested in military research, those engineers who are transformed into technicians of nuclear war, could in the space of fifteen years raise the standard of living of underdeveloped countries by 60 per cent. So we see that the true interests of underdeveloped countries do not lie in the protraction nor in the accentuation of this cold war. But it so happens that no one asks their advice. Therefore, when they can, they cut loose from it. But can they really remain outside it? At this very moment, France is trying out her atomic bombs in Africa. Apart from the passing of motions, the holding of meetings and the shattering of diplomatic relations, we cannot say that the peoples of Africa have had much influence, in this particular sector, on France's attitude.

Neutralism produces in the citizen of the Third World a state of mind which is expressed in everyday life by a fearlessness and an ancestral pride strangely resembling defiance. The flagrant refusal to compromise and the tough will that sets itself against getting tied up are reminiscent of the behavior of proud, poverty-stricken adolescents, who are always ready to risk their necks in order to have the last word. All this leaves Western observers dumbfounded, for to tell the truth there is a glaring divergence between what these men claim to be and what they have behind them. These countries without tramways, without troops, and without money have no justification for the bravado that they display in broad daylight. Undoubtedly, they are impostors. The Third World often gives the impression that it rejoices in sensation and that it must have

its weekly dose of crises. These men at the head of empty countries, who talk too loud, are most irritating. You'd like to shut them up. But, on the contrary, they are in great demand. They are given bouquets; they are invited to dinner. In fact, we quarrel over who shall have them. And this is neutralism. They are 98 per cent illiterate, but they are the subject of a huge body of literature. They travel a great deal: the governing classes and students of underdeveloped countries are gold mines for airline companies. African and Asian officials may in the same month follow a course on socialist planning in Moscow and one on the advantages of the liberal economy in London or at Columbia University. African trade-union leaders leap ahead at a great rate in their own field. Hardly have they been appointed to posts in managerial organizations than they decide to form themselves into autonomous bodies. They haven't the requisite fifty years experience of practical trade-unionism in the framework of an industrial country, but they already know that non-political trade-unionism doesn't make sense. They haven't come to grips with the bourgeois machine, nor developed their consciousness in the class struggle; but perhaps this isn't necessary. Perhaps. We shall see that this will to sum everything up, which caricatures itself often in facile internationalism, is one of the most fundamental characteristics of underdeveloped countries.

Let us return to considering the single combat between native and settler. We have seen that it takes the form of an armed and open struggle. There is no lack of historical examples: Indo-China, Indonesia, and of course North Africa. But what we must not lose sight of is that this struggle could have broken out anywhere, in Guinea as well as Somaliland, and moreover today it could break out in every place where colonialism means to stay on, in Angola, for example. The existence of an armed struggle

shows that the people are decided to trust to violent methods only. He of whom *they* have never stopped saying that the only language he understands is that of force, decides to give utterance by force. In fact, as always, the settler has shown him the way he should take if he is to become free. The argument the native chooses has been furnished by the settler, and by an ironic turning of the tables it is the native who now affirms that the colonialist understands nothing but force. The colonial regime owes its legitimacy to force and at no time tries to hide this aspect of things. Every statue, whether of Faidherbe or of Lyautey, of Bugeaud or of Sergeant Blandan—all these conquistadors perched on colonial soil do not cease from proclaiming one and the same thing: "We are here by the force of bayonets. . . ." * The sentence is easily completed. During the phase of insurrection, each settler reasons on a basis of simple arithmetic. This logic does not surprise the other settlers, but it is important to point out that it does not surprise the natives either. To begin with, the affirmation of the principle "It's them or us" does not constitute a paradox, since colonialism, as we have seen, is in fact the organization of a Manichean world, a world divided up into compartments. And when in laying down precise methods the settler asks each member of the oppressing minority to shoot down 30 or 100 or 200 natives, he sees that nobody shows any indignation and that the whole problem is to decide whether it can be done all at once or by stages. †

This chain of reasoning which presumes very arithmeti-

* This refers to Mirabeau's famous saying: "I am here by the will of the People; I shall leave only by the force of bayonets."—*Trans.*

† It is evident that this vacuum cleaning destroys the very thing that they want to preserve. Sartre points this out when he says: "In short by the very fact of repeating them [concerning racist ideas] it is revealed that the simultaneous union of all against the natives is

cally the disappearance of the colonized people does not leave the native overcome with moral indignation. He has always known that his duel with the settler would take place in the arena. The native loses no time in lamentations, and he hardly ever seeks for justice in the colonial framework. The fact is that if the settler's logic leaves the native unshaken, it is because the latter has practically stated the problem of his liberation in identical terms: "We must form ourselves into groups of two hundred or five hundred, and each group must deal with a settler." It is in this manner of thinking that each of the protagonists begins the struggle.

For the native, this violence represents the absolute line of action. The militant is also a man who works. The questions that the organization asks the militant bear the mark of this way of looking at things: "Where have you worked? With whom? What have you accomplished?" "The group requires that each individual perform an irrevocable action. In Algeria, for example, where almost all the men who called on the people to join in the national struggle were condemned to death or searched for by the French police, confidence was proportional to the hopelessness of each case. You could be sure of a new recruit when he could no longer go back into the colonial system. This mechanism, it seems, had existed in Kenya among the Mau-Mau, who required that each member of the group should strike a blow at the victim. Each one was thus personally responsible for the death of that victim. To work means to work for the death of the settler. This assumed

unrealizable. Such union only recurs from time to time and moreover it can only come into being as an active groupment in order to massacre the natives—an absurd though perpetual temptation to the settlers, which even if it was feasible would only succeed in abolishing colonization at one blow." (*Critique de la Raison Dialectique*, p. 346.)

responsibility for violence allows both strayed and outlawed members of the group to come back again and to find their place once more, to become integrated. Violence is thus seen as comparable to a royal pardon. The colonized man finds his freedom in and through violence. This rule of conduct enlightens the agent because it indicates to him the means and the end. The poetry of Césaire takes on in this precise aspect of violence a prophetic significance. We may recall one of the most decisive pages of his tragedy where the Rebel (indeed!) explains his conduct:

THE REBEL (*harshly*):

My name—an offense; my Christian name—humiliation; my status—a rebel; my age—the stone age.

THE MOTHER:

My race—the human race. My religion—brotherhood.

THE REBEL:

My race: that of the fallen. My religion . . . but it's not you that will show it to me with your disarmament. . . .

'tis I myself, with my rebellion and my poor fists clenched and my woolly head. . . .

(*Very calm*): I remember one November day; it was hardly six months ago. . . . The master came into the cabin in a cloud of smoke like an April moon. He was flexing his short muscular arms—he was a very good master—and he was rubbing his little dimpled face with his fat fingers. His blue eyes were smiling and he couldn't get the honeyed words out of his mouth quick enough. "The kid will be a decent fellow," he said looking at me, and he said other pleasant things too, the master—that you had to start very early, that twenty years was not too much to make a good Christian and a good slave, a steady, devoted boy, a good commander's chaingang captain, sharp-eved and strong-armed. And all that man saw of my son's cradle was that it was the cradle of a chaingang captain.

We crept in knife in hand . . .

THE MOTHER:

Alas, you'll die for it.

THE REBEL:

Killed. . . . I killed him with my own hands. . . .

Yes, 'twas a fruitful death, a copious death. . . .

It was night. We crept among the sugar canes.

The knives sang to the stars, but we did not heed the stars.

The sugar canes scarred our faces with streams of green blades.

THE MOTHER:

And I had dreamed of a son to close his mother's eyes.

THE REBEL:

But I chose to open my son's eyes upon another sun.

THE MOTHER:

O my son, son of evil and unlucky death—

THE REBEL:

Mother of living and splendid death,

THE MOTHER:

Because he has hated too much,

THE REBEL:

Because he has too much loved.

THE MOTHER:

Spare me, I am choking in your bonds. I bleed from your wounds.

THE REBEL:

And the world does not spare me. . . . There is not anywhere in the world a poor creature who's been lynched or tortured in whom I am not murdered and humiliated . . .

THE MOTHER:

God of Heaven, deliver him!

THE REBEL:

My heart, thou wilt not deliver me from all that I remember . . .

It was an evening in November . . .

And suddenly shouts lit up the silence;

We had attacked, we the slaves; we, the dung underfoot, we the animals with patient hooves,

We were running like madmen; shots rang out . . . We were striking. Blood and sweat cooled and refreshed us. We were striking where the shouts came from, and the shouts became more strident and a great clamor rose from the east: it was the outhouses burning and the flames flickered sweetly on our cheeks.

Then was the assault made on the master's house.

They were firing from the windows.

We broke in the doors.

The master's room was wide open. The master's room was brilliantly lighted, and the master was there, very calm . . . and our people stopped dead . . . it was the master . . . I went in. "It's you," he said, very calm.

It was I, even I, and I told him so, the good slave, the faithful slave, the slave of slaves, and suddenly his eyes were like two cockroaches, frightened in the rainy season . . . I struck, and the blood spurted; that is the only baptism that I remember today.*

It is understandable that in this atmosphere, daily life becomes quite simply impossible. You can no longer be a fellah, a pimp, or an alcoholic as before. The violence of the colonial regime and the counter-violence of the native balance each other and respond to each other in an extraordinary reciprocal homogeneity. This reign of violence will be the more terrible in proportion to the size of the implantation from the mother country. The development of violence among the colonized people will be proportionate to the violence exercised by the threatened colonial regime. In the first phase of this insurrectional period, the home governments are the slaves of the settlers, and these settlers seek to intimidate the natives and their home gov-

* Aimé Césaire, *Les Armes Miraculeuses (Et les chiens se taisaient)*, pp. 133-37.

ernments at one and the same time. They use the same methods against both of them. The assassination of the Mayor of Evian, in its method and motivation, is identifiable with the assassination of Ali Boumendjel. For the settlers, the alternative is not between *Algérie algérienne* and *Algérie française* but between an independent Algeria and a colonial Algeria, and anything else is mere talk or attempts at treason. The settler's logic is implacable and one is only staggered by the counter-logic visible in the behavior of the native insofar as one has not clearly understood beforehand the mechanisms of the settler's ideas. From the moment that the native has chosen the methods of counter-violence, police reprisals automatically call forth reprisals on the side of the nationalists. However, the results are not equivalent, for machine-gunning from airplanes and bombardments from the fleet go far beyond in horror and magnitude any answer the natives can make. This recurring terror de-mystifies once and for all the most estranged members of the colonized race. They find out on the spot that all the piles of speeches on the equality of human beings do not hide the commonplace fact that the seven Frenchmen killed or wounded at the Col de Sakamody kindles the indignation of all civilized consciences, whereas the sack of the douars* of Guergour and of the dechras of Djerah and the massacre of whole populations—which had merely called forth the Sakamody ambush as a reprisal—all this is of not the slightest importance. Terror, counter-terror, violence, counter-violence: that is what observers bitterly record when they describe the circle of hate, which is so tenacious and so evident in Algeria.

In all armed struggles, there exists what we might call the point of no return. Almost always it is marked off by

* Temporary village for the use of shepherds.—*Trans.*

a huge and all-inclusive repression which engulfs all sectors of the colonized people. This point was reached in Algeria in 1955 with the 12,000 victims of Philippeville, and in 1956 with Lacoste's instituting of urban and rural militias.†

† We must go back to this period in order to judge the importance of this decision on the part of the French government in Algeria. Thus we may read in "Résistance Algérienne," No. 4, dated 28th March 1957, the following:

"In reply to the wish expressed by the General Assembly of the United Nations, the French Government has now decided to create urban militias in Algeria. 'Enough blood has been spilled' was what the United Nations said; Lacoste replies 'Let us form militias.' 'Cease fire,' advised UNO; Lacoste vociferates, 'We must arm the civilians.' Whereas the two parties face-to-face with each other were on the recommendation of the United Nations invited to contact each other with a view to coming to an agreement and finding a peaceful and democratic solution, Lacoste decrees that henceforward every European will be armed and should open fire on any person who seems to him suspect. It was then agreed (in the Assembly) that savage and iniquitous repression verging on genocide ought at all costs to be opposed by the authorities: but Lacoste replies 'Let us systematize the repression and organize the Algerian manhunt.' And, symbolically, he entrusts the military with civil powers, and gives military powers to civilians. The ring is closed. In the middle, the Algerian, disarmed, famished, tracked down, jostled, struck, lynched, will soon be slaughtered as a suspect. Today, in Algeria, there is not a single Frenchman who is not authorized and even invited to use his weapons. There is not a single Frenchman, in Algeria, one month after the appeal for calm made by UNO, who is not permitted, and obliged to search out, investigate and pursue suspects.

"One month after the vote on the final motion of the General Assembly of the United Nations, there is not one European in Algeria who is not party to the most frightful work of extermination of modern times. A democratic solution? Right, Lacoste concedes; let's begin by exterminating the Algerians, and to do that, let's arm the civilians and give them *carte blanche*. The Paris press, on the whole, has welcomed the creation of these armed groups with reserve. Fascist militias, they've been called. Yes; but on the individual level, on the plane of human rights, what is fascism if not colonialism when rooted in a traditionally colonialist country? The opinion has been advanced that they are systematically legalized and commended; but

does not the body of Algeria bear for the last one hundred and thirty years wounds which gape still wider, more numerous and more deep-seated than ever? 'Take care,' advises Monsieur Kenne-Vignes, member of parliament for the MRP, 'do we not by the creation of these militias risk seeing the gap widen between the two communities in Algeria?' Yes; but is not colonial status simply the organized reduction to slavery of a whole people? The Algerian revolution is precisely the affirmed contestation of that slavery and that abyss. The Algerian revolution speaks to the occupying nation and says: 'Take your fangs out of the bleeding flesh of Algeria! Let the people of Algeria speak!'

"The creation of militias, they say, will lighten the tasks of the Army. It will free certain units whose mission will be to protect the Moroccan and Tunisian borders. In Algeria, the Army is six hundred thousand strong. Almost all the Navy and the Air Force are based there. There is an enormous, speedy police force with a horribly good record since it has absorbed the ex-torturers from Morocco and Tunisia. The territorial units are one hundred thousand strong. The task of the Army, all the same, must be lightened. So let us create urban militias. The fact remains that the hysterical and criminal frenzy of Lacoste imposes them even on clear-sighted French people. The truth is that the creation of militias carries its contradiction even in its justification. The task of the French Army is never-ending. Consequently, when it is given as an objective the gagging of the Algerian people, the door is closed on the future forever. Above all, it is forbidden to analyze, to understand, or to measure the depth and the density of the Algerian revolution: departmental leaders, housing-estate leaders, street leaders, house leaders, leaders who control each landing . . . Today, to the surface checker-board is added an underground network.

"In 48 hours two thousand volunteers were enrolled. The Europeans of Algeria responded immediately to Lacoste's call to kill. From now on, each European must check up on all surviving Algerians in his sector; and in addition he will be responsible for information, for a 'quick response' to acts of terrorism, for the detection of suspects, for the liquidation of runaways and for the reinforcement of police services. Certainly, the tasks of the Army must be lightened. Today, to the surface mopping-up is added a deeper harrowing. Today, to the killing which is all in the day's work is added planned murder. 'Stop the bloodshed,' was the advice given by UNO. 'The best way of doing this,' replied Lacoste, 'is to make sure there remains no blood to shed.' The Algerian people, after having been delivered up to Massu's hordes, is put under the protection of the urban militias. By his decision to create these militias, Lacoste shows quite plainly that he will brook no interference with

Then it became clear to everybody, including even the settlers, that "things couldn't go on as before." Yet the colonized people do not chalk up the reckoning. They record the huge gaps made in their ranks as a sort of necessary evil. Since they have decided to reply by violence, they therefore are ready to take all its consequences. They only insist in return that no reckoning should be kept, either, for the others. To the saying "All natives are the same" the colonized person replies, "All settlers are the same."*

When the native is tortured, when his wife is killed or raped, he complains to no one. The oppressor's government can set up commissions of inquiry and of information daily if it wants to; in the eyes of the native, these commissions do not exist. The fact is that soon we shall have had seven years of crimes in Algeria and there has not yet been a single Frenchman indicted before a French court of justice for the murder of an Algerian. In Indo-

HIS war. It is a proof that there are no limits once the rot has set in. True, he is at the moment a prisoner of the situation; but what a consolation to drag everyone down in one's fall!

"After each of these decisions, the Algerian people tense their muscles still more and fight still harder. After each of these organized, deliberately sought after assassinations, the Algerian people builds up its awareness of self, and consolidates its resistance. Yes; the tasks of the French Army are infinite: for oh, how infinite is the unity of the people of Algeria!"

* This is why there are no prisoners when the fighting first starts. It is only through educating the local leaders politically that those at the head of the movement can make the masses accept 1) that people coming from the mother country do not always act of their own free will and are sometimes even disgusted by the war; 2) that it is of immediate advantage to the movement that its supporters should show by their actions that they respect certain international conventions; 3) that an army which takes prisoners is an army, and ceases to be considered as a group of wayside bandits; 4) that whatever the circumstances, the possession of prisoners constitutes a means of exerting pressure which must not be overlooked in order to protect our men who are in enemy hands.

China, in Madagascar, or in the colonies the native has always known that he need expect nothing from the other side. The settler's work is to make even dreams of liberty impossible for the native. The native's work is to imagine all possible methods for destroying the settler. On the logical plane, the Manicheism of the settler produces a Manicheism of the native. To the theory of the "absolute evil of the native" the theory of the "absolute evil of the settler" replies.

The appearance of the settler has meant in the terms of syncretism the death of the aboriginal society, cultural lethargy, and the petrification of individuals. For the native, life can only spring up again out of the rotting corpse of the settler. This then is the correspondence, term by term, between the two trains of reasoning.

But it so happens that for the colonized people this violence, because it constitutes their only work, invests their characters with positive and creative qualities. The practice of violence binds them together as a whole, since each individual forms a violent link in the great chain, a part of the great organism of violence which has surged upward in reaction to the settler's violence in the beginning. The groups recognize each other and the future nation is already indivisible. The armed struggle mobilizes the people; that is to say, it throws them in one way and in one direction.

The mobilization of the masses, when it arises out of the war of liberation, introduces into each man's consciousness the ideas of a common cause, of a national destiny, and of a collective history. In the same way the second phase, that of the building-up of the nation, is helped on by the existence of this cement which has been mixed with blood and anger. Thus we come to a fuller appreciation of the originality of the words used in these underdeveloped countries. During the colonial period the people are called

upon to fight against oppression; after national liberation, they are called upon to fight against poverty, illiteracy, and underdevelopment. The struggle, they say, goes on. The people realize that life is an unending contest.

We have said that the native's violence unifies the people. By its very structure, colonialism is separatist and regionalist. Colonialism does not simply state the existence of tribes; it also reinforces it and separates them. The colonial system encourages chieftaincies and keeps alive the old Marabout confraternities. Violence is in action all-inclusive and national. It follows that it is closely involved in the liquidation of regionalism and of tribalism. Thus the national parties show no pity at all toward the caids and the customary chiefs. Their destruction is the preliminary to the unification of the people.

At the level of individuals, violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect. Even if the armed struggle has been symbolic and the nation is demobilized through a rapid movement of decolonization, the people have the time to see that the liberation has been the business of each and all and that the leader has no special merit. From thence comes that type of aggressive reticence with regard to the machinery of protocol which young governments quickly show. When the people have taken violent part in the national liberation they will allow no one to set themselves up as "liberators." They show themselves to be jealous of the results of their action and take good care not to place their future, their destiny, or the fate of their country in the hands of a living god. Yesterday they were completely irresponsible; today they mean to understand everything and make all decisions. Illuminated by violence, the consciousness of the people rebels against any pacification. From now on the demagogues, the opportunists,

and the magicians have a difficult task. The action which has thrown them into a hand-to-hand struggle confers upon the masses a voracious taste for the concrete. The attempt at mystification becomes, in the long run, practically impossible.

VIOLENCE IN THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

We have pointed out many times in the preceding pages that in underdeveloped regions the political leader is forever calling on his people to fight: to fight against colonialism, to fight against poverty and underdevelopment, and to fight against sterile traditions. The vocabulary which he uses in his appeals is that of a chief of staff: "mass mobilization"; "agricultural front"; "fight against illiteracy"; "defeats we have undergone"; "victories won." The young independent nation evolves during the first years in an atmosphere of the battlefield, for the political leader of an underdeveloped country looks fearfully at the huge distance his country will have to cover. He calls to the people and says to them: "Let us gird up our loins and set to work," and the country, possessed by a kind of creative madness, throws itself into a gigantic and disproportionate effort. The program consists not only of climbing out of the morass but also of catching up with the other nations using the only means at hand. They reason that if the European nations have reached that stage of development, it is on account of their efforts: "Let us therefore," they seem to say, "prove to ourselves and to the whole world that we are capable of the same achievements." This manner of setting out the problem of the evolution of underdeveloped countries seems to us to be neither correct nor reasonable.

The European states achieved national unity at a moment when the national middle classes had concentrated

most of the wealth in their hands. Shopkeepers and artisans, clerks and bankers monopolized finance, trade, and science in the national framework. The middle class was the most dynamic and prosperous of all classes. Its coming to power enabled it to undertake certain very important speculations: industrialization, the development of communications, and soon the search for outlets overseas.

In Europe, apart from certain slight differences (England, for example, was some way ahead) the various states were at a more or less uniform stage economically when they achieved national unity. There was no nation which by reason of the character of its development and evolution caused affront to the others.

Today, national independence and the growth of national feeling in underdeveloped regions take on totally new aspects. In these regions, with the exception of certain spectacular advances, the different countries show the same absence of infrastructure. The mass of the people struggle against the same poverty, flounder about making the same gestures and with their shrunken bellies outline what has been called the geography of hunger. It is an underdeveloped world, a world inhuman in its poverty; but also it is a world without doctors, without engineers, and without administrators. Confronting this world, the European nations sprawl, ostentatiously opulent. This European opulence is literally scandalous, for it has been founded on slavery, it has been nourished with the blood of slaves and it comes directly from the soil and from the subsoil of that underdeveloped world. The well-being and the progress of Europe have been built up with the sweat and the dead bodies of Negroes, Arabs, Indians, and the yellow races. We have decided not to overlook this any longer. When a colonialist country, embarrassed by the claims for independence made by a colony, proclaims to the nationalist leaders: "If you wish for independence,

take it, and go back to the Middle Ages," the newly independent people tend to acquiesce and to accept the challenge; in fact you may see colonialism withdrawing its capital and its technicians and setting up around the young State the apparatus of economic pressure.* The apotheosis of independence is transformed into the curse of independence, and the colonial power through its immense resources of coercion condemns the young nation to regression. In plain words, the colonial power says: "Since you want independence, take it and starve." The nationalist leaders have no other choice but to turn to

* In the present international context, capitalism does not merely operate an economic blockade against African or Asiatic colonies. The United States with its anti-Castro operations is opening a new chapter in the long story of man's toiling advance toward freedom. Latin America, made up of new independent countries which sit at the United Nations and raise the wind there, ought to be an object lesson for Africa. These former colonies since their liberation have suffered the brazenfaced rule of Western capitalism in terror and destitution.

The liberation of Africa and the growth of consciousness among mankind have made it possible for the Latin American peoples to break with the old merry-go-round of dictatorships where each succeeding regime exactly resembled the preceding one. Castro took over power in Cuba, and gave it to the people. This heresy is felt to be a national scourge by the Yankees, and the United States now organizes counterrevolutionary brigades, puts together a provisional government, burns the sugar-cane crops, and generally has decided to strangle the Cuban people mercilessly. But this will be difficult. The people of Cuba will suffer, but they will conquer. The Brazilian president Janio Quadros has just announced in a declaration of historic importance that his country will defend the Cuban Revolution by all means. Perhaps even the United States may draw back when faced with the declared will of the peoples. When that day comes, we'll hang out the flags, for it will be a decisive moment for the men and women of the whole world. The almighty dollar, which when all is said or done is only guaranteed by slaves scattered all over the globe, in the oil wells of the Middle East, the mines of Peru or of the Congo, and the United Fruit or Firestone plantations, will then cease to dominate with all its force these slaves which it has created and who continue, empty-headed and empty-bellied, to feed it from their substance.

their people and ask from them a gigantic effort. A regime of austerity is imposed on these starving men; a disproportionate amount of work is required from their atrophied muscles. An autarkic regime is set up and each state, with the miserable resources it has in hand, tries to find an answer to the nation's great hunger and poverty. We see the mobilization of a people which toils to exhaustion in front of a suspicious and bloated Europe.

Other countries of the Third World refuse to undergo this ordeal and agree to get over it by accepting the conditions of the former guardian power. These countries use their strategic position—a position which accords them privileged treatment in the struggle between the two blocs—to conclude treaties and give undertakings. The former dominated country becomes an economically dependent country. The ex-colonial power, which has kept intact and sometimes even reinforced its colonialist trade channels, agrees to provision the budget of the independent nation by small injections. Thus we see that the accession to independence of the colonial countries places an important question before the world, for the national liberation of colonized countries unveils their true economic state and makes it seem even more unendurable. The fundamental duel which seemed to be that between colonialism and anticolonialism, and indeed between capitalism and socialism, is already losing some of its importance. What counts today, the question which is looming on the horizon, is the need for a redistribution of wealth. Humanity must reply to this question, or be shaken to pieces by it.

It might have been generally thought that the time had come for the world, and particularly for the Third World, to choose between the capitalist and socialist systems. The underdeveloped countries, which have used the fierce competition which exists between the two systems in order to assure the triumph of their struggle for national libera-

tion, should however refuse to become a factor in that competition. The Third World ought not to be content to define itself in the terms of values which have preceded it. On the contrary, the underdeveloped countries ought to do their utmost to find their own particular values and methods and a style which shall be peculiar to them. The concrete problem we find ourselves up against is not that of a choice, cost what it may, between socialism and capitalism as they have been defined by men of other continents and of other ages. Of course we know that the capitalist regime, in so far as it is a way of life, cannot leave us free to perform our work at home, nor our duty in the world. Capitalist exploitation and cartels and monopolies are the enemies of underdeveloped countries. On the other hand the choice of a socialist regime, a regime which is completely orientated toward the people as a whole and based on the principle that man is the most precious of all possessions, will allow us to go forward more quickly and more harmoniously, and thus make impossible that caricature of society where all economic and political power is held in the hands of a few who regard the nation as a whole with scorn and contempt.

But in order that this regime may work to good effect so that we can in every instance respect those principles which were our inspiration, we need something more than human output. Certain underdeveloped countries expend a huge amount of energy in this way. Men and women, young and old undertake enthusiastically what is in fact forced labor, and proclaim themselves the slaves of the nation. The gift of oneself, and the contempt for every preoccupation which is not in the common interest, bring into being a national morale which comforts the heart of man, gives him fresh confidence in the destiny of mankind and disarms the most reserved observers. But we cannot believe that such an effort can be kept up at the same

frenzied pace for very long. These young countries have agreed to take up the challenge after the unconditional withdrawal of the ex-colonial countries. The country finds itself in the hands of new managers; but the fact is that everything needs to be reformed and everything thought out anew. In reality the colonial system was concerned with certain forms of wealth and certain resources only—precisely those which provisioned her own industries. Up to the present no serious effort had been made to estimate the riches of the soil or of mineral resources. Thus the young independent nation sees itself obliged to use the economic channels created by the colonial regime. It can, obviously, export to other countries and other currency areas, but the basis of its exports is not fundamentally modified. The colonial regime has carved out certain channels and they must be maintained or catastrophe will threaten. Perhaps it is necessary to begin everything all over again: to change the nature of the country's exports, and not simply their destination, to re-examine the soil and mineral resources, the rivers, and—why not?—the sun's productivity. Now, in order to do all this other things are needed over and above human output—capital of all kinds, technicians, engineers, skilled mechanics, and so on. Let's be frank: we do not believe that the colossal effort which the underdeveloped peoples are called upon to make by their leaders will give the desired results. If conditions of work are not modified, centuries will be needed to humanize this world which has been forced down to animal level by imperial powers.*

The truth is that we ought not to accept these condi-

* Certain countries which have benefitted by a large European settlement come to independence with houses and wide streets, and these tend to forget the poverty-stricken, starving hinterland. By the irony of fate, they give the impression by a kind of complicit silence that their towns are contemporaneous with independence.

tions. We should flatly refuse the situation to which the Western countries wish to condemn us. Colonialism and imperialism have not paid their score when they withdraw their flags and their police forces from our territories. For centuries the capitalists have behaved in the underdeveloped world like nothing more than war criminals. Deportations, massacres, forced labor, and slavery have been the main methods used by capitalism to increase its wealth, its gold or diamond reserves, and to establish its power. Not long ago Nazism transformed the whole of Europe into a veritable colony. The governments of the various European nations called for reparations and demanded the restitution in kind and money of the wealth which had been stolen from them: cultural treasures, pictures, sculptures, and stained glass have been given back to their owners. There was only one slogan in the mouths of Europeans on the morrow of the 1945 V-day: "Germany must pay." Herr Adenauer, it must be said, at the opening of the Eichmann trial, and in the name of the German people, asked once more for forgiveness from the Jewish people. Herr Adenauer has renewed the promise of his people to go on paying to the state of Israel the enormous sums which are supposed to be compensation for the crimes of the Nazis.*

* It is true that Germany has not paid all her reparations. The indemnities imposed on the vanquished nation have not been claimed in full, for the injured nations have included Germany in their anti-communist system of defense. This same preoccupation is the permanent motivation of the colonialist countries when they try to obtain from their former colonies, if not their inclusion in the Western system, at least military bases and enclaves. On the other hand they have decided unanimously to forget their demands for the sake of NATO strategy and to preserve the free world; and we have seen Germany receiving floods of dollars and machines. A Germany once more standing on its feet, strong and powerful, was a necessity for the Western camp. It was in the understood interests of so-called free Europe to have a prosperous and reconstructed Germany which

In the same way we may say that the imperialist states would make a great mistake and commit an unspeakable injustice if they contented themselves with withdrawing from our soil the military cohorts, and the administrative and managerial services whose function it was to discover the wealth of the country, to extract it and to send it off to the mother countries. We are not blinded by the moral reparation of national independence; nor are we fed by it. The wealth of the imperial countries is our wealth too. On the universal plane this affirmation, you may be sure, should on no account be taken to signify that we feel ourselves affected by the creations of Western arts or techniques. For in a very concrete way Europe has stuffed herself inordinately with the gold and raw materials of the colonial countries: Latin America, China, and Africa. From all these continents, under whose eyes Europe today raises up her tower of opulence, there has flowed out for centuries toward that same Europe diamonds and oil, silk and cotton, wood and exotic products. Europe is literally the creation of the Third World. The wealth which smothers her is that which was stolen from the underdeveloped peoples. The ports of Holland, the docks of Bordeaux and Liverpool were specialized in the Negro slave trade, and owe their renown to millions of deported slaves. So when we hear the head of a European state declare with his hand on his heart that he must come to the aid of the poor underdeveloped peoples, we do not tremble with gratitude. Quite the contrary; we say to ourselves: "It's a just reparation which will be paid to us." Nor will

would be capable of serving as a first rampart against the eventual Red hordes. Germany has made admirable use of the European crisis. At the same time the United States and other European states feel a legitimate bitterness when confronted with this Germany, yesterday at their feet, which today metes out to them cutthroat competition in the economic field.

we acquiesce in the help for underdeveloped countries being a program of "sisters of charity." This help should be the ratification of a double realization: the realization by the colonized peoples that *it is their due*, and the realization by the capitalist powers that in fact *they must pay*.^{*} For if, through lack of intelligence (we won't speak of lack of gratitude) the capitalist countries refuse to pay, then the relentless dialectic of their own system will smother them. It is a fact that young nations do not attract much private capital. There are many reasons which explain and render legitimate this reserve on the part of the monopolies. As soon as the capitalists know—and of course they are the first to know—that their government is getting ready to decolonize, they hasten to withdraw all their capital from the colony in question. The spectacular flight of capital is one of the most constant phenomena of decolonization.

Private companies, when asked to invest in independent countries, lay down conditions which are shown in practice to be unacceptable or unrealizable. Faithful to the principle of immediate returns which is theirs as soon as they go "overseas," the capitalists are very chary concerning all long-term investments. They are unamenable and often openly hostile to the prospective programs of planning laid down by the young teams which form the new government. At a pinch they willingly agree to lend money to

^{*} "To make a radical difference between the building up of socialism in Europe and our relations with the Third World (as if our only relations with it were external ones) is, whether we know it or not, to set the pace for the distribution of the colonial inheritance over and above the liberation of the underdeveloped countries. It is to wish to build up a luxury socialism upon the fruits of imperialist robbery—as if, inside the gang, the swag is more or less shared out equally, and even a little of it is given to the poor in the form of charity, since it's been forgotten that they were the people it was stolen from." Marcel Pétu, "To die for De Gaulle?" *Temps Modernes*, No. 175-6, October-November 1960.

the young states, but only on condition that this money is used to buy manufactured products and machines: in other words, that it serves to keep the factories in the mother country going.

In fact the cautiousness of the Western financial groups may be explained by their fear of taking any risk. They also demand political stability and a calm social climate which are impossible to obtain when account is taken of the appalling state of the population as a whole immediately after independence. Therefore, vainly looking for some guarantee which the former colony cannot give, they insist on garrisons being maintained or the inclusion of the young state in military or economic pacts. The private companies put pressure on their own governments to at least set up military bases in these countries for the purpose of assuring the protection of their interests. In the last resort these companies ask their government to guarantee the investments which they decide to make in such-and-such an underdeveloped region.

It happens that few countries fulfill the conditions demanded by the trusts and monopolies. Thus capital, failing to find a safe outlet, remains blocked in Europe, and is frozen. It is all the more frozen because the capitalists refuse to invest in their own countries. The returns in this case are in fact negligible and treasury control is the despair of even the boldest spirits.

In the long run the situation is catastrophic. Capital no longer circulates, or else its circulation is considerably diminished. In spite of the huge sums swallowed up by military budgets, international capitalism is in desperate straits.

But another danger threatens it as well. Insofar as the Third World is in fact abandoned and condemned to regression or at least to stagnation by the selfishness and

wickedness of Western nations, the underdeveloped peoples will decide to continue their evolution inside a collective autarky. Thus the Western industries will quickly be deprived of their overseas markets. The machines will pile up their products in the warehouses and a merciless struggle will ensue on the European market between the trusts and the financial groups. The closing of factories, the paying off of workers and unemployment will force the European working class to engage in an open struggle against the capitalist regime. Then the monopolies will realize that their true interests lie in giving aid to the underdeveloped countries—unstinted aid with not too many conditions. So we see that the young nations of the Third World are wrong in trying to make up to the capitalist countries. We are strong in our own right, and in the justice of our point of view. We ought on the contrary to emphasize and explain to the capitalist countries that the fundamental problem of our time is not the struggle between the socialist regime and them. The Cold War must be ended, for it leads nowhere. The plans for nuclearizing the world must stop, and large-scale investments and technical aid must be given to underdeveloped regions. The fate of the world depends on the answer that is given to this question.

Moreover, the capitalist regime must not try to enlist the aid of the socialist regime over "the fate of Europe" in face of the starving multitudes of colored peoples. The exploit of Colonel Gargarin doesn't seem to displease General de Gaulle, for is it not a triumph which brings honor to Europe? For some time past the statesmen of the capitalist countries have adopted an equivocal attitude toward the Soviet Union. After having united all their forces to abolish the socialist regime, they now realize that they'll have to reckon with it. So they look as pleasant

as they can, they make all kinds of advances, and they remind the Soviet people the whole time that they "belong to Europe."

They will not manage to divide the progressive forces which mean to lead mankind toward happiness by brandishing the threat of a Third World which is rising like the tide to swallow up all Europe. The Third World does not mean to organize a great crusade of hunger against the whole of Europe. What it expects from those who for centuries have kept it in slavery is that they will help it to rehabilitate mankind, and make man victorious everywhere, once and for all. But it is clear that we are not so naive as to think that this will come about with the cooperation and the good will of the European governments. This huge task which consists of reintroducing mankind into the world, the whole of mankind, will be carried out with the indispensable help of the European peoples, who themselves must realize that in the past they have often joined the ranks of our common masters where colonial questions were concerned. To achieve this, the European peoples must first decide to wake up and shake themselves, use their brains, and stop playing the stupid game of the Sleeping Beauty.

SPONTANEITY: ITS STRENGTH AND WEAKNESS

This consideration of violence has led us to take account of the frequent existence of a time lag, or a difference of rhythm, between the leaders of a nationalist party and the mass of the people. In every political or trade-union organization there is a traditional gap between the rank-and-file, who demand the total and immediate bettering of their lot, and the leaders, who, since they are aware of the difficulties which may be made by the employers, seek to limit and restrain the workers' demands. This is why you often are aware of a dogged discontentment among the rank-and-file as regards their leaders. After a day spent in demonstrating for their demands, the leaders celebrate the victory, whereas the rank-and-file have a strong suspicion that they have been cheated. It is through a multiplicity of demonstrations in support of their claims and through an increase in trade-union demands that the rank-and-file achieve their political education. A politically informed trade-union member is a man who knows that a local conflict is not a decisive settlement between himself and the employers. The native intellectuals, who have studied in their respective "mother countries" the working of political parties, carefully organize similar institutions in order to

BEYOND RESISTANCE: EVERYTHING

**AN INTERVIEW WITH
SUBCOMANDANTE INSURGENTE
MARCOS**

EL KILOMBO INTERGALÁCTICO



PAPERBOAT PRESS
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INTERVIEW

WITH SUBCOMANDANTE MARCOS

By El Kilombo Intergaláctico

THE OTHER CAMPAIGN: A DIAGNOSTIC

1 *After having spent all of 2006 traveling by land to visit the 32 states of the Mexican Republic, the EZLN said that they have found much more pain than what they had expected. Since the Sixth Declaration was written, how have the EZ's ideas changed, in terms of what Mexico is, suffers, and could be?*

Well to start with, before writing the Sixth, we did a kind of x-ray or study of the country. Not by reading books, but, like the intellectuals say, through fieldwork. So we sent a group of *compañeros* and *compañeras* to various parts of the country to see what the situation was like. After 2001, when the indigenous law was betrayed [by the National Congress], the question left pending was, what now? At that point, after so many years of efforts to establish a conversation with the political class, which failed, we were deciding to change interlocutors, and we had to answer the question, now who? With whom are we going to speak? Which is what I was asking you before we started: “Who am I talking to?” So we sent out these *compañeros* and *compañeras*, and we gave them the collective name, “Elias Contreras,” in honor of a support-base *compañero* who died around that time. They brought us this type of radiography that told us something about the subject of land, something about the subject of young people, and something about women.

In broad strokes, this study coincided with our perception or intuition that the sectors that had worked most closely with us, or which had best understood our word as Zapatistas—indigenous peoples, women, and young people—continued to be near us and continued to maintain this synchrony, not as a result of the virtue of our discourse, but because of their own realities. That is, it is not the eloquence of our word that has earned their ear, but rather the fact that they are seeing and living things similar to what we are; this is why we are speaking the same language.

We told ourselves we could construct a movement if we could construct a common terrain. The terrain that the EZLN inhabits is a clandestine political-military one, and we would need to construct another level, another terrain of encounter, another space, like you guys say, to meet each other. And this was what the Sixth proposed. The place where we would meet would have to be in their places, on their terrains—no longer just Zapatista initiatives in Zapatista territory, because this would imply once again the hegemony of the EZLN with respect to the tasks and priorities set and the paths and companions taken, which is what had marked the previous 10-12 years. So we said, if we make this common territory and common terrain, it has to be with them, where they are, and that means we will have to come out.

So we did this kind of diagnostic of suffering, of the criminalization of the young people, of this, how do I put it, this *fraud* of gender equality. By this I mean the assumption that the struggle over gender has advanced, because, within the political class or the wealthiest and most powerful business sector, women have been able to appear more visibly, which hides the fact that intrafamilial rape continues to be a problem, that aggression against women just

because they are women continues in the streets, at work, in school, everywhere. And on the subject of indigenous peoples...Yes there had been much attention given to the indigenous *Zapatistas* of Chiapas, and secondarily to the National Indigenous Congress. But there are other indigenous peoples that were not even named, not recognized, as if they did not even exist. These are the things that were discovered, among other things, in the first journey of the first phase [of the Other Campaign].

We had thought, we must construct this terrain of encounter, but we must also ask ourselves, “What for?” Then the basic principles of the Sixth were established, and we decided we were against the political class, against the system, and we were going to identify the common enemy of our pain and the form in which we would find that enemy and fight it. We were given the image of a country with many pains but still marked by what the mass media presents us with: this great divide between the north of the country, which supposedly has a quality of life similar to that of the southern United States, and the Mexican south, which is said to have a quality of life closer to that of Central America. This is why it is presumed that the great movement of people to the Other Side [the United States] came principally from the states of the south and from Central America.

When we began the journey, the first part, it was confirmed that there is in effect a significant acceleration of the loss of lands and thus the expulsion of indigenous peoples and poor farmers to the cities and toward the northern border. Schools in general, from kindergarten to postgraduate studies, are undergoing an accelerated process of privatization, which leads to a lowering of the quality of teaching, the quality of education, and the quality of research, above all scientific research, which is converted into a kind of factory for large transnational corporations. This is what they said in one state, Veracruz, where they told us, we didn’t realize that scientists are participating in a huge war industry. We were buying the myth that we are doing objective or neutral science, even humanitarian science, and it turns out that it is one part of the knowledge that, in another part—in this case in large research centers paid for by private companies—is being converted into something harmful for humanity.

On the subject of women, with regard to politics from above within the political class, when the struggle of women is institutionalized—that is, when it is accepted that there are rights that must be recognized—here in Mexico appears this great generalization that there can be good laws but they are not implemented. But what we found was that in addition, there are bad laws that are also not implemented. The other thing that we found that was not detected by the first group [Elias Contreras] was the destruction of nature, now no longer because of the inattention or carelessness of governmental authorities or of the population, but rather as a purposeful policy of destruction, which is the case in all the coastal zones, in the Yucatan Peninsula, in Veracruz, and on the Oaxacan coast. Up to the Federal District [Mexico City], the center of the republic, when we had traveled all of the south and southeast and the Yucatan peninsula, the diagnostic was close, but things were actually worse, because there was an element which had not been detected by the commission we had sent—the sensibilities and feelings of the people.

If you recall, the journey changed as it went along. At the beginning, a lot of people came to present their complaint or request, thinking that the Sixth Commission was a channel for getting their demand to the government. But as the journey advanced, this began to disappear, and little by little the forum of denouncement turned into a forum of expression for forms of rebellion and resistance. And the people started getting to know each other. And we discovered a hurting country but also a very organized country—organized, but dispersed. Many of these rebellions we had not known of; that is why we make reference to the mass media, because it seems as though if one doesn’t appear in the media, one doesn’t exist. In this sense, the EZLN existed because it appeared in the media, and since now it doesn’t appear, then it must not exist anymore. If that happened to us, what was happening to the rest of the people that had never appeared in the mass media? The Other Campaign means to be the forum where one begins to say, “I am this, I am here.”

When Atenco occurred and we stopped in the Federal District, the record so far was more or less balanced [between pain and resistance], with the addition of this surplus, this extra learning, that we had discovered in these organized rebellions, which is not the same as just a rebellion. And the Other Campaign had the opportunity to generate a network between these rebellions. At this point the danger was the hegemonification of what had flourished precisely because of the fact of being so different. At that time, certain tendencies had already arisen within the Other Campaign that tried to create a single party, a single movement, a single organization, which in our view would have meant that these different rebellions would have to retreat or retire. [We saw that] they were not already in a single movement or party for a reason.

When we took off to the North, we left with the prophecy that we were going to go completely unnoticed, that the conditions were completely different. But what we discovered in our path, if you remember, was that the conditions are the same or worse than in the South. We had bet that the North shared with the South historic and cultural roots, and for this reason continued to be Mexico. But in the progress of the journey to the North of the Republic, we discovered that in addition to sharing similar living conditions, the North also shared with the South experiences of organized rebellion, though dispersed.

So after this year's journey, on one hand we have a country in a more serious state of destruction than we had thought, more in a state of ruin, we say, but also much richer in terms of the organization of the people than what we had thought. In fact, in some parts we were already insisting that it was time to design an organizational form that didn't erase the existence of the great plurality that characterized these organized rebellions. Unfortunately, this was understood then as if the Other Campaign is the place for whomever, even if they aren't in agreement with the Other Campaign. We think that there does have to be a basic political definition, but that it has to respect, maintain, cultivate, and make grow its spaces of autonomy and rebellion. So, in broad strokes, we have these two results or these two axes: that of destruction, which is telling us that there is no longer any turning back, that this is the last call, as we say, and that if we take the slow road, little by little, we are not going to have anything left to save or rebuild; and on the other side, that of the rebellions that are clamoring for a national organized space, without losing their identities.

A SCRAMBLED GEOGRAPHY

2 *How do the Zapatistas imagine the Mexican Nation in its deterritorialized reality, deterritorialized on one side by a globalized economy and a transnational division of labor, and on the other by indigenous peoples, Mexicans, Chicanos, all of whom were crossed by the border, instead of the other way around, and now find themselves on both sides of this line? What would a new nation and a new constitution look like in this context of scrambled geography?*

What we try to teach people—and to practice—is modesty. We have to recognize that there are realities that we cannot imagine, just like there are worlds that we cannot imagine; and the fact that we can't imagine them does not mean that they aren't possible. This Mexico, so complex in its destruction, could be equally complex in its richness. But we can't imagine it, because when we try to imagine it, we use referents that we already know. That is, if by the new constitution we are imagining a group of intellectuals that get together, write up some good, well-intentioned laws, decree them and have a party and set a date to celebrate, where the children sing the national anthem and salute the flag, well no! We are saying that to make a new constitution is to create this common bridge, a new agreement. You and I are going to come to an agreement on how we are going to relate to each other; and this agreement is going to be different from what we have ever known, because you and I are going to be different from what we have ever been, because of the place we occupy. Neither women nor indigenous peoples nor young people, to speak of the primordial sectors of the Other Campaign, are going to be the same in the new Mexico. Not their demands, not their forms of conceiving of themselves, and not their futures.

Talking to a compañera in the Other Campaign, I said to her, you can imagine, as a woman, a Mexico where the factories are the property of the workers, but you can't imagine one where you can walk in the street dressed however you want without being harassed. You can't imagine this, and here we can help, because we *can* imagine it. If we think another world is going to be possible, the fact that we can't imagine it because of our education, our history, because of where each of us—we as indigenous peoples, others as migrants, others as academics, others as a cultural-artistic group, etc.—directs our gaze, does not mean that it isn't possible to make. It seems impossible to think that one could construct a nation with that border there, with immigration, with the Minutemen, with Bush and all that,

no? But the journey of the Other Campaign demonstrated that from one end to the other, organizations, rebellions, and movements are arising for whom this border doesn't exist; that is, it doesn't exist in real terms. In this sense, we can find cultural roots deeper in North Carolina than in Polanco in Mexico City, despite the fact that this line, this border, divides one country from the other.

So we say, how are we going to do this? By guaranteeing that the Other Campaign, or this great movement whatever it will be called, will always have a space for listening, and that this listening will always take into account what it hears. If it's not one group, however good a group it is, the Zapatistas, or a group of really good intellectuals, if instead of this one group deciding what the path will be, we all decide, or we take the word of each and every person and start to construct something, that is where we will go. If you remember when we went through Jalisco, we went through a place where there was a mural, and it was a *compañero* of the Other who painted the mural. So when he was showing us the mural, I think it was in Ciudad Guzman, I asked him, "So, when you made this mural, did you imagine how it was going to look?"

"Yeah, I imagined it already finished," he said.

"But even so, you started to make it and some things changed and the result is different but similar to what you imagined."

"Yes."

"Could you make a mural," I asked him, "start a great drawing with many colors, without knowing the result?"

"No," he said, "That would take a lot of imagination."

That is the Other Campaign. We are starting to make the outline of something, though we don't know how it will end up. Our honesty and our humility is to recognize that we don't know. The only guarantee that we have that it's going to be better is that we are choosing an ethics. And the ethics we are choosing is the ethics of the people, the people from below; we are choosing to give them their place. It's not about seeing if in the future there are going to be better salaries, or better prices, or whatever. We don't even know if there are going to be salaries. This is a recognition of the limits that we have, that our horizon is this world that we have. And what lies beyond, that is for others to determine.

This is what the Other Campaign is proposing. Those who try to explain us as a movement, an organization, or a political party, take as their referent what is already at hand. We say no. They say a federation of organizations, or a united front of organizations will have to form, some kind of single unit, or a national dialogue, or a popular assembly like in Oaxaca, or a National Democratic Convention like that of Lopez Obrador. No! The surest thing is that it will be none of these things, because each of these has the horizon of a specific problem—and the problem here isn't defined still, other than that it is a system. None of these other movements or organizational forms take seriously that there is another reality in another place that is the same. If the first journey of the Other Campaign removed the barrier that separated the north from the south of Mexico, then the second phase, which we are going to launch starting in the north, we think will erase the [US-Mexico] border, in real terms, that it will be a bridge to the migrants, the Chicanos, to all of the realities that are on the other side. I'm not talking only about people of Mexican origins, also the original peoples of North America, to people of color, to immigrants from other parts of the world, for example from Asia, to the white low-income population, to all those there who are saying, "And us? What about us? Here in the belly of the beast, is solidarity the only thing left for us?" Saying that there, one can't do anything because everything is about television, everything is about drugs, everything is just shit...We think that these people are going to start making their bridges, and that *there* is where we have to give some room to imagination.

If someone from the other side of the border *and* from this side of the border had the imagination to imagine him/herself as a rebel, then think how much more we could imagine a world that has nothing to do with this one—not the relations between men and women, not the relations between generations, not the relations between human beings and things or nature, nor between races, to put it one way, or between nations with different cultural roots. That is why we say that the Other Campaign, and I am referring not just to what was originated by the EZLN but to what has been born in the journey out of the participation of everyone, is going to be a great lesson for the world that one has to know how to read, and to read with humility. That is what we have not found in the intellectuals that have talked about the Other.

WHEN THERE IS NO REFERENT, CREATE!

3 *In the United States, we have a concept of “people of color,” people that for economic reasons have been forced, or their ancestors have been forced, to live in the United States. But even though these people have been marginalized and discriminated against, they do not consider themselves ex-nationals—they are not simply ex-Mexicans, or ex-Colombians, or ex-Africans—but neither do they consider themselves (US) Americans. That is, while they may have deep memories of their lands, many haven’t seen those lands for 400 years; but neither do they identify with a national project in the United States. In our own personal experiences, we recognize a growing population of de-nationalized people that could never recognize the reconstruction of a nation as their project, because they have never belonged to a nation. Currently, we see in the marginalized communities of the United States and Europe that this subjectivity is growing, and we think that this subjectivity may have an important role to play in the construction of resistance against global capitalism/neoliberalism. In your experiences in the encounters with the Other Side and along the border in general, how have you seen this experience and its possible role in the construction of the Other and the Sixth?*

The problem is identity. This, what you are saying, is exactly what an indigenous compañera from Oaxaca in New York said. She said, “The thing is that I’m here now.” And what’s more, she said it by video from New York because she couldn’t cross [the border], so she said, “I’m here now, and here I’m going to be something else. I’m not going to be gringo, I’m not going to be an indigenous Oaxacan because I’m not in Oaxaca though I have my roots there, and I’m not going to be Mexican. I’m going to be something else.” But she wasn’t comfortable with this, and she asked, “So if that’s how it is, that I’m not anything, do I have a place in the Other Campaign or not?” We think this is the problem of identity, when one says, “*Who am I?*” And they skim the yellow pages thinking, let’s see, my referent should be here somewhere. Yet it doesn’t occur to them that this referent doesn’t exist, that it must be constructed. The problem is not if someone is African or North American or Mexican, but rather that one is constructing their own identity and that they define themselves: “I am this!” The basic element of the notion of indigenous peoples determined by the National Indigenous Congress (CNI) in the San Andres Accords, is that indigenous are those who self-proclaim themselves indigenous, who self-identify as indigenous. There’s no DNA test, no blood test, no test of cultural roots; to be indigenous it is enough to say so. And that’s how we recognize ourselves, the CNI says.

There is no referent in these realities, above all in marginalized sectors, which have been stripped of everything, or have been offered cultural options that don’t satisfy them—because this happens a lot to young people, no? Because one says, “If the option of rebellion is what the mass media offers, between Britney Spears and Paris Hilton, then I’ll make my own rebellion.” Or, “Is this the only way to be rebellious or unruly? Or can I create my own way?” And they start to construct an identity, and they form small collectives, and they say, “Who are we? We are...” whatever they call themselves. [And when someone asks] “But you guys, what are you, anarchists, communists, Zapatistas?” [They answer] “No, we’re such and such collective.”

We think that with regard to communities and collectives, this is going to arise. The world that we are going to construct has no reason to use former national identities or the construction of a nation as a referent. If some group in a North American city constructs its own identity and says, “I am whatever-they-call-it,” maybe not even a recognized name, then a community in Southeast Mexico can do the same thing, to say we’re not indigenous Tzeltales or Tzotziles, we’re indigenous Zapatistas. We *constructed* that identity. Now [that identity] is not something that we grant, nor something that we belong to. It is a new identity, though there may be elements of, I am a woman, I am a young

person, I am indigenous, and I am a soldier, in the case of an insurgenta,¹ for example.

It's the same for the indigenous woman in New York. Her husband hits her and she can't even report it because the police can deport her instead of protecting her. She says, I have this reality and here I am going to construct my identity, and it has to do with the fact that I am indigenous, that I come from Oaxaca, with the reality that I suffer as a woman, that I am undocumented, that I work in a restaurant. And her children are going to have an identity that has to do with all this but is different still. In all of the groups that are on the North American border, the southern border with Mexico, there are some that say, "We're Chicanos," others that say, "We're Mexicans," others that say, "We're not Mexicans or Chicanos or North Americans, we're...." And they give themselves a name. And this is our identity, and these are our cultural forms, and we dress like this and we talk like this, and this is our music and our art. And they begin to construct their own civilization, and just like a civilization their existence doesn't depend on history books with references to the Roman civilization or the Aztec or whatever, but rather that there is a relationship in a community, a self-identity, a cultural, artistic, economic development.

So we say that in this reality that you mention and explain, where you all live and work, the surest thing is that these people create their own identity, and that there's no reason for us to pressure them to define themselves: "Are you Mexican or aren't you?" There remains this problem of, "Am I in the Sixth International or am I in the Other Campaign?" Well, wherever you want to be! And they say, "Well the thing is, I'm from the Other Side." Well yes but no, this doesn't matter. We think what has to be done in these cases is not so much talk to the people, but listen to them. And with questions and everything, they start to draw their profile. And [they begin] to say, "Well, I don't identify as Mexican. I don't identify as African. I don't identify as North American. I have these characteristics of all of them, but I also have these others, so I'm going to call myself..." And they give themselves a name, like the Chicanos gave themselves a name. The problem isn't existence; it's identity. Because they're going to exist whether or not they are named. The problem is how this identity relates within itself, between those that identify as such, and how this identity relates to others. This is the relation that we want to construct, the new world, where these identities have a place, not just that they are there, but the way in which we relate to them.

ON ENCOUNTERS AND BRIDGES

4 *Beyond the deterritorialization of the population or the reconstruction of the nation, the Zapatistas have said that now is the moment in which we need concrete forms of transnational organization and resistance. How do you imagine a possible intersection or possible seamlessness between the practical work of the Intergalactic and the entity of a future Mexican nation? For example, in forms of citizenship or labor regulations; one thing we have been thinking about is the free movement of people with a citizenship that applies to the same boundaries as the North Atlantic Free Trade Association. As part of the Other Campaign, what would the EZLN think with respect to these possibilities?*

This isn't defined yet. In reality, the majority of people in the Sixth are also in the Other, looking for their place. The moment will arrive when they will say, *this* is my place. But it is also evident that someone who has their historic horizon in Europe will think of different things from someone with their historic horizon in Australia, or Guatemala, or Belize, or Bolivia, Ecuador, or whatever part of the world, Russia. They are going to construct their identity and perspective, their own historic horizon. The new world for a European in the Spanish state means one thing. For the Russian it means another. For a North American it means another. For the indigenous something else, and it varies like that. But what doesn't exist is what you mentioned before we started, the space to meet each other, to come into contact, to get to know each other. What guarantees us that the reality that the European woman constructs has a relation with that reality lived by a North American who doesn't know what she is, or with that lived by

a woman in the mountains of the Mexican Southeast, if there's no space for this? Or if only space is solidarity on the border with charity. That is, I remember that you exist when they're killing you, when you're dying. In what moment are we going to construct a relationship of respect? This is what we are trying to do in the Other. Yes, we ask to be supported, but we can also give support, even within our poverties and limitations. That is why we sent corn and other goods out to others. We're not just here to receive; we are an organization, and we can also give.

In this space, the European from the Spanish state, from the Basque state let's say, to make it an even more conflictive place, is going to contribute her idea with the woman in New York who is a migrant but is not Mexican and is not American even though she has her papers, with the woman who is part of the Good Government Council in a Zapatista community, with the Seri woman on the coast of Sonora. Each person is going to start to say, "For me, my world is this way," and they're going to start constructing it and the other is going to learn. Not just to have the ideas, like Moy (Lieutenant Colonel Moises) explained, who said that when people talk to each other they begin to get ideas, and to understand each other's ideas. Not just this but also to create paths, coming and going, to meet each other.

What is the basic proposition of a dialogue? A common place to speak and listen? No. No, because this is only possible if there is already a stable bridge of communication, a common language. No, the basic proposition of a dialogue is to recognize the existence of the other, to respect them, to say, s/he is other, and I am going to relate to the other, discarding beforehand, not even thinking that s/he has to be like me, or that I will make him/her my way. Like we always say, "The thing is he wants to do it his way," and that's where things get screwed up and cause fights and so on. Rather, it must be, this one is different, this other, as I am different. If the problem is no longer who commands, or who makes everyone else do whatever, then we can go on to something else. Because even when there is similarity in the language, or understanding, there's no common path because there is no respect, even if we're speaking the same language.

So the basic point that the Other Campaign and the Sixth International try to resolve is this: What place will each person have? And each person will decide that for themselves. The most likely, within the Sixth, is that people say, "We are other," and they do an Other thing, and this is what it is about, that everyone goes about generating movement. But in this trajectory they are getting to know each other and in the process creating bridges. And the same thing will happen as what happened in the Other Campaign, where the path of the Sixth Commission was the pretext so that others got to know each other, and began to construct bridges and to relate to each other. These relationships are maintained and will continue whether or not the Other exists. The Other could disappear or fail or change names, but this bridge that the Náhuatl of Jalisco made with the Comca'ac and with the Seris of Sonora, that doesn't have anything to do with us anymore. We were the pretext for them to meet, so they could arrange for our visit. But now they've met each other. They've heard each other: "Things are really messed up here." "Here too, we should get together."

When the Meeting in Defense of Water and Mother Earth took place in Mezcala, in the edge of the Chapala Lagoon in Jalisco near Guadalajara, the Yaquis came. This is a group that generally would very rarely meet with others, not just with mestizos, but also other indigenous groups, because they are a tribe that has grown from battling other tribes. All of the tribes of the North are warriors, because they were attacked by the Apaches and the Comanches, the Mexicaneros, by everyone. But they began to meet, now not dependent upon what the Other Campaign says or if the Sixth Commission convokes them. The problem is not going to be how the Sixth International relates to what comes out of the Other Campaign, but rather, what is the place that we are going to construct all together? And it probably won't have anything to do with what we see now. If the Other Campaign that you see now—a transnational movement already, because already it is more than a national entity—is different from what you saw in September of 2005 here in this very place in La Garrucha [where the early meetings and plenaries of the Sixth Declaration were held in the fall of 2005], if it changed that much in one year—it changed protagonists, it changed its objective, it changed its voice, it changed its horizon, it changed its pace, it changed its company, now we are all others, we became ourselves, who we are now, along the way—then just think, the same thing could happen in the rest of the world and the rest of the country.

THE MOVEMENT OF MOVEMENTS AND THE GENERATION OF '94

5 *There is something that today we call "Generation '94": young people in the majority but also people of all ages, who had their political education in Chiapas or via Zapatista discourse and practice communicated through informational networks. These people, or this network, have made, politically, something like a Zapatista diaspora, which has had a profound and reciprocal effect with other movements and spaces: the alter-global movement, the World Social Forum and the regional forums, for example, in a Left that is young, global, and committed to making an "other politics," in organizing itself without doing the politics of politicians. The impact from our perspective has been deep and strong. What has been the effect in Zapatista territory of these interchanges and of the birth of what could be called a diasporic Zapatismo?*

First of all, it may be what is least seen but it is also what is most felt here inside. Almost since the very beginning, the presence of all these groups removed from our struggle the horizon of fundamentalism. An organization that is 99.9999% indigenous has always the temptation of becoming a race movement, especially in the Mexican Southeast, where the mestizo has cultivated hate and resentment in the indigenous for centuries. So in the moment when a fundamentally indigenous organization comes into the light of day, and with great strength—and I'm not referring to the media impact in other countries, but rather how we saw ourselves here, we saw that we are many and we are organized and we can do all of this—its immediate horizon is to become a race movement, that is, a fundamentalism, converting the Zapatista movement into a movement against another race (indigenous against mestizos, or between races, the Tzeltals against the Tzotziles, Tzotziles against... and so on). So this shared interchange, this give and take with what you all call "Generation '94," immediately opens for us a new horizon and takes us out of this fundamentalist risk. Now, we never suggested that! I mean that it is a risk that I for one saw, that the moment was going to arrive when they say, take out the light-skinned ones because they're light-skinned... and of course there are historical arguments which back up [the idea] that from *there* comes the pain.

So the appearance of these people and this form of relating to people of other colors and other cultures opens the world to us without our moving. We become able to see the rest of the world and other cultures like no one else has been able to, I think, without moving from our communities, because of these people who came from other places. This "talk to me," this "show yourself to me," to us as indigenous, was unknown. We would have said, "Who is going to want to listen to us and who is going to want to look at us?" And it turns out that all over the world there is this generation like you say that wanted to see us and listen to us. So we began to listen and to speak and to show ourselves and to see others. We began to see the rest of the world through a whole bunch of windows that were these young people that came to us all this time. And whether we wanted it to or not, this had a beneficial effect on us, because, without losing our indigenous essence, because we are on our own court, in our territory, we can see everyone else without losing our identity. This opens our horizon and changes us; it makes us understand, in an almost natural pedagogical process, *sui generis*, that the world goes far beyond our noses, however big our noses may be. And that this world is much bigger, richer, better and worthwhile.

So there is the impact that this interchange produces on the outside, which is what you have pointed out in the question. But what it produces inside is, first, it eliminates from us the possibility of fundamentalism. If not, you would have here a war like in the Balkans, first between mestizos, then between groups, between indigenous peoples, between Tzeltals and Tzotziles, later between communities and between valleys, and so on, because that is how history has gone. The survival of the EZLN has to do with the fact that we didn't fall into this, and we still haven't. All

this has to do with the fact that these other people came to us, that we were able to see out, and these other worlds made our hearts big. And a big heart is not capable of stinginess. To be stingy, to be petty, to be egotistical, you must have a very small heart, and the Zapatista indigenous communities don't. And this is why, because of this contact, they have been able to construct.

So this generation that comes after the uprising, our new generation, which I talked about one time to say that there is a new generation and it is better than we are... the thing is, this generation already has this richness. It's not a generation that was formed in the mountains, which is where we were trained—isolated, in very difficult living conditions, barely scratching out a survival. But [the new generation] grew up in the resistance itself, in rebellion, but always in contact with others with another horizon. When we were in the mountains, we were on the socialist path. We came out into public light knowing that there was now no referent for this, that these movements were finished, that even armed struggle was done. And these compañeros and compañeras that were children when we rose up in arms, grew up. They became adolescents, teenagers, young people, adults, in this world that is now much bigger, despite the fact that it is still their community.

If before 1994 a woman in this house would say, "I haven't even been to Ocosingo. I've never been away from here," and she would have this temptation to go to Ocosingo, and later to San Cristobal, and then Tuxtla, and then to Mexico City, that would be something else. The generation that is now governing in the autonomous municipalities, which makes up the Good Government Councils and the middle commands of the EZLN, they don't have this problem. They grew up in their communities but they have seen the world through all this we are talking about, through these people. Because it is not the same thing, for example, to see Italy on a *National Geographic* television program as to see Italy through the stories of the people who are struggling in Italy. It's not the same to see the United States of North America through the declarations of Bush, when he manages to say something coherent, which is seldom, as it is to see the people organizing themselves there, people struggling, working, most of all the communications media which are the ones who come here most. You see the world differently. So you could take the same journey that we have just taken following a tourist guide and you would say no, this doesn't have anything to do with what I saw. The Mexico that we saw has nothing to do with tourist Mexico. Well in the same way, the world that we [Zapatistas] were able to see had nothing to do with the geographic world, or with the world you study in school. It had to do with these people who struggle.

So these are two great achievements, or advantages, or learnings we have been given by this "Generation '94"—to avoid fundamentalisms, and to form together this new generation which is the one that created autonomy here. All that shined just now in the encounter between Zapatista peoples and peoples of the world is a product of that generation, not of us.

BEYOND RESISTANCE? EVERYTHING.

6 *This generation, repressed by a capitalism that does not recognize its reality and bored with the tactics and proposals of a left with no relation to its world, has found something that interpolates it in the *Geografía Revuelta*² [Scrambled Geography], the *Calendario Confundido*,³ [Confused Calendar], the identity of *el pinguino*⁴ [the Penguin], in the *Pueblo Girafa*⁵ [Giraffe People], in an institutional irreverence but a great personal respect...*

There is something here that we recognize, if not explicitly then intuitively, as the rejection of the imposition of a universal measure of value, that is, capitalism. This generation has launched a diversity of projects and ideas of self-valorization, in concrete projects but also in terms of a general understanding of what it means to say, "¡vamos por todo!" [we're going for everything], or "¡para todos todo!" [everything for everyone], or, as we've now seen graffitied on walls all over the world, "We Want Everything."

This desire has developed within the Fourth World War, within the globalized market, the nation-state as storefront in the world mall, within

the fragmentation of globalization. And these people, this generation, they are everywhere.

Many that have opposed the movement of this political generation, the movement of movements, still insist that there is not a general discontent with the effects and programs of neoliberalism. Anyone speaking sincerely would have to conclude that the Other Campaign in Mexico has made this conclusion impossible. That is, in all the places visited by the Other Campaign, one constant was found: resistance to the devastating consequences of capitalism. For us, one of the undeniable virtues of the Other Campaign has been the task of putting these resistances in circulation, making them visible. However, it is a second idea announced by the EZLN and demonstrated in the Other Campaign that most calls our attention: the idea that resistance alone is not enough to change our situation. Taking into account that the EZ has been very clear that the Other Campaign is not a call for armed struggle, and using the experiences that the Other Campaign has found this past year, what do you imagine beyond resistance? Rebellion? Constituent power? A massive civil insurrection?

It has to do with the parameter in which things are valued. In reality, what is the criteria people are using when they say there isn't a universal sentiment of discontent with regards to neoliberalism? Why? Because the governments are neoliberal governments, because leftist parties do not arise. So these are considered indicators to say that the people are not discontent, that if they were they would demonstrate their discontent. No. We say that the people are discontent, but we don't have paths [for change], or we don't have satisfactory paths. If, in Mexico or the North American Union, to be a rebel is to be part of the Democratic Party, well a lot of people are going to say, "Hmm, no. I think I'll just stay where I am." If in Mexico that means being part of the Revolutionary Democratic Party (PRD), a lot of people are going to say no. [The choice is] you're either a Democrat or a terrorist, or in favor of armed struggle. And in the face of this farce of a dichotomy, many people say, "No, I'm not a Democrat and I'm not for armed struggle or violent action, or even direct action."

So then they say, "Well that means these people are very conservative, conformist, or they are not being affected by neoliberalism." When really what is happening is that we need another way that has nothing to do with the radical Left of armed struggle, or with the reformist left of the electoral realm. We think that this discontent and inconformity exists across the world, and that you have to find it. It doesn't have one channel of expression, or the channels of expression that exist do not satisfy it. And in the case of young people, who are the majority of the world population, this is exactly what is happening. Not even the parameters of fashion, or musical style, or artistic forms can encompass this. That's why new movements, new musical generations arise, because people don't identify with one or the other, so they create another and then another, and this one is co-opted, and so they make another and yet another, and that's how it goes.

So we think that if this path of inconformity isn't constructed, well everyone will go about constructing their own ways of manifesting it, but we will continue to lack the place of encounter. That is why we say, this isn't about constructing a world rebellion. That already exists. It's about constructing the space where this rebellion encounters itself, shows itself, begins to know itself. To those that say there isn't discontent in the American Union, the thing is there *is*, but we can't see it. Or we can't see it because it doesn't show itself. And it doesn't show itself because it has no place to do so.

In this situation, we think that in this "we want everything," there is above all a valorization, how do I put it, not of personal capacity, but of a willingness to take risks. In 1994 in the dialogues in the cathedral, the government representatives told us, "The thing is, you're asking a lot." And we said, "Those who are willing to die for their demands have the right to ask for *everything*." That is when one begins to ask, how much is life worth? What life do I want? And this is what it's about, right? We said resistance is not enough. Resistance may be sufficient to detain the enthusiasm of neoliberal destruction, but we would need a global resistance, an effort of such force that you have to ask, "If we already have this much strength, plus excess, why am I going to settle for stopping here?" Because this is the problem, right? Because between "something" and "we want everything"... Yes, we want not to die, agreed. But in order not to die, we need a force of such strength that we arrive at the question, the place of not dying is the desire to live like *this*. How? I don't know. However each person determines. And the answer is different from one place to the next.

We think that this movement has to encompass the international network of resistances, but even with this strength of force we must ask, is it only about this, that the army stays away from me, that I'm not harassed as a woman, that I'm not criminalized as a young person, that I'm not attacked as an indigenous person? Or is it about, now with this strength, I can conquer and create my own identity as a woman? Because the problem with a woman saying, "It's enough if they just leave me alone," is that another woman may say, "That isn't enough! I have other aspirations.

And that they're supposed to be praised because they aren't raping or beating me, well no. I want more." It's the same with indigenous people. Young people, too. So when this is put on the table, one begins to ask, "What am I capable of? How far can I go?" Because the politician is always going to tell you, "Up to here, no further," or, "Okay, there, that's sufficient," or, "This is progress, and if you don't accept this, you're going to lose everything."

Because one thing is that it's not armed struggle, and another thing is that it's not non-violent. One example is the APPO. In Oaxaca, there was not armed struggle, but there was violence, on both sides. And this popular violence, I don't condemn it. On the contrary, I salute how they confronted the Federal Preventative Police and defeated them numerous times. And many have advised and are advising them [the Oaxacan resistance], and this is the dispute over the movement in Oaxaca, that they should stop where they're at, that they have made significant progress, they achieved some things, and that now they should try to get a few prisoners out and leave it at that. But the kids, the young people, men and women, the ones who maintained the movement, they are saying, "Why?" And here lies the issue. "Why am I going to settle for Ulises Ruiz stepping down and someone else the same steps in? Why don't I ask at this point, who do we want to be the government? Or why don't I ask if we're going to have a government?" Somebody said, I think it was a drawing that said, "They are trying to obligate us to govern. We won't fall into the trap!" That is, they want us to be like them.

And when this is what is put on the table, imagine this at the national and global level: why are we going to settle with saying, well okay, good enough that the capitalists just don't destroy nature completely. We're going to make laws so they can't contaminate the rivers, destroy the beaches, the air, and all of this. But, why do we have to settle for there being capitalists at all? That is the next question. We could demand that they give us good salaries, or that prices not be so high, or that they don't manufacture such trash. But why does there have to be someone that does this? Why don't we do it ourselves? Even the most radical leftist sectors in Mexico, the non-electoral Left, said, "the truth is we hadn't even asked these questions. We were talking about the taking of power, the dictatorship of the proletariat, but we never put on the table that everything just belongs to the people."

This is what we are doing here in Zapatista territory. We didn't rise up in arms to say, "Okay, let's ask for better salaries from the plantation owners." No! We said, "We are not going to die anymore and we are going to run off the plantation owners and keep the land ourselves." Are we going to ask that they give us a good municipal president? No! The municipal president has to go and we're going to make our own government. It is this force, not personal strength, not "I'm strong because I do exercise," but I am strong because I am willing to offer this, risk this, in the struggle. We think that in the Other Campaign, the Zapatistas are strong because we risked everything. And we challenge everyone else: and you, what will you risk? And we'll see the size of the risks, and thus the size of the demands, and the [size of the] fear, of each person.

So this is what we say: if it is great movements that have recently turned over governments and opened the possibility for change in a place, even if that [change] hasn't been concretized, those movements in the last few decades have not been armed struggles. But neither have they been non-violent. In the cases of Bolivia, Ecuador, Argentina, these weren't armed struggles but neither were they struggles of "flower power." There were confrontations, there were clashes, fighting that resulted in injured and dead on both sides. And we think this is what must be done. But this is the problem, the problem of, for what? There are some that say, "In order to create a party," and others that say, "No, in order to change society." This is the great difference. And this is what those who are lobbying for the Other Campaign to join forces with Lopez Obrador's movement don't understand. It's not the same thing! They want to change presidents, to switch governments. We don't want the government. We want another country, another world.

CONSTRUCTING COMMUNITY IN LIBERATED TERRITORY

7 *To give us a framework of the “we” that you already are, can you explain the organization of the MAREZ [Rebel Zapatista Autonomous Municipalities] and their relationship to the military structure of the EZLN? How many autonomous municipalities exist? How many people live in these municipalities? What are the basic functions of these municipalities?*

All of this is born with the First Declaration of the Lacandón Jungle, which says that the EZLN will advance and liberate the territories over which it advances from the oppressor government and will implant civilian, just, free, democratically chosen governments. This doesn't happen. But in December of 1994, almost a year after the uprising, the autonomous municipalities were created, though still very dependent on the military structure, because at that time, we [the EZLN] were stationary there. We were in the territory where we formed, but now there was going to be a civilian government, not from the official government, but of civilians from the communities.

But as an organization very tied to the political-military apparatus, the political-military apparatus was carrying out governmental functions, the organizational part, but it continued to be a hierarchical structure. It's not that the military officers of the insurgents give orders, but the committees do, which are the political-organizational commands. So during this time, the committee that should organize the people and represent the organization to the outside is carrying out governmental functions. We began to see justice issues, agrarian distribution problems for example, but all of this kind of stayed as “we'll see,” because we didn't yet know how the dialogues were going to turn out. When it became clear that these weren't going anywhere, or at least that it was going to take a long time, the autonomous governments were installed. But we also began to see an unbalanced development in the regions. Where the commanding officers were closest to operations in a region, the development was slower, and where the officers were further, the development was faster. Because the distance of the military command obligated them, like Moy explained, to resolve their problems. I mean, between “let's go ask the command what to do” and “we have problems here and we have to resolve them,” in one of these they start resolving their own problems.

So the first characteristic that arose was how they [the autonomous governments] would be named. This falls to tradition: the assembly named them. And these are very local governments, geographically very local. They didn't manage resources or projects or anything else at the beginning. They were just in charge of resolving community problems in their own community, like land disputes or land distribution—because remember that we took over lands [in the uprising] and now it had to be decided how they would be distributed. Later, as the organization of the autonomous municipalities advanced, we began to see that precisely where we weren't directly involved, the comandantes and comandantas, is where there was the most progress. The place where there was the most progress at that time was in Amparo Agua Tinta, which is almost to the southern border, far from all the other zones, in the zone of La Realidad but remote. This municipality, in 1998, four years after the uprising, already had a civil record. That is, they were able to have civil marriages, which no other municipality did. The others are just starting to now, at that time they only had religious marriages, and Agua Tinta was doing it then. They had civil marriages, public registers of births, deaths, and official appointments/duties, with a minimal paperwork to keep records. They were governing and giving an identity to the people, resolving problems. And this began to develop gradually into programs of education and health, though still very much in the mode where people from outside would come to give medicines or provide medical consultations and so on.

So as the EZLN began to delink itself from the labors of civil governance, the municipalities advanced and developed. The EZLN at that time was receiving international aid and sending it out as it saw fit; it wasn't of course

for the EZLN in any case, but we were still deciding where it went and for what, because at that time the only person that knew the situation was the military commander for that region. This was who knew the territory, knew where things were the worst and where aid must be sent. And this was almost always material aid, like clothes, supplies, etc., when things were really bad. Later people began to offer productive projects and then the military commander began to say, well, now I don't know. And so the autonomous authorities said, well, that's us. And the autonomous municipalities began to grow, but still very unevenly. So the order was given that we [the EZLN] should back out of this part completely to see if the development would even out. And yes, after the order was given for military commanders not to get involved in civil decisions, things did even out more or less in the different zones and the *compañeros* were obligated to make the decisions. Because if you're asking "Hey what do I do," and the answer is "I don't know," then they have to decide themselves.

Later we had the problem of the land. There are about 32 autonomous territories. Between Zapatistas and non-Zapatistas that recognize the autonomous authorities, there would be around 300,000 indigenous persons—men, women, and children, Zapatistas and non-Zapatistas. So this relation develops and the issue comes up of what goes on between one municipality and another in the same zone. And the history that Moy tells is how the first society of autonomous municipalities formed, which was in the Tojolobal zone. Four autonomous municipalities say okay, we're going to start projects that work for all four of us and unite the strength of all four of us. They start with a warehouse for corn, which is what they produce there, because there, the coyote comes and buys cheap and then sells high. So [the municipalities] say, "We need a warehouse where we can store and sell at a better price, and the coyote can go to hell." So the four municipalities get together, make the warehouse, and the coyote has to pay the warehouse price or go home without any corn.

This turns out well there and so we say, what we have to do is coordinate according to zones, and this is where things really begin to even out. Because there's also this problem that before, the autonomous municipalities only governed Zapatistas; only the Zapatista support bases recognized them. But as this structure develops, people that are not Zapatistas also begin to recognize them as their legitimate government. So we said, we're an organization for Zapatistas, but the government isn't just for Zapatistas. It should be for anyone who wants it. So the Good Government Councils are created to resolve problems between Zapatistas and non-Zapatistas. And Non-Zapatistas is different from anti-Zapatistas; these people aren't Zapatistas, but neither are they against us. So they recognize the government and they want to work with this government but they are not part of us. So this mediating role develops. Later [the Good Government Councils] function also to distribute projects and to serve as another interlocutor for civil society. Because before, this was always done through the military commanders. You had to talk to the military command in order to propose or talk about a project. So now in each zone people could talk directly with the local authorities.

The next challenge was how to make a team, a Zapatista political system. [The communities] said, they can't be permanent positions. They have to be rotating, just like in the autonomous municipalities. And it can't be that someone steps out of one position and steps into another. They have to go back and work the land because this is what guarantees that the political class is not corrupted, that there isn't a political class! So what happens is that every week or every 15 days, depending on the Good Government Council, the council changes. And this is a mess for the people that come from outside because they make an agreement with one council and later when they get there it's already another council. But for the people it has meant the demystification of the labor of governing. So every now and then Mrs. Tortilla-maker says, 'pretty soon I'm going to be the government and then after a little bit I'm going back to making tortillas.' So it's one more job to do; it's not being the boss. Not here. Here the problem isn't going to be who rules. The problem is the relationship that you build. Even though this frustrates those of you that come from outside and talk to one authority and later they change authorities on you, for us it has served us well. And that has been what has really launched the autonomous municipalities.

And the last element that I would add is this generation that grew. Apart from the delinking of the political-military apparatus, apart from the fact that this allowed for the recuperation of the traditional customs and practices for choosing governance democratically, for resolving problems via dialogue and consensus and so on, apart from the fact that the positions and responsibilities are rotating in order to prevent corruption or that it is detected rapidly, apart from all of this, the generation that were children during the uprising grew up with autonomous education, health, and have begun to hold delegated positions in the autonomous municipalities. But they are Others. They aren't the ones that rose up in arms. They are the ones that grew up in the resistance.

And the rotating and the length of turns are decided at the regional level?

Yes, by zone really. That is, let's say the Tzeltal people of the Jungle zone, which is this one, have one rhythm. The Tzeltal people in the zone of Altamirano have another. The Tzotzil people of the Highlands have another. Everybody decides for themselves the length of the [governing] turns. This has to do with how they see themselves, how long they need to learn, the distance they have to travel in order to trade off, the cycles of each autonomous municipality, because the Good Government Councils come out of the autonomous municipalities. And the municipalities come from the communities, and that's how everything rotates.

The autonomous education and health systems also vary by zone?

Yes, health, education, and also agrarian issues, the problem of land. Because there are places that distribute in some ways and others in other ways, and there are places that don't have land, like the Highlands. But the education system in one zone like Roberto Barrios is decided there by the Chol people, and it doesn't have anything to do with La Realidad, which is Tojolobal.

I AM WE

8 *There is another reverberation between movements that is seen and heard in the masks, in the "behind us we are you," of the Zapatistas which has been converted into the, "the other is I" of the Piqueteros,⁶ in the recuperation of the "I am we" of the Black Panthers in the US in the 70's, in the "We are all Atenco/ We are all Oaxaca" of the current Other Campaign, and in the "We are all others!" of the other loves⁷ and the transsexual community, adherents of the Sixth Declaration. This has been one of the most important lessons Zapatismo has given us, the challenge to the figure of the individual author, the individual subject, and individual production. And in combination with movements and contemporary tendencies like copyleft and the piracy cooperatives of artistic, communicative, and informational material, we are teaching each other that stories are collective, style is a communal production, and ideas are the accumulation of the histories and experiences of many. However, in many parts of the world, including Mexican society, the individualist subject is a very big obstacle to organization, and while in many places people have learned to think and produce in cooperation, it is still very hard for us dream collectively. How have the Zapatistas seen this paradox, if you see it that way?*

We think that the only real guarantee of individuality, of subjectivity, is the collective. The problem is how the collective relates to its parts: if it is imposing a hegemony or respecting these differences. Just like this collective demands respect from other collectives in a larger movement, it must deal with the same issue among its parts. The fact that in the Other Campaign there are thousands of individuals does not mean that they don't have a group. It means that no group has satisfied them, that in no group have they felt respected in their individuality. Let's say that half of those more than 3,000 individuals are spies or police or whatever, and that the other 1,500 are authentic. Well those 1,500 could be the biggest collective yet if they all got together. But they haven't found a space where they feel like, 'I, as an individual with my faults and my strengths and my defects have a place, and I am going to be respected.' They may think that Zapatismo isn't going to include them, but it is going to open a space and it will not forget them. We think that it is just a question of time before they understand that it is in collective where our problems can be resolved. But the worlds offered are not the only ones possible. It may be that the collectives that appear are not the only ones possible, that maybe another must be made. In fact, many collectives are confronting this problem. They are coming apart, not because of political difference, but because there is no space for their individuality.

And the individual-individual, well no! This doesn't exist! It is a myth of capitalism. Individualism in reality is the negation of the individuality of subjectivity. We think that it is in the Other Campaign, this huge collective, where these individuals are finding an identification. [They say,] "I'm not willing to join this or that, but I am willing to do

such and such for this cause, and this is the space to do it. I paint, I sing, but I'm not going to any meetings." Or, "I sing well, I paint well, or I make recordings or I hand out fliers or I set up a table, but I'm not going to do anything else. I don't want to go to meetings to listen to speeches or any of that. But this great space guarantees me that my individual action will become collective in a cause."

This is what we need to convince the rest of the world. The fact that the only place where you can be yourself, whatever you consider that to be, is in a collective that guarantees you that respect and where you guarantee respect in return. In this case, your commitment is not to an organizational structure but to a cause. Now, if I am in a cause and in an organizational structure as well, then I commit myself to respect their decision-making processes, their way of working in collective, and there are people who don't go for that. What they're interested in is that their efforts enter into a cause. But even so, we think that the world that we are dreaming, in this great society of societies, the great collective of collectives that will be the world, only there can the individual *be*, without this crisis of identity of, "Who am I?" and "Where am I going?" knowing always that they have all the liberty to decide and create who they are and want to be. And that is what does not exist now.

ALL EMPIRES SEEM INVINCIBLE...

Many have asked you for your analysis of the current national situation. We want to take this opportunity to ask also about the political moment currently lived at the global level. Here we have in mind a few things in particular: first, the war in Iraq, which from any perspective is a failure, and Bush's subsequent power and popularity plummet in the US; two, the taking of power of various self-proclaimed leftist or progressive governments in Latin America; and third, the political and economic growth of various previously considered marginalized countries, as is the case with China, or India, or Brazil. How do you see these phenomena? Do you see in them, or outside of them, any hopeful signals? What could be the starting point to analyze these phenomena from a perspective from below?

All empires, or all of the great world oppressions, seemed invincible up to the eve of their fall. The Roman Empire, for example, the Nazis in Germany, and now that of North America, or more generally of neoliberalism, as we call this stage of capitalism. The fact that more and more frequently war is resorted to, in order to defeat what was before defeated by an influx of capital, hides the fact that the science is the same. When the Iraq war started, a leftist intellectual, well, they say leftist, Régis Debray, of France, said, "How stupid the North Americans are. They could have overturned Hussein and conquered Iraq by making them loans." The International Monetary Fund could give the loans, indebt the country, do what it has done in other countries, and it will have Iraq and the entire Middle East on their knees. But Mr. Debray and the European intellectuals were forgetting that war is essential to capitalism, that destruction is essential to capitalism. War is an industry that generates profit for capitalism. In this case, it wasn't about dominating Iraq; it was about generating profit. And the form to generate profit was with a war.

Like in Vietnam, like in other places, the North American government has realized that neither military technology nor the number of men available is important in order to conquer a territory. That it is only possible to conquer it completely if it destroys that territory completely, and total destruction is not in [the US'] plans at this point. So it turns out that it isn't enough to get rid of Hussein and the Iraqi army, but that they would have to get rid of the entire Iraqi population in order to defeat the resistance. So where the large companies are already installed, those that arrived behind the North American army, they say, wait a minute, where is the market? A desert market of buyers and sellers is of no use to me, not even as a production base; we're going to have to import from everywhere, workers yes, but also the buyers—producers *and* buyers. At which point we get to this absurd logic of capitalism where you have to make war to make profit and then stop the war so that the profits come through, and this is reaching its limit in Iraq, if you look at it from above.

In the case of the other colossus that is arising, which is what is putting the gringos on alert, it turns out that the expansion of Chinese society is generating a market worth millions, and everyone is asking themselves, who is going to build these houses? Who is going to feed these people? Who is going to dress these millions of Chinese? The Chinese government plans to concentrate the population, because it is so large, in great metropolises. Magnificent idea some say, but others say, who will be the firm contracted to build these metropolises? Because that's where the profit will be. And making war with China is unthinkable, because it's not just the territory but also the people! So they [the North Americans] say, here we are all tangled up in Iraq and the market is over there, and the Europeans are there and the Japanese are there and the whole world is saying that over there is this great mass of people that needs someone to sell them things, because the Chinese don't have that. They [China] are saying, "Who wants to come sell?" And everyone is saying, "*Vamonos*!" It is a market infinitely superior to that which opened when the Soviet Union fell, when all of a sudden the North Americans said, "Bingo!" And they began to come in and it turned out much better than if they had defeated the Soviet Union militarily, because the market stayed intact, that is, the producers and the consumers.

So, broadly speaking, we see all this. And in neoliberalism, the fight is for the market. It doesn't matter what is destroyed in the process: the fundamental logic is profit. So when a war produces profit, they are going to make war. When stopping war makes profit, they are going to stop the war. But on the other side are the tendencies that are below, subterranean, disperse. Evidently, the Ford Directory of corporate giants are not the only ones able to convince the North American government; it also takes the Iraqi resistance movement, just like occurred in Vietnam and in other places.

In this great struggle for the market, between these companies fighting for the market, in this logic of profit, there is something that is leftover, and that is the political class. [In this logic they ask], "These politicians from before, why do we need them? Why, if a business can do the job better? Why do we want political parties if we can put in the president that we want?" Because, now no one even remembers, but Bush was installed via electoral fraud in the country that proclaims itself the defender of democracy! A scandalous fraud at that, and documented, provable! That is, he got to the presidency without having the majority of the votes, of those that they counted that is. So, why do we need the political class if we can put in the president that we want or the government that we want? The United Nations is a place to deposit money exempt from taxes, like a world telethon; that is the UN, because it does absolutely nothing else. So, what do we do then with these politicians? There the problem is that the big companies say [to the political class]: "Okay, you guys tell us why we shouldn't sacrifice you. Convince us you're worthwhile." And thus begins the dispute over who will administer this crisis. And it turns out that the big powers don't necessarily conform to the proposals of the Right. If there is a proposal from the Left that guarantees them a better administration, they go with that one.

About a decade ago, when a leftist candidate was about to win—in Uruguay or Paraguay I think it was—someone at the World Bank was asked if this wasn't going to be a problem, especially with the tradition of dictatorial regimes against the Left there, and the official said no! If it's a good administration of our political economic policy, whoever is fine. And in effect, ever since then, for the last 10 years to date, these governments have been taking power and have turned out to be excellent administrators [of neoliberalism]. Lula is the best example of the fact that a left-handed government functions better for this in Latin America. No other country in Latin America has as many economic successes as Brazil, economic successes for those above that is, and this is a government supposedly of the Left. So we said, this option is going to continue appearing here and there, and we thought it was going to happen in Mexico. But it looks like the possibility of Lopez Obrador in power frightened these people, and the people with the money said no, better not. But if they had been more prudent and not so greedy...

So we see in the whole world this tendency from above to fight for markets, not just this internal agreement in North America, but also in the European economy once the European Union was consolidated, in the resurgence of Japan, and now with the Chinese there saying, "Here I am, I buy, I sell." And [the Chinese] are calculating that whatever happens, whoever they let in, they are moving up as a world economic power that can sell and buy and in some moment will be decisive in the geopolitics of that hemisphere. But on the other side are these sparks of rebellion that appear on the national level, and that later have these great flashes like in parts of the alter-global movement that may seem still to be very small and dispersed but which are going to be a great world power. But that is how history works. On the eve of the fall of the Roman Empire, the appearance of the Barbarians here and there was thought to

be nothing to worry about. And that's how the Roman Empire reacted until they realized what was happening, and by then, there was nothing left. The problem isn't this [lack of resistance]; we think that the problem is that in addition to constructing the network that makes world linkage possible, world solidarity, a world network that is, when all this begins to surge from the bottom, there must simultaneously be a discussion and a proposal: What now? Because if we don't respond to this question, we return to what was before.

And here I want to include a parenthesis. If Kilombo hadn't posed the question after the movement against the war in Iraq, "What now? After this, what?" they would have returned to their normal lives. They would have went on like nothing had happened. They would be living and eating and breathing like anybody else. It is when this question is asked, "And now what? We're going to do this, but then what?" that the opportunity arises for history not to repeat itself. Because if not, it seems to me that it will repeat. You can make a global movement and take down everything that exists now, and not offer an alternative and come back to make something equally bad or worse. This is what has happened in the history of the world. We can't always say that the world that comes out of the destruction of the previous one is better. That's just not true. The world that the Spanish built wasn't better than that of the Aztecs, which was already bad—the Aztec Empire—because it wasn't an alternative. So it could be just this, a historic anecdote, everything that the museums study, everything that was the North American Empire or the French Empire or the British Empire, if there still is one; the problem is if we're not just going to make the same thing all over again. In another interview they asked us, what is Marcos' worst nightmare? That nightmare would be that after all this, we would end up the same. That we would return to being the same thing, with another name, with another face, that the indigenous peoples in Mexico would be free at the cost of the submission of the mestizos. That is a nightmare. That would be to change history but only to change its protagonist and not its path. And what we want to change is the path. That there are mestizos, indigenous, everybody able to do their own thing, with good relationships to each other, not one above or over the other. So the nightmare would be that we would win and we would lose winning. Or that in winning what we wanted, we did what we didn't want to do.

AQUÍ ESTAMOS CABRONES!

10 *How do you see, from the perspective of the Other Campaign, the importance of the burgeoning immigrant movement in the United States? Did the May 1st marches of last year in US cities, which were, it must be said, the biggest one-day protests in the history of the United States, carry some resonance for Zapatismo? What do you think could be the foundations for a common imagination between this movement and Zapatismo in Mexico?*

To die for! This movement is the best example of the fact that things aren't until they are. Because if you remember how the media managed this—all of the [Mexican] media, national but also the more leftist ones—the image of North America they were creating was that the people there were worried about whether they were going to have the right to vote or not, and for whom they were going to vote. So they were asking if the [Mexican] Senate was going to approve the vote from the exterior, if they were going to be able to run campaigns there. And the media correspondents were saying, "Our compatriots in the US, the migrants, are concerned about this. And they're also worried about if they're going to get hit by the Minutemen, by these assassins, all this that the Texas ranchers were doing." And then all of a sudden they have a march, and it's a huge march, and everyone said, "Of course, we saw this coming." But it's not true! Nobody saw it coming! There wasn't anything that said this was going to happen.

I think the most surprised were the migrants themselves, who said, "*Cabron*, there are so many of us!" The reaction of Power to try to co-opt and control as many of the visible leaders as possible, to take the movement down, was apparently successful. I say "apparently," because it's the same thing in Oaxaca. It looks like the movement is over and it turns out that the lessons learned there stuck, or that they continue germinating there and that they will arise again.

The problem that this great migrant movement—in all of its differences—brought up is the same that the

Other Campaign is addressing. And this was summed up well by that little girl [in Tijuana] who said, “Here we are.” The problem isn’t what are they going to do with us. The problem is that here we are and we want *this*. Not if we’re leaving or if they’re going to send us back. They have to get used to the idea that we’re here. This is our identity, whatever that may be for each one of us. And the world has to get used to the idea that I exist, that here I am.

We think that there is where this bridge will be built, that this is a great movement independent of its political affiliations and its identities, and it has in the Other Campaign and the Sixth International a space to encounter other realities. Because at some point, someone always comes to us to try to get some kind of political backing in order to hegemonize the rest of the migrant movement in the United States. And we say, “No, it’s not that there aren’t others [in the movement]. There are others.” “But these others are bad,” they tell us. [And we respond], “No, all are migrants; it is their identity.” What they are disputing is who has the role of interlocutor with those in power. We say we’re not interested in who has this role, or in giving political backing to anyone. [The Other Campaign] is the space for you to meet the indigenous peoples who are here but who also have people on the other side—the O’odham, the Kiliwa, the Kumiai, and also the Zapatistas, the Náhuatl, the Zapotecos. This is the space where all these can meet. And this is the space where the Zapotec from Oaxaca can say, “I am Zapotec from Oaxaca,” and another will say, “I’m Zapotec from New York,” and so on.

And at the same moment that they are saying this, that is exactly what we are doing. We loved it [the May 1st marches], because they didn’t warn anybody! It was like January 1st of 1994, when everyone said, “Well they surprised us!” Well yes! Because everyone was looking somewhere else. But if it was possible that tens of thousands of indigenous in the mountains where there is no communication were preparing an uprising for 10 years and nobody realized it, how is it possible that hundreds of thousands of migrants in the cities, where there is so much communication, organized this and nobody realized it? Not the journalists, the editorialists, the analysts, not even the FBI or the CIA! One has to say, well, if they haven’t had more towers fall, they must not have any more towers! If this is their security system! It’s ridiculous! How can it be that all this was being generated, because it wasn’t just 10 or 20 that came out... It seems to me that in the American Union, a big march is 5,000, 10,000 people, that even that is nearly unprecedented. Or something really amazing would be the million that marched in the people of color march in Washington years ago. But this, millions of people, simultaneously, unprecedented... Man, what an intelligence service! This would be cause to take down the chief, no? And instead they gave him another job! It’s true! They gave Bush another four years! But oh well, these things happen in whatever part of the world....

And this is a government worried about its internal security. And this [migrant] reality has us quite happy, because, what we were told in ‘94 was, “Listen, you all keep it up and grow and good luck there, but the gringos are not going to permit it. It’s going to be like Vietnam.” And I said, “No, Mexico is farther from the United States than Vietnam.” “How?” they ask. Because we’re already there. We are inside the American Union, and there weren’t as many then [‘94] as there are now. That is, you can’t just attack like that. It’s not like you can go to the people and say, “Look, there are some horrible yellow Chinese that want to hurt us, and we’re going after them.” Even when they did that, the people didn’t swallow it. And now, to say that we’re going to attack these people who come from your same land, it’s not that easy.

So over all, this is how we saw the movement there; it made us very happy. We laughed quite a bit at the editorialists and analysts. Because later they wanted to say, “Well you guys didn’t see it coming,” and I told them, “Nooooooo, I remember what *you* wrote about the migrant movement *before* this march! You don’t remember now?” This is what they always say about us, that the bad thing, well, I don’t know if it’s bad; they say, “But the thing is that the compañeros remember everything!” And I said yes! We do remember everything! [Laughing]

Oh, and the Seris said that [about identity] too, “We’re not part of Mexico. We don’t recognize Mexico. We are the Comca’ac nation. We are a nation.” I guess we’ll see how they do it. And why not?

LOVE: A POLITICS

11 *Many times you have said that this movement is the greatest lesson of love that these lands have ever seen. Another time, in Tijuana, you said that the EZ prefers to use the word “respect” instead of “love.” This concept, love or respect, how do you conceptualize it as a political concept, perhaps the most important political concept of our times, the concept that lacks nothing?*

What we said was that the problem of love is a problem of respect. That love understood as possession, property, is not what we think is love. That fundamentally a relationship, of whatever kind, not just in a couple but between people who relate to each other, has to be based in respect. If not, sooner or later it becomes a kind of domination or destruction. I say that without condemning any of the healthy perversions like sadomasochism and all that, which are also ways to relate. [Laughing]

The problem of respect is toward the Other. We say that when we as Zapatistas say we love this land, it is that we respect it. And we look for the best for it, not according to our criteria but according to what we understand from [the land] itself. Because it's not the same to say, “I love you and I want what's best for you but according to what I think is best for you, and I don't give a shit what you think.” That's not respect. We say that this has to be according to what each person thinks. And this is the reading that one does, where one commits errors or finds truths. In this case, that is the reading the Zapatista indigenous peoples make of the land. That is respect. It [the land] says, “The best thing for me is that you protect me, you care for me; they are trying to destroy me, etc.” We say, we must do something.

Whatever political relationship that is not based in respect is a manipulation. Well-intentioned or bad-intentioned, it doesn't matter, because it is a manipulation. If you don't respect the thinking of the other, of their word, if you don't speak to them clearly, then you don't respect them and you are manipulating them. There was a compañera who was asking, “Okay, all this about peaceful struggle that the Zapatistas are saying, that's a strategy right? I mean really you are thinking in terms of armed struggle, right? I mean, because with the army and all!” And I told her, “Do you believe that we are going to be dishonest with people, telling them that it is a peaceful struggle and to sign on up but really we're preparing an armed struggle?” Of course not! We would say so, publicly. We would say, “Compañeros, we're going to say this is a peaceful fight, but really it's going to be armed struggle.” [Not to tell them] would be to disrespect them, to manipulate them. And we can't construct a political relationship like that. Or we could, but that's not the relationship that we want; we want something else, a new relationship. If you're going to do something, good or bad or whatever, you have to say so clearly. And the people who are with you, who support you, or who are your compañeros, in that they don't just support you but you mutually support each other in a project, they have to know that you spoke straight. Now if it turns out badly, that's something else, but they have to know you didn't fool them, that you didn't manipulate them. And to do that you have to respect them, and to respect them you need to know them.

We can't construct a relationship of respect with the Chicano movement, or with the Mexicans on the other side, or with the migrant movement, or with the movement of people of color, or with the movement of all the identities that are going to arise—I'm thinking, for example, of the communities of Asian origin that already have their own logic in the American Union—if we don't know them. And we say that this is not about making an introduction, about exchanging cards. It's about creating the space where we can introduce ourselves and get to know each other. Where we can do this thing of, ‘I am, I am here, and these are my problems. I'm telling you so that you know me, not so that you help me or have pity on me or admire me or learn from me.’ Not with this enthusiasm for dependency. But rather, “Look at me, this is my face.” And then if you like it or not, well, that is very much your problem.

That's why we said, starting there, we can construct respect or we can construct a relationship of domination. There are people who come to see, to figure out what this is about, and who say, "Here, good, here they're doing something with political purchase." Or, "Here, no." So their interest is where there is political purchase, where they can reap some benefit. And where they can't, then no. But if there is a relationship of respect, then it's not that way. So the knowing each other follows respecting each other. That is what has to be constructed.

And this is what we say is a demonstration of love: respect. This, along with subjectivity, is something difficult to construct in these times. That is, in capitalism, it is difficult to construct a relationship of respect, even between two individuals, and that much more difficult in collectivity, in society, or in a nation. What respect can you say the North American government has for its people? At the hour that it turns out that, "Oh, guess what, the weapons we were searching for in Iraq, well they didn't really exist. And we knew they didn't exist but we needed something to tell you in order to be able to attack." And what respect does CNN or the other major North American media companies have when they tell the people, "We fooled you; the images that we showed of Iraq aren't of Iraq. Or there were more but we only used these." And what respect does the teacher have for the student, the student for his/her classmate, neighbor for neighbor, and so on, if there is nothing in this society telling you it's possible to create a relationship based in respect? And we say that is the only solid relationship it is possible to create—that which is based in respect. And that is what we want to do, and what we are learning to do. And we make mistakes. Sometimes we make mistakes in saying, "I am thinking you are saying this," and you aren't saying that. Take land for example, or the example of indigenous peoples, of student groups, or of the young people who we saw on the journey, of landless peasants, of the poor, or the migrants, the women, etc. We say that what we agree upon, even when we are hearing wrong or understanding wrong, is that we need a space to listen to each other.