

# BLACK ROSE

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*Volume 2 #5 Spring '80*

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## Cages of the Mind

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The idea of a God implies the abdication of human reason and justice; it is the most decisive negation of human liberty and necessarily ends in the enslavement of mankind both in theory and in practice.

He who desires to worship God must harbor no childish illusions about the matter but bravely renounce his liberty and humanity.

—Michael Bakunin

*To place oneself in the service of either a political or religious doctrine is to risk slavery of the mind. Over the few years of my political activity, I've noticed the pervasiveness of such slavery not only in the most obvious places (the Moonies, the Scientologists, the US Labor Party, Seventies psychotherapy, the Krishnas, sectarian Left-wing political groups, and others), but to a lesser extent in the mainstream Left. I believe that such dogmatic belief-systems and social forms debilitate both individuals and movements by transforming relatively free actors into vehicles for the mechanical advancement of doctrine. In doing so, they limit radical change by foreclosing on many options for evolutionary development.*

*What worries me is not what beliefs people have, but how those beliefs are held, whether they are open to change. The world would be much poorer without spiritual and transcendental dimensions; only a one-dimensional, totalistic subordination of oneself to such dimensions is at issue.*

*To be sure, there are a number of pitfalls inherent in any attempt to outline these cognitive and motivational lobster traps. There is probably no nondogmatic definition of dogma, so my analysis should be regarded as only a heuristic for self-examination and the dislodging of entrenched habits. (A fully universalized, rationalized version of this would probably look a lot like the dogmas it criticizes.) Last, my own position has its own, equally metaphysical, (relativist) assumptions as do beliefs in the Absolute.*

*Both the structure of the rigidified system and its reinforcing, perpetuating social milieu are responsible for its persistence. While many areas of human activity and belief such as science, art, design, education, mainstream political action, and medicine have their own inflexible, tradition-oriented norms, the more extreme examples of religious cults and political sects better illuminate the salient characteristics of that end of the spectrum. In political sects and religious cults, the central doctrine of the group provides an identity for its "true believers" by supplying a cognitive, moral, and social framework which specifies "correct" thought and action. The organization allows the true believer to immerse him/herself totally in a cause larger than him/herself by supplying him/her with a new, fully rationalized, determined identity freed of personal responsibility and failure.<sup>1</sup>*

*The structure of the doctrine itself plays a crucial role in both its own propagation and in the perpetuation of the organization. The ideological or religious "line" taken by the organization holds it together by providing a common, continually reinforced identity to its members. Unity is all important because it reaffirms group identity; differing positions are "divisive" because they undermine uncritical acceptance of the group "line." Because the doctrine is responsible for both socialization into the group and group "solidarity", doctrinal issues are paramount. This may be why Left sectarians, coming out of such a context and entering into a nonsectarian coalition, first attempt to get agreement on fairly specific positions. Within their worldview, doctrinal purity is the only way of achieving solidarity; solidarity the only means for single, unified action; unified action the only means of acting on a "correct" set of assumptions.<sup>2</sup> Remember, there is only one true path.*

*The doctrine itself must be sufficiently insulated from external challenge, sufficiently mystified to prevent internal challenge, and sufficiently rich to interpret the entire world within its framework. By its form the doctrine inhibits the true believer from simultaneously considering other beliefs along with his/her own, "as if" they were true, undermining the true believer's capacity for understanding and identifying with other nonbelieving people, and isolating him/her as a result. Empathy is diminished; the glassy-eyed believer loses many "human" qualities. True believers also seem to have a difficult time separating themselves from their situation enough to examine it from without.<sup>3</sup> Possibility for self-criticism and self-reflection, a major liberating escape route, is shut off.*

**CAN YOU RECOGNIZE THE FIVE WARNING SIGNS OF RIGIDIFIED THOUGHT?**

Five major characteristics seem to be commonplace in these selfstabilizing, self-justifying systems of belief:<sup>4</sup>

**1 The Belief System is a Deterministic, All Encompassing Set of Beliefs Claiming Exclusive Truth and Objectivity and Denying the Possible Relevance or Validity of Other Systems Based on Other Assumptions or Outlooks.**

The doctrine provides an account of all that is relevant within its own terms, while asserting its own eternal, exclusive truth. It defines the cognitive world of its beholder, reshaping it into its own categories while extinguishing other, previous modes of understanding. The doctrine gives the believer the power to explain everything, to assert the absolute "correctness" and veracity of his/her beliefs, and to act without doubt on those beliefs. Such unbounded certainty with total disrespect for other traditions and viewpoints allows the true believer to ruthlessly trample them without remorse. Actions such as the firebombings of abortion clinics, the shouting down of Right wing speakers by Leftists, the Nazi march on Skokie, takeover of political organizations by sectarian groups, and terrorization of the Black community are all contemporary examples. Where the religion/ideology specifies a determinate progression of events leading up to the final, harmonious end of the world (e.g. Utopia, Kingdom of God, Classless Society, The Best of All Possible Worlds), personal responsibility is removed completely from the believer.

Social change in such a system is viewed as the process of moulding an essentially passive society into one's own image, just as converts are moulded by the image of the religion into new people. Because one does not generally "see" the validity of the religion/ideology before conversion, it follows that the individual simply didn't perceive the Truth until conversion. This same sequence is replicated in the true believer's conception of social change: once society is "converted" by a restructuring specified by the religion/ideology, then people will be content with the change and, in retrospect, grateful for it. These beliefs, sincerely held, legitimize openly manipulative methods of arriving at conversion; the Ends are so firmly established (and inevitable) that any means of arriving at them is justified. The resulting insensitivity to other systems, of thought/action results in

propaganda rather than dialogue, manipulation rather than cooperation, and isolation rather than understanding.

**DRIVING ON THE LEFT**  
obey signals by authorised persons

beware signals from unauthorised persons

**2 In its Assumptions the Belief System Contains the Refutations and Rationalization for all Competing Theories.**

Competing worldviews become a result of distortion ("You are misguided"), naivete ("when your ideas become more highly developed you'll think like me"), blasphemy, sacrilege, heresy (knowing, intentional dissent), "idealism" (you are not in touch with Reality, as defined by the religion/ideology), subjectivism (your beliefs are merely a consequence of

your individual history or position in society), and willful deceit (you yourself are a propagandist).

This rationalization of other viewpoints coupled with extreme conviction in one's own results in very patriarchal attitudes towards other traditions. Open discourse on equal terms becomes difficult because the believer, smug in his/her certainty, won't take other positions seriously. Mass demonstrations, with their orchestrated control over what viewpoints are acceptable (only the "correct ones") embody this idea that organizers know what's best for the crowd, and that presenting opposing viewpoints only confuses them.<sup>5</sup> In their formats they replicate the teacher/student, leader/follower, expert/layman distinctions in which participants become passive spectators to be moulded.<sup>6</sup> It comes as no surprise that often those most eager to speak are true believers; a one way conversation to thousands of people is a rather expedient means of disseminating the truth.

### **3 Broad, Widely Held "Universal" Moral Generalities Are Used To Justify the Acceptance of the Doctrine and Action in its Behalf.**

It is much easier to gain converts, carry out one's program without interference, and to neutralize active opposition if one can justify one's action in commonly accepted moral terms. Anything from acting in behalf of God, Country, the Family, or All Things Decent to liberating oppressed peoples, saving the human race from extinction, or forestalling Certain Death, gives the believer a just cause to which s/he can devote an entire waking existence. Criticism is muffled because most people share the general goals of the true believer's doctrine; to argue against someone sincerely attempting to realize those goals appears to subvert their attainment.

Such moral generalities are even apparent in what Chomsky calls the State Religion version of American foreign policy:

*According to the State Religion, the US is unique among the nations of past history in that its policies are governed by abstract moral principles such as the Wilsonian ideals of self-determination, human rights, economic welfare, and so on, not by the material interests of groups that actually have domestic power, as is the case in other societies. (BR#4, p.19)*

Colonial wars, international economic manipulations, and occasional scandals such as the CIA involvement in the 1973 Chilean coup are dismissed as mistakes, temporary deviations from the true purpose of the US. Likewise, the same rhetoric is used in behalf of the Soviet Union by its de-

fenders both here and abroad.

### **4 The World is Dichotomized into Good/Evil, Redeemable/Nonredeemable, Ally/Enemy, Correct/Incorrect, along "Objective" Lines. Noncooperation, Disinterest, Or Apathy is a Sign of Enmity.**

Behaviors are considered either revolutionary or reactionary, virtuous or sinful, correct or misguided, beneficial or detrimental, and are rewarded or punished accordingly by one's like minded peer group. Actions are judged by their "objective" effects, not by the intention of the actor, since intentions are not a part of the "objective" situation. For this reason non-believers as well as atheists are considered part of the damned. The delegitimation of the subjective thus forces the believer back to the doctrine of his/her analysis of the situation, further limiting the opportunities for doctrine-independent action.

The use of guilt is quite common within these settings, serving to raise the psychological price of breaking with the group, thereby restraining the development of "incorrect" deviant paths. Constant baring of souls within the peer group allows many opportunities for doctrine-independent action.

The use of guilt is quite within these settings, serving to raise the psychological price of breaking with the group, thereby restraining the development of "incorrect" deviant paths. Constant baring of souls within the peer group allows many opportunities for previously nonconforming parties to do penance by admitting past sins and taking positive action by doing group-approved "good deeds."

Coupled with isolation that arises from the individual's desire to shield him/herself from "bad influences," the escalating price of deviance gives the peer group increasing monopoly over guilt production and absolution. Barrington Moore in *Injustice: The Social Bases of Obedience and Revolt* calls this the expropriation of guilt:

*"Over the centuries the Catholic Church has had considerable success in expropriating guilt. It has achieved this by helping to create the sense of guilt and then providing the bureaucratic mechanisms for alleviating it. As an economist might put it, the Catholic Church managed to create much of the demand and most of the supply."*

Within the mass meeting context, patterns of accusation for the sins of questionable association, questionable intents, incorrect attitudes, "objectively harmful" actions (regardless of intent), and dangerous social origins become vehicles for neutralizing opposing views and silencing inter-

nal criticism. For example, within such situations men cannot comfortably, publicly criticize measures proposed to combat sexism within an organization, especially when they agree that the problem exists but disagree on the solution. I have seen men chastized as sexists whose only sin was to be apathetic about joining a men's discussion group on sexism. In other circumstances the appropriate epithet can be thrown at those who are "objectively" oppressors to silence them or to embarrass them into participation: white, racist, middle class, male, fascist, "Cambridge radical chic", bourgeois, macho, authoritarian, intellectual, elitist, affluent, Communist, Atheist, tool of Satan, fag, nigger-lover, wimp.<sup>8</sup> The tactic effectively drives out most nonmasochists, leaving those self-confident enough to deny guilt and those gullible enough to accept it. Needless to say, such practices are exceedingly destructive to open organizations.

#### 5 All Facets of Life are Recast in Terms of the Religion/Ideology.

Life becomes living solely for the Revolution or the Second Coming; all discussion and daily life becomes oriented towards the nuts and bolts of the Great Cause, and one's humor disappears.<sup>9</sup> A deadly seriousness pervades all actions and conversations; both have become instruments for processes larger than the believer. After all, aren't we about to be vaporized, raptured, liberated or enslaved if we don't take immediate, serious action? Anything less, of course, is nonproductive frivolity, counterproductive in attitude and effect.

#### Against Faith

The danger implicit in these "traditionalistic", dogmatic modes of existence is not so much the courses of action that they pursue (obnoxious as they may be), but the active suppression of unorthodox approaches, experimentation, and radical restructurings of thought and social form necessary for further growth. The individual, movement, or society stagnates, unable to creatively innovate, to restructure itself to adapt to new challenges.

At the root of the problem is an insecurity of identity both on the individual and social level. Counterexamples throw identified roles and social norms into question, delegitimizing them, making them appear absurd. To those with an identity invested in them, social norms must be preserved to preserve dignity and meaning in existence.<sup>10</sup>

We must break out of such norms, whether of society or of the move-

ment, to unstrangle both, to revitalize both. The psychologist Robert Jay Lifton has summarized my analysis and predispositions quite well:

Most of the revolutionary ideologies of the past have been notable in providing elaborate blueprints for individual and collective immortality, specifications of ultimate cause and ultimate effect, theological in tone and scientific in claim. For present day revolutionaries to reject these Cartesian litanies is to take seriously some of the important psychological and historical insights of the last few decades. For they are rejecting an oppressive ideological totalism — with its demand for control of all communication in a milieu, its imposed guilt and cult of purity and confession, its loading of the language, its principles of doctrine over person and even dispensing of existence itself (in the sense that sharp lines are drawn between those whose right to exist can be recognized and those who possess no such right). This rejection, at its best, represents a quest by the young for a new kind of revolution — one perhaps no less enduring in historical impact, but devoid in the claim of omniscience, and of the catastrophic chain of human manipulations stemming from that claim. In other words the young resist the suffocating personal boundaries imposed by other revolutions.<sup>11</sup>



We need to work to transform the monological styles of our own demonstrations and mass meetings along with the dominant communicational structures of our society into more dialogical, open ended forms. In doing this we will need to develop a tolerance for other ideologies, modes of expression, and personality styles in dialogue with our own. A certain

pragmatic relativism is necessary if such a libertarian, dialogical framework is to function.<sup>12</sup> We must listen to those views which are relevant to our needs and aspirations, and while not necessarily agreeing with them, examine them "as if" they were true. We will then develop the facility to think in other "languages", other systems of belief, and other cultural norms; understanding our enemies' points of view as well as our own. We will then be free to fight for the kind of world we deeply want to see to arise, not the only world we know, and not the preordained, inevitable, "morally correct" wave of the future.

Our cognitive world will similarly change, adopting those aspects of each culture, tradition, or ideology which seems most beneficial from the standpoint of our constantly redefined goals. Instead of one doctrine to completely orient our entire world, we will adopt aspects of many, creating new frameworks whenever possible. In selecting between competing, plausible theories and strategies we will strengthen our ability to distance ourselves from our "theories of action", increasing our capacity to see when such approaches become counterproductive or irrelevant to our aspirations.

Instead of one apocalyptic revolution, we should try to build into ourselves and our organizations the capacity for permanent innovation and change in all dimensions. Instead of relying on an organizing principle for change, a Design from doctrine or latent traditionalistic norms, we should substitute experimentation and extensive communication. Pluralistic modes of experimentation allow the greatest degree of creativity; the whole group is not bound by one strategy and autonomous, heterogeneous subgroupings are encouraged to take their own paths. Coupled with a libertarian organizational framework for communications, where groups "spontaneously" assemble and disassemble task forces according to the current needs of each constituent group, the process becomes "self-organizing". The movement possesses a constantly reorganizing network of interacting individuals, groups, and concerns, constantly changing and evolving but without an official ideology or determinate end state. Within such a movement radical restructurings can be facilitated; permanent, ongoing revolution can become the norm instead of the exception.

Of course this is only my hope and my preference.

There is little use in devising a system of thought about the nature of the trap if the only thing to do in order to get out of the trap is to know the

trap and find the exit. Everything else is utterly useless: Singing hymns about the suffering in the trap... or making poems about the freedom outside of the trap, dreamed of within the trap... The first thing to do is to find the exit out of the trap. The nature of the trap has no interest whatsoever beyond this one crucial point: WHERE IS THE EXIT OUT OF THE TRAP?

— WILHELM REICH

— Peter Cariani

If you think you're free, there's no escape possible:  
Baba Ram Dass



1. Erich Fromm discusses the psychological motivation for this drive towards submission to a movement of this sort in *Escape From Freedom* (1941). He discusses three modes of escape from self-identity within the context of Fascism: authoritarianism, destructiveness, and automaton conformity. The first and the last seem most applicable to religious and political sects today. In addition Eric Hoffer's *The True Believer* (1951) is a postwar antitotalitarian tract on the sociology and psychology of such mass movements.
2. Within the context of radical demonstrations, chanting slogans is meant to fill this role of demonstrating unity. Marching in tight rows, five or six abreast, also demonstrates unity by subordinating the participants to the demonstration. Needless to say, chanting destroys the possibility of dialogue between demonstrators themselves and between demonstrators and interested bystanders. It further prepares the uninitiated for direction by the marshalls (the organizers of the event) for which chants to shout, where to march and which projects to pursue after the demo is over.
3. One means of sparking self-reflection is to offer a counter-example which parodies the believer's views to the point of absurdity, as in *The Ruling Class*, where two madmen each claiming to be God are placed in the same room as therapy. When accosted on the same streetcorner daily by the same believer (who wants me to take a "personality test") with whom discourse has failed, I find that silently handing out a deaf-mute card works wonders.

4. Many of these are articulated in depth in a mid-1950's study of Chinese brainwashing, *Coercive Persuasion* (1961) by E.H. Schein. The analysis explores both the structure of belief and the social setting of belief change. Unfortunately the work only deals with Chinese Communist ideology, and does not address similarities with beliefs found in "democratic" societies.
5. This was essentially the same rationale used by the television networks to suppress broadcast of the filmed statement made by the Iranian captors of American hostages. Calls for unity are also often used to suppress dissenting points of view on a national level, as in the case of Senator Kennedy's criticism of the Shah, and on a movement level. For example, my affinity group was, for a time, told we could not give a presentation on nonviolent direct action against nuclear power plants at a "progressive" set of teach-ins at MIT because it would make the antinuke movement look divided, (which, in fact, it is).
6. For more elaboration on these dichotomies and of a dialogical vs. antialogical action, see Paolo Friere's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968). Friere has a theory of education which places students and teachers on equal terms, in two-way rather than one-way conversation. This line of thinking is also shared by Ivan Illich in his critiques of professionalization.
7. He goes on to note that the large, bureaucratic mail order social change organizations do the same thing: the amount of absolution is proportional to the amount of the check sent in return.
8. This is not to say that sexism, racism, authoritarianism, imperialism, classism, intellectual snobbery, and the other oppressions/injustices do not exist. There are times when such labels are warranted: when the offender is aware of the injustice and the meaning of the label, and continues to consciously support it. In most cases, however, the labels are not used to express moral outrage but to punish other people for having views different from their own.
9. A sense of humor seems to require both a distancing from one's immediate situation and more than one semantic context for comprehending the irony in the joke. As the punch line comes around interpretation of the joke leaps from one meaning to another as in a Gestalt switch. (The people who do catastrophe theory claim to have an explanation for this process.) In any case, since true believers are working within one conception of things, they can't seem to comprehend humor based on other systems. What's left are the "technical" jokes around different doctrinal interpretations.
10. I believe that much of the opposition of conservative, tradition-oriented women to women's liberation lies in this insecurity in the face of much greater freedom for choosing alternatives to traditional roles.
11. Robert Jay Lifton, *Boundaries* (1969) Simon & Shuster, p. 97  
I discovered this book having already written and sketched out the overwhelming bulk of this essay, it's a bit embarrassing to have one's entire psyche and system of beliefs characterized, but I suppose it's deserved since it is precisely what I attempt to do to true believers.
12. Paul Feyerabend in *Science in a Free Society* (1978) New Left Books, advocates such Dadaistic framework for scientific advancement, rejecting any constraints on methodology and content as being destructive to future development. He also argues that science, like religion, should be separated from the state, and that lay people should have democratic control over publicly funded scientific research.

## LETTERS

Dear Comrades,

It was with slight nostalgia and substantial frustration that I read the interview with Cloward and Piven in issue #2 of *Black Rose*. It recalled a period in my life, when as a "welfare mother", I invested much energy and optimism in the struggle for "welfare rights." The optimism that cast a slightly rosy haze over events during that period, accounts for the nostalgia. The actuality of what was taking place then, and how little has been learned from this history in retrospect, accounts for the substantial frustration I experienced reading the interview.

By making some criticism of these events, I don't mean to imply that Piven and Cloward are solely or even mainly responsible for influencing the direction and outcome taken by those events. To do so would be giving far too much credit and/or far too much blame. Rather, I would apply an assessment similar to their assessment of apparently "spontaneous" social movements actually being the result of a long-term welling up of social forces culminating in a particular situation. Thus, in assessing their theories and analyses I find their thinking influenced by previous and traditional sociologic thought churned out by a long line of academics before them: drawing on established dogma, upholding cherished prejudices, ignoring reality where it conflicts with the basic parameters of academically acceptable social theory. This tradition of social theory, and its perpetuation, is well pointed out by



Dobash and Dobash in their work *The Role of the Sociologist in the Struggle of Women Against Repression* (University of Stirling, Scotland, 1977).

In short, Cloward and Piven are products of their time and place. They, and those who peopled the social movement they analyzed, exist in two different worlds. Piven and Cloward seem unable or unwilling to bridge the gap to recognize the reality of that other world that most women must cope with daily.

Cloward and Piven give lip service to the importance of "understanding and identifying the institutional position of different groups and analyzing the kinds of power available to them," and that, "goals emerge out of people's understanding" (or their spokesperson's understanding) of "what's wrong with their situation." Not incidentally, the term used by NWRO

(National Welfare Rights Organization) was always "spokesman" not "spokesperson" and this terminology fairly represents the general level of understanding given to "welfare mothers" by those who shaped the strategy and analysis of NWRO and helped carry it out. There was not just a lack of understanding and identifying the position of "welfare mothers", instead there was real resistance against dealing with the reality of our lives. Issues such as: the economic alternatives of women (as women) to welfare, the status of female-headed families, the role of women in the family, the unwaged and unrecognized work of women in the home, the lack of options for childcare, and the myriad of other issues that constitute the bedrock of "welfare mothers" existence were suppressed or ignored by NWRO.

Far from understanding and attempting to identify the position of "welfare mothers", NWRO sought to contemptuously suppress any analysis or understanding of their position and instead manipulated women as a tool in trying to gain a guaranteed annual income. In most cases, this goal constituted a "hidden agenda" that didn't allow for discussion or input from "welfare mothers" and further testified to the contempt in which their opinions were held. (Of course, if discussion on this topic were opened, it might bring up embarrassing questions like: Why was the most economically vulnerable segment of the population being used as shock troops on this issue? Why were women who didn't even get paid for the work they did [in the home] expected to struggle alone to secure this benefit for everyone? Why weren't the ones who actually got paid for most of their work, received the highest pay, and have the most power [men] taking the brunt of this struggle that they would benefit from?)

Even the most superficial analysis of welfare would have yielded the fact that most welfare recipients are women and therefore what must be dealt with is the reason why it's most frequently women who are forced to resort to this economic option that's generally considered so degrading. Such an analysis would have led to questioning whether the stigma attached to welfare came a priori or whether it arose because mostly women are forced to avail themselves of welfare. Even a superficial analysis would also have had to note that all "welfare mothers" actually do work at home maintenance and childrearing, as the truism "every mother is a working mother" states. (In NWRO only women who worked outside the home were referred to as "working".)

Recognition of these realities would have led to an exploration of such questions as: why aren't women paid for their work?, why does unemployment money, where the recipients actually *aren't* working, have less of a stigma than welfare, where most of the recipients are working? A realistic analysis would also explore how women do wind up on welfare: battering husbands, lack of job opportunities, lack of childcare options, etc.? All of these issues lead back to the position of women that must constitute the basis of an realistic appraisal of the position of "welfare mothers."

The presence of these issues is assiduously ignored by Piven and Cloward. The discontent of "welfare mothers" (which they helped channel for their own ends) was merely part of the general discontent being felt and expressed by great numbers of women. Unfortunately, in the case of "welfare mothers" much of this discontent was redirected away from the issues that were of primary importance to them and onto issues that were secondary effects of their primary position. (Indeed,

it was quite a feat to aid in influencing such a great outpouring of energy and dissatisfaction away from any fundamental change.) Without dealing with or changing those primary conditions, there was little hope of having an effective impact or changing more distant economic structures in a way meaningful to women on welfare.

The perspectives of Cloward and Piven that impel them to ignore the issue of male supremacy in addressing welfare, manifest themselves quite clearly in their disparaging comments in regard to the women's movement and their obvious need to underrate and ignore its impact and potential. Knowing the women's movement quite well from a grass-roots level, I find the assessment of it by these two academics, vastly ironic. Their apparent ignorance of the issues that have been tackled by the women's movement, and the energy, sacrifice and endurance it has entailed, is appalling. The deep impact of these issues (economic discrimination, rape, battering, sexual harassment at work, childcare, etc.) on the lives of women of all classes and nationalities is something that any credible sociologist should be acutely aware of.

Unfortunately, Piven and Cloward seem not to have learned much from their association with NWRO, and its manipulative omissions and failures. Beyond their peculiar and fundamental failure in the area of women's position, the movement that Piven and Cloward describe in their interview was almost unrecognizable to me. As a "welfare mother" activist in NWRO, my view of its operation is very much at odds with the picture of that organization they paint. What I saw on an organizational level was a nascent bureaucracy, membership drives, disappearance and misuses of funds, cultivation of an elite corps of "spokesmen" handpicked by the

leadership of paid organizers, decisions taken without any consultation with the rank-and-file, etc. On a personal level what I saw was sexual exploitation of "welfare mothers" by the male organizers (tragically, some women were left with "another mouth to feed" after the NWRO organizers had moved on to newer pastures). Exploitation by the paid male organizers of the skills and energies of the "welfare mothers" for doing much of the organizing work was everywhere evident. Economic exploitation of the "welfare mothers" who provided meals to the paid organizers was also a matter of course. Sexist, degrading remarks to, and about, the "welfare mothers" was everyday practice in NWRO. Cloward and Piven seem oblivious also to these features that were very much part and parcel of NWRO.

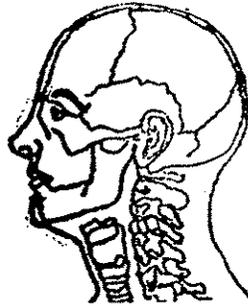
For "welfare mothers" though, I think the real tragedy lay in the fact that so many hopes were raised and so much energy extracted, while so little was actually changed. The end result, I believe, is that many of these women will refrain from trying again to exert control over their lives through a social movement.

Betsy Warrior

**Carter said: "Government cannot solve our problems. It can't set our goals. It cannot define our vision. Government cannot eliminate poverty, or provide a bountiful economy, or reduce inflation, or save our cities, or cure illiteracy, or provide energy."**

# The Politics of Disease: Cancer in a Metastatic Society

Richard Mandel



Cancer is a disease of the economic and social organization of 20th century post-industrial society. It is the only major cause of death that has continued to rise since 1900. It is as characteristic of this century as tuberculosis was of the 19th century or the plague was of the 13th century. Its causes lie in the very fabric of our lives. The approaches society has and has *not* attempted to use in the control of cancer result from contemporary attitudes toward health, disease and the environment. They underline our faith in and dependence on medical authority as the sole mediator of health and illness and demonstrate the power of the government bureaucracy, medical institutions and the pharmaceutical and health industry in setting priorities of research and treatment. This article will discuss why cancer has become such a common disease and what is being done about it. We shall examine the environmental factors that have dramatically increased human risk of cancer and which point toward a rational means of eliminating the disease as a serious cause of mortality.

Large quantities of money, time and effort have been wasted in trying to cure a disease that appears to be more susceptible to prevention. For example, over the last fifteen years the National Cancer Institute (NCI) has heavily funded a fruitless search for the viral cause of cancer even after it was apparent that, with small exception, viruses do not cause cancer. This incorrect para-

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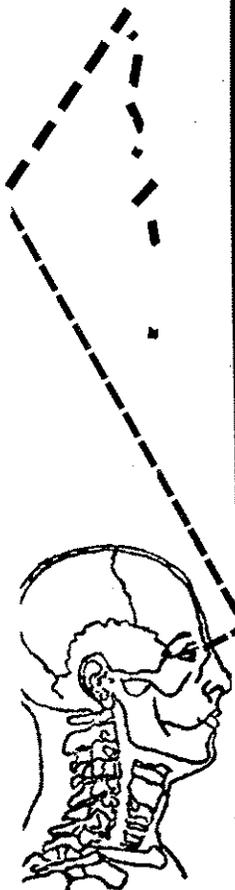
digm has been pursued for so long not because of its scientific merit but because of the influence of the dramatic cure of polio with the development of the Salk Vaccine. Other misguided attempts directed toward curing cancer include: the random screening of chemicals for antitumor properties and the development of dangerous screening programs for early detection where increased risk of getting cancer as a result of the screening itself outweighs any benefit of early detection.

It is not simply folly, however, to search for a cure for a disease that may be prevented. Rather it is consistent with a global view underlying a system controlled by a powerful bureaucracy in government, industry and medicine. It results from an unwillingness on the part of an economic system to sacrifice profit for workers' safety, to absorb the social costs of pollution, to abandon nonecological and in the long run harmful methods of production, and transform production to a more human scale using technology to meet human needs. It results from the institutionalization of health care with the creation of an industry designed and run more for its own benefit than for that of the people it should serve. It also results from our overall worldview, honed by centuries of faith in the progress of modern scientific and philosophical thought.

Much of the modern philosophical and scientific thought is grounded in a dualistic model of existence which reinforces objectification of the individual and of the environment. This dualism is strongly expressed by the separation of mind from body and of self from other. The body has been defined as separate from and alien to the mind but under its control. Human judgment, intelligence and all of the higher qualities are attributed to the mind. The ideal of unity of mind and body with the two working in harmony has been lost. Contemporary medical attitudes often result from this same self-alienation and much of the force of medical technology and research has been directed toward interventions which



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reinforce this separation. This is most strongly expressed in attitudes toward health and sickness. The major concern of medicine is sickness rather than health. Good health, promoted by adequate preventative medicine, is unavailable because of the monopoly exercised by the medical profession. Their training, knowledge and care is directed toward curing illness and simply prolonging life instead of promoting wellness and improving the quality of life.

Similarly, there has been an objectification of the external world as separate and alien from self. This has allowed for the exploitation and neglect of the environment and the domination of other humans. This failure to conceive of or to perceive the fundamental wholeness and unity of life has prevented us from realizing that we are directly and indirectly affected by the external world and that our attitude towards it is a reflection of ourselves. The uncontrolled concept of private property is the concrete expression of this alienation. The wanton use of nuclear energy in the form of atomic weapons and in the construction of nuclear power plants is the concrete expression of the will to dominate both nature and human society. It is almost inevitable that there will be disregard for the environment when production is for profit, since the social costs of pollution are a public cost and difficult to quantify while the benefits of such pollution remain in private hands and readily translate into dollars and cents.

#### **"Cut It Out! Poison It! Burn It!" — The No Win War**

In 1971 Richard Nixon launched an "all out assault on cancer" with the National Cancer Act. It was to be a national crusade, a cure to be achieved by 1976 in time for the Bicentennial celebration. This was to be the 1970's version of the successful and equally meaningful venture to put a man on the moon. In the same year, Nixon was also directing the destruction of Indochina by bombing the Vietnamese into submission, with "peace"

to be achieved before 1972 in time for his reelection. The weapon for the War on Cancer was to be the usual one that our nation has become so accustomed to over the last forty years: massive amounts of money administered by the federal bureaucracy. The National Cancer Institute (NCI) budget immediately doubled as war was declared. Eight years and seven billion dollars later we are no closer to a cure than at the outset.

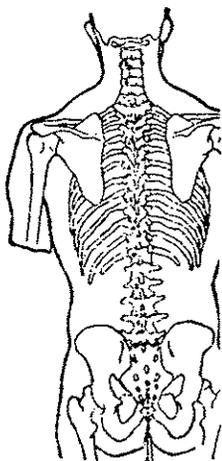
Indeed the language used to describe cancer borrows heavily from military metaphors and invokes the same simplistic attitudes that characterize American foreign policy with respect to wars of national liberation.<sup>1</sup> The American Cancer Society (ACS) emphasizes early detection with the "seven early warning signs" of cancer as a catechism. We are taught to keep constant vigilance on our bodies with "a checkup and a check."<sup>2</sup> In the words of Pogo, "We have met the enemy and he is us." Tumors are often characterized as invasive, they escape their primary sites, avoid, confuse and neutralize the body's natural defenses and set up outposts of secondary metastases at distant sites. It is usually these metastatic growths which ultimately cause mortality and not the primary sites. Treatment involves the use of the whole arsenal of medical science including radical surgery, radiation as well as highly toxic chemicals to kill the malignant cells. These methods of treatment are very primitive, nondiscriminating and not effective in the majority of cases. In the future these methods will probably be considered with the same horror and disdain that we now reserve for medieval surgery carried out by barbers without the benefit of anaesthetics or antiseptic techniques.

The oncologist (physician who specializes in cancer) stands at the head of the team, calling on the arsenal of weapons as his judgment dictates. Perhaps a surgical strike is needed. Surgery often removes large regions of normal tissue surrounding the tumor. It is difficult to be certain whether all of the cancerous cells have been

#### **Notes**

1. The metaphors associated with cancer have been examined in *Illness as Metaphor* by Susan Sontag. An analysis of these metaphors is useful because it illuminates contemporary attitudes toward cancer and helps to explain how we attempt to deal with the disease both physically and psychologically.

2. Actually, early detection is of little value. It has the dubious benefit of increasing apparent survival since it increases the probability that the victim will survive five years—the time scale upon which the survival statistics are generally based. This ACS program which emphasizes individual responsibility without providing necessary information on the role of environmental and occupational factors has the overall effect of "blaming the victim."



removed and the continued presence of even one is sufficient to reestablish it. Chemotherapy is generally non-specific and attacks rapidly growing normal cells with the same avidity as cancerous cells. It is often difficult to distinguish between normal cells and cancer cells and nearly any damage to the body is justified if it kills cancer cells. This is quite analogous to many military operations carried out in Vietnam in which towns were completely destroyed in order to save them from themselves.

It is no coincidence that the language of the military and medicine are often interchangeable. The rigor of training and the process of initiation is similar in both cases. They both perceive themselves as defenders of human welfare, they are both hierarchically organized elites; they both reap great financial rewards from the federal government, the military through the Department of Defense and the medical through the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW). They both have extensive ties to industry through either the defense industry or through the pharmaceutical and health industry. In fact, many defense contractors also supply hospitals with costly and sophisticated equipment for diagnosis and treatment.

### The Theocracy of Medicine

In ancient Greece during the 4th century B.C., a gradual change in attitudes toward health and disease occurred. Most of those details are now lost in antiquity but nonetheless we are able to reconstruct in broad outline the nature of that transition. In the Museum of Athens there is a marble bust from around 380 B.C. Depicted is Hygeia, a serene benevolent maiden personifying health by her balanced and reasonable demeanor. Hygeia was not fashioned after a real person, rather she was abstracted from the concept of health and her name was taken from the word meaning health. This feminine personification of health was soon superseded by Asclepius. Apparently modeled after a living man, Asclepius

was the first physician who mastered the use of the knife. In the iconography of the third century B.C. Asclepius is depicted as a handsome, self-assured young god accompanied by his handmaidens, Hygiea on the right and Panakeia (the goddess of the cure) on the left.

These characters put into relief current attitudes regarding health and disease as well as help to define the role that the physician plays in our society. The young masculine god Asclepius, the wielder of the knife, is the personification of the physician. He practices surgery and dispenses panaceas. Even today, the surgeon is considered the most worthy of deification in the medical hierarchy. The prestige accorded surgeons in the medical hierarchy, in the media and in terms of their salary and position is strong evidence of the focus of contemporary medicine. The ideal of Hygeia—health resulting from the ideal of physical and spiritual balance—a self-contained attitude not relying overly on dramatic intervention, has been lost. Preventive medicine is a small step in return to this principle. Also lost or excluded is the feminine experience in this patriarchal world of medicine where woman are relegated to minor roles. We have placed our faith in Science, the religion of the 20th century, in the wielder of the scalpel and the dispensers of drugs. Unfortunately, these aids are woefully inadequate in dealing with human cancer. The ideal of Hygeia has been replaced by the theocracy of medicine with the hope and promise of a cure dispensed like a eucharistic wafer. For now this cure remains elusive while we are shepherded by government, industry and science through fields contaminated with the very causes of the disease.

### The Impact of Cancer

It is estimated that this year over 3/4 million people will be diagnosed as having cancer and over 400 thousand people will die from the disease. Cancer strikes all age groups, not just the elderly.<sup>3</sup> The direct costs of can-

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3. It is the leading cause of death among women between ages 35 to 54 and among males it is the second leading cause of death for all age groups, except between 15 to 34 years, where it is exceeded by violent deaths, accidents, homicide and suicide.

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4. For a complete discussion of cancer and its impact see *The Politics of Cancer* by Samuel S. Epstein (1979).

cer treatment are estimated at an average of 20 thousand dollars for an individual and the total national costs are estimated at 30 billion dollars yearly.<sup>4</sup> This underestimates the real total which includes many costs still unrecognized.

There are few miracles available in treatment of cancer. Except for a small number of specific tumors which have yielded to chemotherapy, the results are disappointing. The ability of medical science to treat cancer has not improved substantially in the last half century. Improvements in the five year survival statistics are not due to advances in treatment itself so much as advances in surgical and hospital procedures including the use of antibiotics and transfusions.

The survival statistics on the treatment of breast cancer, which represents one-fourth of all female malignancy, are virtually unchanged over the last 50 years. All breast cancer patients have 25% risk of recurrence, even those with the simplest cases diagnosed early. A recent retrospective survey by a pathologist review committee indicated that of 506 diagnosed and treated minimal cases of breast cancer, between 66 and 88 of them were benign. Complete mastectomies were performed on 71 patients although there is no evidence to indicate that this form of treatment is more effective than simple excision of the tumor and surrounding tissue.

The statistics are yet more depressing for lung cancer, a disease which accounts for 22% of all male cancers. The five year survival statistics show 95% per cent mortality. Most lung cancers are so advanced by the time they are detected only 25% of all patients can be helped at all by surgery and mortality resulting from the surgery itself is considerable.

#### Social Change Against Social Disease

The tremendous improvements in life expectancy the world has experienced since the middle of the 19th century have been in large part due to the drop in infant

mortality. Until that time about half of all children born in the U.S. died before the age of five of infectious diseases such as smallpox, scarlet fever and dysentery. The discovery of microbes as a primary vector of transmission of these diseases was an important finding, but microbial epidemics were not eliminated by treatment with drugs but rather by improvements in nutrition, sanitation and through human adaptation. The diseases of the 19th century in which the greatest strides were made were precisely those that responded to the social and economic reforms after industrialization. Tuberculosis is an example of a disease which followed such a course. Similarly, nutritional diseases such as ricketts in urban area, pellagra in the south, and scurvy have largely disappeared as a result of overall improved nutrition and *not by vitamin treatments*. This point is often overlooked but is central to this discussion, that is, changes in the social and economic structure of our society are largely responsible for the improved health we experience while medicine, although important, is secondary.

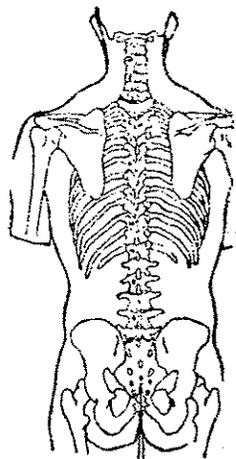
Our current need is therefore to discover and change those aspects of our lives that have led to those diseases which are endemic to the 20th century. Furthermore, we must reexamine the role that medicine has played and can play in overcoming these maladies. The magic bullet is social change not vaccination.

#### Lessons of History

There are many parallels to be made between the attitude toward the causes of and course of tuberculosis and that of cancer. We are concerned with the evolution in treatment and understanding of the causes, cure and prevention of TB and object lessons which can be applied to our present day situation with cancer. The decline in mortality due to TB during the latter half of the 19th century occurred even before the microbiological origin of the disease and its capacity for contagious transmission was understood.<sup>5</sup> Undoubtedly part



5. The myth of the progress of medicine has been continually shattered by the writings of Rene Dubos. In *The White Plague: Tuberculosis, Man and Society* (1953) by Rene & Jean Dubos, detailed arguments debunking the importance of medical discovery and treatment of TB are presented. *Man Adapting* by Rene Dubos shows how social and natural forces have played the most important roles in determining human response to disease.



6. Obviously, this mechanism of adaptation does not work well with cancer since it is primarily a disease of adults who already have reproduced and transmitted any genetic susceptibility to their offspring.

of this decline is explicable by the adaptation of the exposed population by elimination of those most susceptible and increased immunity for the rest.<sup>6</sup> Urban areas have always been a very fertile breeding ground for infectious disease due to the ease of transmission as well as the ensuing ability of the disease to be in a continuous infective state in some part of the relatively larger urban population. The lack of knowledge regarding the contagious nature of the disease certainly prevented effective isolation of patients and inhibition of the spread of the microorganism.

At the same time, however, TB found a very fertile environment in the social and economic conditions in the industrial city of the early 19th century. Long hours of exhausting work in damp, badly ventilated and heated offices and factories were the norm. Living conditions were equally bleak with overcrowding of tenements and dormitories, inadequate nourishment, and deplorable sanitary conditions. Children were employed starting at the age of seven or eight and accounts of the time describe them as pale, sickly and suffering from obvious malnutrition. In addition to physical hardship, the social fabric of their lives was ripped apart by their uprooting from Europe and by their relocation in the unhealthy environment of crowded city ghettos. Similar disease patterns still appear in developing nations as they go through the comparable stages of industrialization despite the medical advances of the last hundred years.

The inadvertent approach society took in TB treatment was primarily a social one. Social change was influenced by diverse sources including: utopians who organized model factories, unions which organized at the work place, social reformers who aroused the public through magazine serializations which graphically painted pictures of the horrible conditions in the slums, and radical groups advocating revolution. The labor movement began to win better working conditions. Public health programs improved living conditions in the city:

pure water became available, better quality and variety of food became available, sanitation and waste disposal improved. All of this was done in the name of humanitarian ideals and was begun even before the cause of TB was discovered. In summary, improved health does not result so much from the great discoveries of medical science, more so from the social and economic patterns which have created an healthful environment. We will now observe how cancer is also susceptible to a similar analysis.

#### Waiting for the Cure— Causes of Cancer

Since 1970 or earlier it has been known that a large proportion of human cancer is caused by specific environmental factors.<sup>7</sup> It is currently estimated that 70-90% of all cancer is related to these factors, some of which occur naturally but most of which enter the environment through human activities. These factors include: occupational sources, in the manufacture of industrial products, chemicals now part of the production and distribution of foodstuffs, pollution in the form of hydrocarbon exhausts from tobacco and other smoke, mine tailings, radiation, diet and drugs.

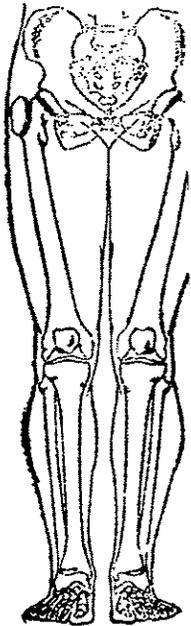
Currently over 50 thousand chemicals are produced and used and nearly one thousand are introduced into the environment yearly. A large fraction of these chemicals have appeared since World War II and their production grows yearly.<sup>8</sup>

In 1978, over 90 thousand Americans died of lung cancer. Despite known risks people continue to smoke.<sup>9</sup> Along with the changed lifestyle of women we are finding an increased smoking habit and a rapid growth in lung cancer amongst women. Women began to smoke in large numbers in the 1940's, toward the end of World War II, and, with a thirty year induction period from the time of exposure until the appearance of clinical signs, we are beginning to see the effect of cigarette smoking on women. Despite this fact, little is being done to elim-

7. The earliest observation linking cancer to environmental factors was made over two hundred years ago in which an occupationally caused human cancer was shown to be due to exposure of chimney sweeps to soot. Elimination of exposure prevented the disease. Despite the importance of such findings there has been little interest in eliminating the causes of cancer either by medical science, government, or industry. In fact, there is strong pressure to ignore these findings.

8. For example, the production of two chemicals recently found to be carcinogenic, vinyl chloride and dichloroethane has increased by about ten fold since 1960. However, it should be noted that most chemicals are not carcinogenic and that elimination of carcinogens will not return us to the Stone Age as proffered by those opposed to such a ban.

9. For example, at almost every Black Rose editorial meeting Robert D'Attilio smokes either cigarettes or cigars.



10. Many of the problems discussed in this present article were prophetically revealed and comprehensively examined in the 1962 publication, *Our Synthetic Environment* by Lewis Herber, a pseudonym of Murray Bookchin. In its current revised edition (1974) it is still of great value.

inate cigarettes.

The urban environment in which 90% of all Americans live is an unhealthy one.<sup>10</sup> The air is fouled by the presence of factory and power plant emissions and automobile exhaust. Hydrocarbon pollutants resulting from the burning of fossil fuels give rise to a large variety of products known to be carcinogenic. The concentration of one of these chemicals, benzo(a)pyrene, has been determined to be up to one hundred times more plentiful in urban areas than in rural regions. Gasoline additives include benzene, an agent known to cause leukemia as well as other carcinogens. Similarly, emissions into streams and rivers and unregulated dumping of hazardous wastes which eventually find their way into water supplies present further hazards.

#### Food

Our food is contaminated with fungicides, herbicides, preservatives, artificial colors and flavors. Farming has been corrupted by agribusiness, a capital intensive industry where chemicals are used heavily and profitability is the ultimate measure of quality. It is a production system that simplistically reduces complex ecologies to assembly lines consisting of square miles of geometric arrays of monocropped fields managed by chemical control. Such modes of production have enabled California to produce 70% of all fresh fruits and vegetables in the U.S. and requires Massachusetts to import 85% of its fresh produce. Animals are pumped up with diethylstilbestrol (DES), a known carcinogen, to bring them to market more rapidly. Meats are preserved with nitrates and nitrites. The pattern of both centralized production and distribution requires the use of extensive preservatives to allow for the long journey between farm and plate and allow enough time for each middleman to handle the product.

It would be bad enough if we were only alienated from food production, but we are also alienated from

good taste and nutrition.<sup>11</sup> Our dietary habits, so affected by advertising and marketing and so unobservant of our health needs, have led to large scale obesity unparalleled in the world and the subsequent popularization of artificially sweetened beverages containing saccharin (a weak carcinogen) as a means of controlling caloric intake. Furthermore, there has been shown to be correlation between lower intestinal cancer and the quantity of fat in the diet. This form of cancer has steadily increased in the 20th century.

#### Occupation

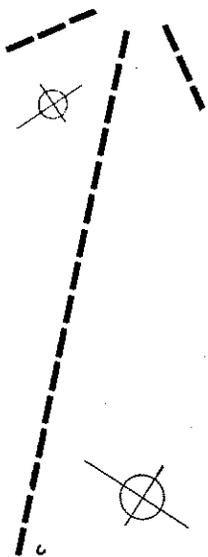
The harmful effects of carcinogens is seen most clearly in the human guinea pigs exposed at the workplace.<sup>12</sup> Occupational cancers are most evident because of the extremely high levels and long periods of exposure and are illustrated by the following examples. Eighty years ago it was discovered that aromatic amines cause bladder cancer among German dye workers. In addition, a later British report indicated that exposure to one of these chemicals (2-naphthylamine) causes bladder cancer with an incidence 80 times greater than the population at large. These substances were banned at least 20 years ago in most of the European industrial nations; in the U.S. workers are still exposed.

Asbestos is widely found in the environment, due to its use in construction, shipbuilding, insulation, textile and automotive industries. It is detected in significant concentrations in urban areas<sup>13</sup> but is present at the most hazardous concentrations in occupational settings in the mining and processing of the ore and its fabrication into products. Epidemiological studies indicate a four fold increase in the overall incidence of cancer and an 8-fold increase in lung cancer, including an otherwise exceedingly rare form called mesothelioma (in the lining of the lungs). The effects of such industrial pollution are not limited only to workers. All people exposed suffer increased risk. For example, a 42 year old man whose

11. See John and Karen Hess, *The Taste of America* which details the decline in U.S. cuisine. They ascribe much of the blame to the ascendancy of industrial food processing during the Civil War and to the popularization of those products and the "science of nutrition" by modernists such as Fannie Farmer.

12. It is estimated in a 1978 report from the NCI that 20-38% of all cancer is related to occupational factors.

13. Several years ago the Environmental Protection Agency had to halt the demolition of a building in Washington D.C. because of the dangerously high levels of asbestos dust found in the air in the neighborhood.



father worked at an asbestos plant for three years until he was 11 years old, and a 40 year old woman whose father worked in a plant for five years during one of which she delivered lunch to him, both developed mesothelioma as a result of seemingly insignificant exposure.

### Energy

The demand for energy by an overcentralized consumerist society is a further present and ever increasing future risk. The options currently considered by the federal government and the energy industries to meet future energy needs are a choice between two poor alternatives: synthetic fuels and nuclear power. The future risks resulting from the production and combustion of synthetic fuels are probably less dangerous than the Pandora's box opened by nuclear power. Nuclear energy production in its totality including extraction, refining, utilization and disposal of wastes is destructive of our health and potentially lethal to human life. The mining of uranium is an extremely hazardous job which causes an incidence of lung cancer ten times higher for miners than for the population at large. The wastes produced at the mine known as tailings contain high concentrations of arsenic (a probable carcinogen) and radioactive "daughters" of uranium (known carcinogens). The tip of the toxicological iceberg has surfaced in Butte, Montana, where it was found that people are being exposed to high levels of radiation through the leakage of gaseous radon from nonferrous mines located beneath the town, and again in several places in Colorado where people were forced to abandon homes with concrete foundations constructed with radioactive mine tailings. Aside from the probable results of a nuclear meltdown or similar disaster such as nuclear war, the problems of transporting and storing for 250,000 years the increasing quantities of high level nuclear wastes represents the ultimate in egotism. By their own inadequate standards, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission admits that there is no present solution to

the storage of high-level radioactive wastes. One gram of plutonium spread around the world is enough to give lung cancer to each human now alive. There are many possible energy alternatives to nuclear power. However, the current choices have been made on the basis of short term economic benefits without including the costs of present and future public health: our costs and their benefits.

### Cleaning Up Our Act—Possibilities and Problems

We are losing time and present and future lives by waiting for a cure. The causes of cancer are primarily environmental. Economic and social factors, not scientific ignorance, prevent us from eliminating cancer as a major disease. Cancer is not a disease with a single causative agent. It is a family of diseases initiated by a wide variety of environmental factors. Therefore, different strategies to minimize human exposure to the many different carcinogens are required. Simpleminded sweeping regulation, the great strength of bureaucratic organizations, will not adequately solve the problem.<sup>14</sup>

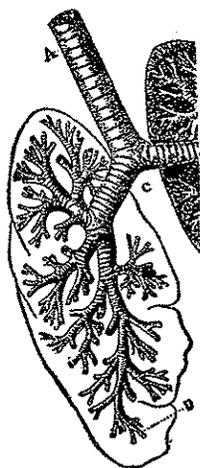
The structure of the medical profession and of health care in our society has prevented us from perceiving cancer as a public health problem and has suffocated progressive change. Predictably, most cancer directed medical resources go towards diagnosis and treatment. Resources need to be directed more toward prevention. Cancer needs to be recognized as preventable. Attempts by medical science to identify high-susceptibility populations is yet another way that it serves special interests and reinforces the status quo. Identification of such populations is a variation on "blaming the victim" and does not justify or ameliorate chemical hazards. It is clear that medical services must be made more responsive to human needs. Reliable and inexpensive health care is a human right as important as any other human freedom. The women's movement has provided a useful critique of the patriarchal nature of medi-

14. The reliance on institutions to solve our problems is morally and psychologically disabling, and an exercise in impotence. Ivan Illich in *Deschooling Society* (1970) recognizes the close relationship between the effects of physical and social consumption. "It is now generally recognized that the physical environment will soon be destroyed by biochemical pollution unless we reverse current trends in the production of physical goods. It should also be recognized that social and personal life is threatened equally by HEW pollution, the inevitable by-product of obligatory and competitive consumption of welfare." He has extended this analysis to the medical establishment and identified the "medicalization of life" and "expropriation of health" in *Medical Nemesis* (1976).

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...cine, but the replacement of men by women as doctors and women by men as nurses, seen as adequate goals by liberals, does not address the problems of lack of patient information and control over their care, problems resulting from hierarchy and domination. Hospitals should not be centers for the practice of divine intervention, they should be part of a human support system fostering good health and prevention of disease. Moreover, the environment is an important part of our support system.

On an individual level, informed change in personal habits and lifestyle can have a strong impact on the chances of getting cancer. We have the greatest degree of control over the products we consume: the food we eat, the beverages we drink, the weeds we smoke, the drugs and cosmetics we use. The large differences in the incidence of organ-specific cancers in different nations of the world, in different regions of the same country, and in different ethnic and social populations in the same region point out the importance of lifestyle and personal choice. Until recently, however, due to lack of interest by the NCI and the presence of strong special interests in the medical community, the role of nutrition and environment in cancer has not been adequately investigated. People must realize that everything is not carcinogenic and that reasonable choices are available. The myth that everything will give you cancer is a convenient excuse for those who profit by it. Unfortunately, the control we have over our lives and circumstances is limited by the nature of our society. We are dependent on the testing and labeling of consumer products. We often have little control over public decisions and institutional choices which determine our exposure to many carcinogens.

In the workplace, the nature, organization and control of work must be transformed. The workers themselves must determine their safe exposure on the job. This contrasts markedly with the present situation in many factories where the employees are kept ignorant of

ever present risk, where the determination of risk levels is falsified, where workers are denied access to medical records and other information and where simple safety procedures are denied for the sake of profit. In many cases the regulatory agencies have to rely on statistics of carcinogenic risk provided by the industry itself. The community in which the factory is located must have control over the levels of pollutants it is exposed to. The profitability of carcinogens must be eliminated. The threat of job loss, a means of avoiding compliance to minimum standards, is a common ploy when profit is the bottom line.

Public policy decisions are often made by federal and local government based on political considerations resulting from the pressure of special interests. For example, the militant anti-smoking campaign started by HEW was squelched under pressure from the Carter administration trying to curry favor in the tobacco growing states. Such policy decisions are often molded and played out in the forum of mass media where a balanced viewpoint is rarely obtained because of industry's resources and their access to advertising. Special interests focus on the immediate loss of jobs and the increased cost consumers will be required to pay for goods and services. This is the extent of their social consciousness—no more than a disguised profit and loss statement. Balanced against their red ink are present and future social losses which are enormous but difficult to quantify. Mass movements such as the anti-nuclear movement can have important impact by challenging the hegemony of business interests and demanding not only safety and health but economic autonomy and freedom. But, "No Nukes" is not enough! Visions of a non-nuclear future must be developed or we will be forced to accept the future vision of corporate socialism, whether nuclear or non-nuclear. More fundamental is the pressing need to deinstitutionalize our lives. We can not and must not depend on government and private institu-





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tions to define and provide for our perceived needs.

It is almost unavoidable that mass technologies applied in centralized ways will lead to profound and harmful effects on the earth's ecology. Such technologies result from a knowledge-monopoly controlled by industry and government. Knowledge and technique is fostered to yield the best returns in profitability and control. As a result we are always left with few real alternatives with which to restructure our lives and social change is rendered much more difficult. At the same time, a theory of "Small is Beautiful" as proclaimed by E.F. Schumacher and others is inadequate without understanding and dealing with the problems of domination and control in both monetary and human terms and their effects on social organization. The potential for human freedom is not achieved by simply making the scale smaller, especially if profit remains the ultimate social determinant. It can be achieved when people are empowered by the acts of redefining and reclaiming control over their lives.

## Conversation with Augustin Souchy

*Augustin Souchy is a German anarchist of considerable experience. Souchy, born in 1892, was an anarchist activist in the anti-militarist movement which failed to head off the First World War. He attended sessions of The First International in Russia had arguments with Lenin over the brutal treatment of the Russian anarchists by the Bolsheviks and over the projected course of the International. He was the "Foreign Affairs Secretary" for the Spanish anarcho-syndicalist union, the CNT, during the Spanish Revolution and Civil War. Souchy also participated in the anarchist movement in South America and had first-hand experience of the Israeli kibbutzim. He is currently living in Munich and is as active in the anarchist movement as his age allows. His political memoirs, Beware, Anarchist! A Life for Freedom (Luchterhand), were published in 1977.*

When we met Souchy some three or more years ago as he was touring North America on behalf of the "reborn" CNT, he impressed us as one who had thought deeply on history and his own experience, one who was irrevocably committed to anarchism and freedom, and one who tried to understand the world in a principled but undogmatic fashion. We feel that all this comes across, albeit imperfectly, in the interview.

Yet this is surely a controversial interview, and this should be pointed out. Souchy is what is called a "reformist" anarchist, or more unkindly, a "collaborationist." He often in the interview presents as decided issues that are yet the subject of debate and disagreement. Some outstanding examples: The question of anarchism and violence is much thornier than Souchy would present it, with both Kropotkin and Malatesta, each well-known and influential anarchists, supporting violence against the State, though not indiscriminately so. Souchy does not mention that there is a great deal of disapproval within the anarchist movement of the Spanish

anarchists having joined the Republican government during the Revolution and Civil War. He also fails to mention that there were dissident German Marxists who were publicly opposed to militarism before the First World War and Bolshevism afterward. Nonetheless, despite our disagreements with some of what Souchy asserts, his positions are always reasonable, and we felt that this was an interesting, provocative interview, raising some points well worth consideration and discussion. Thus we decided to print it.

The interview was translated from the German periodical *Europäische Ideen*, Vol. 39, 1978, and was translated by James D. Pustejovsky. It was edited and prepared for publication by Michael Murphey, Nancy Driscoll and myself. We would like to thank Paul Breines for his assistance.

—Peter Abailard



**E I:** In a few words, what is anarchism and what do the anarchists want?

**A S:** There are several interpretations of anarchism. Translated literally anarchism means "orderlessness." From that, however, one is able to grasp very little. Naturally one wants to know how an unordered society is supposed to function. Whole books have been written on that subject and there have also been practical experiments as well. The most important of the latter are the collectives during the Spanish Civil War and the kibbutzim in Israel. The most popular definition would be: anarchism is equivalent to libertarian or free socialism. But I don't support the use of words with -isms in them. They are supposed to say everything, but from this clear generalization, libertarian socialism, comes very little which is concrete. Observed undogmatically, the themes of the French Revolu-

tion of 1789 were "Liberte, Egalite, Fraternite." This is what the anarchists want.

There are, moreover, many different currents within anarchism: the Individualists (Max Stirner), the Collectivists (Michael Bakunin), and the Communists (Peter Kropotkin), with but slight differences between the latter two. Proudhon, who is called the "Father of Anarchism", defined his interpretation in a letter from 1864 in these words:

Anarchy, if I may so express it, is a form of government or state of affairs in which the public and private conscience is built upon the development of knowledge and justice, a state which is just sufficient enough for the preservation of order and the security of all freedoms, where the principle of authority and police institutions, taxes, etc. are reduced to a minimum. A condition in which all forms of monarchy and centralization disappear, replaced by federative institutions and communal activity.

**E I:** A few years ago, Colin Ward, an English anarchist, wrote that anarchism is "... a theory of spontaneous order." What does that mean?

**A S:** "Spontaneous order" may at first appear to be a contradiction in terms, but actually it is not. The word "spontaneous" has a double meaning, one being "suddenly, without outside force," and the other being "free-willed, from inner impulses." Colin Ward means "free-willed order," the opposite of forced subordination.

**E I:** How is that related to one of the chief points of anarchistic theory, its aversion towards all state, church, legal, and police authority?

**A S:** Anarchism is a socio-cultural movement, not a political party for the conquest of power. Its focus is the critique of power, not the exercising of it. Power corrupts; that is well known. If the anarchists were to take part in power, they would also become corrupt. Their uniqueness and their contribution to progress lies in their very non-participation in practical politics. This is not to say, however, that they withdraw themselves from their social responsibilities.

After their initial partial victory over General Franco, the Spanish anarcho-syndicalists took part in the government, refusing, however, the dictatorship. And with that they differed from the Marxist Bolsheviks in Russia.

**E I:** It has been said, "All anarchists challenge not just institutional authority but even intellectual guidance as well." In fact, the "Fathers of Anarch-

ism", such as Proudhon and Bakunin, for example, thought of the learned and the intellectuals as the tyrants of the modern age. This tradition has continued in post-war anarchism. What is the reason for this passionate anti-intellectualism of anarchism?

**A S :** I have to disagree with you. Proudhon and Bakunin, for example, never turned against intellectuals on principle, as is easily proved by studying their writings. In the beginning of the international workers' movement, when the social gulf between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie was much larger, and the cultural gap much deeper between them, a certain mistrust for the upper classes by the underprivileged seemed justified. However, at the Geneva Congress of the federative wing of the First International, after the split between the Marxists and the Bakuninists, the Bakuninist worker representatives - predecessors of the anarchists - declared that an intellectual could be just as good a revolutionary as a worker. The anarchists Proudhon, son of a craftsman, and Bakunin, of aristocratic descent, were both intellectuals. In my almost seventy years of militancy in the international anarchist movement I have never encouraged workers to distrust intellectuals. In Germany, Gustav Landauer and Erich Muhsam, both anarchist theoreticians and intellectuals, enjoyed widespread support and trust among anarchist workers — and other groups as well.

**E I :** In principle have conceptions of the goals and strategies of anarchism changed since its beginnings in the previous century, and, if so, in what ways?

**A S :** The anarchistic theses of the previous century are still topical today. In the 1870's Bakunin wrote:

The new free society must be freed from the belief in God and instead support itself with a cult of love and attention to humanity. The foundation of the new social order should be the individual and collective freedom of the human conscience. Monarchy, social classes and degrees, economic and social privilege, all must be abolished. General conscription and the standing army must be dissolved; women must be set on an equal footing with men in all areas; public, judicial, and civil functionaries as well as community and regional representatives must be elected directly. The economic structure has to be organized from the bottom up, from the periphery to the centre. Furthermore, official religions and state churches will be abolished, and total freedom of speech, press, assembly, and union will all be guaranteed. Communities are to be autonomous and send representatives to the provincial administrations. They

can, on the other hand, organize to form a nation without coercion. Free nations should join together in a league of nations to maintain and defend both peace and freedom.

Political freedom presupposes economic equality. Social equality can only be attained, however, when the right of inheritance is done away with. Private property as well as means of production ought not be changed into state property, but should become collective property. A spontaneous collective economic order will take the place of the private capitalist order.

These are the main points of Michael Bakunin's programme. A few have already been realized today, others must still be fought for.

**E I :** One exceptional chapter of your book is dedicated to "Anarchism and Authority". There you dispute the claim that anarchism is a movement for power. "The anarchistic ideology, which is, after all, nothing other than a project for a social order without rule, expressly excludes violence and, more importantly, terror, for where there is no ruler and no ruled, assassinations and terror become superfluous." Does this mean, however, that no terror and violence are to be used to attain this goal?

**A S :** The principle of non-violence is inherent in anarchism, and belongs to the idea of non-rule. Would you trust someone who tells you, "Today I'm a devil, but tomorrow I'll be an angel?" In the anarchistic theory of society violence and terror are not to be found. When people say, "Terror arises from anarchist ideology," I respond that this statement is semantic nonsense, that anarchism is possible only in the absence of violence and terror. This must always be emphasized.

The mistaken identification of anarchism with violence and terror arose in the previous century. There were assassins who called themselves anarchists. Even in the twentieth century there have been a few assassinations committed by anarchists. I have known several thousands of anarchists, of whom but three were assassins: Alexander Berkman, Buenaventura Durruti, and Simon Radowitzky.

**E I :** You stress the non-violence of anarchism. But haven't anarchists been involved in violent revolutions?

**A S :** Comrade Richard Wagner, Bakunin's comrade-in-arms in the Dresden insurrection of May, 1849, yet one who certainly can not be called a preacher of violence, wrote in his famous essays on "Art and Revolution", "I

want to destroy this rule of one over the others. I want to shatter the violence of the mighty, of the law, and of property. I want to destroy this order of things, which divides a united humanity into hostile nations, into the powerful and the weak, the privileged and those without rights, and into the rich and the poor."

Max Stirner, the individualist anarchist theoretician, could not have formulated it any clearer. It is obvious that the destruction advocated by Wagner would not be attainable without the practice of violence. Yet it would be wrong to call him an apostle of violence. The same is true of Bakunin. His infamous saying, "The urge to destroy is a creative urge," does not mean destruction for its own sake but rather a demolishing of the old and of the oppressing, accompanied by a building up of the new, the liberating. His words can only be interpreted in this manner. Any other interpretation would not agree with Bakunin's intention.

In any case, anarchist theory is free of dogma. Whoever frees a people from oppressors, autocrats, dictators, or other people in power by the use of violence is not an anarchist. Violence has been till now the basic principle of all "archies" (from monarchy to oligarchy) and all "cracies" (from aristocracy to plutocracy to democracy). To maintain and defend a dominion violence is necessary. Only in an *anarchy*, an order without rule, does force become superficial.

**E I :** German terrorists such as Baader, Meinhof, Ensslin and others are always labeled as "anarchists" in the press. Were they anarchists?

**A S :** No. They themselves had explained in their basic declaration, with complete clarity, that they are Marxists, Leninists, and/or Maoists. The fact that they were labeled as anarchists in spite of this in the media is to be attributed to ignorance.

**E I :** You have said, "To this day, nationalist revolutionary terrorists, who are anything but anarchists, carry out assassinations without anyone ever making nationalism itself responsible for these crimes."

**A S :** There have been political assassinations for thousands of years. The Athenian tyrant Hipparchus fell at the hands of an assassin in 514 B.C. Since then many oppressors have been murdered without their assassins being anarchists. During the last few decades the world has been afflicted with acts of political terrorism to a degree never before seen. The perpetrators are fanatical nationalist revolutionaries: Latin American

guerillas, Tupamaros, Arabic Fedayin, Croatic Ustashi, Turkish nationalist students, Black Panthers, Basque ETA militants, Irish freedom fighters, as well as Leninists, Maoists, and Trotskyites. In contrast, the number of assassinations committed by anarchists in an entire century can be counted on one's fingers. Terrorist acts committed in the last ten years by nationalist revolutionaries could not fit on any list.

Terror does not arise from any particular ideology. *Individual* terrorism is a desperate weapon, one which is the *least effective of all* in realizing a free, stable social order. Organized *mass* terrorism is particularly reprehensible. The Stalinist forced collectivization terrorism cost many *Mushiks* their lives. And if we look back a bit further in history, we ought not forget the terror of the Inquisition in the Middle Ages under which hundreds of "heretics" and "witches" lost their lives. Anarchist ideology, therefore, cannot be connected with either individual or mass terror.

**E I :** Anarchism is said to be "anti-political", that is, the resolute denial of political reality — of *might*. This would seem to be a protest against reality in general.

**A S :** Anarchists have always been striving to influence the "polis", public affairs, in the direction of progress, freedom, and peace. They had pushed for popular action long before the phrase was in vogue. May Day, a world-wide workers' holiday, owes its origin to the initiatives of the Chicago anarchists, five of whom lost their lives in this struggle in 1886. In Mexico it was the anarchists who launched the slogan "Land and Freedom", and with this became the authors of Latin America's first agrarian reform in 1917. Throughout the world the anarchists, later joined by the radical pacifists, stood at the forefront of the anti-militarist and anti-war movements, which were quite neglected and perhaps sabotaged by the German Marxists. The anarcho-syndicalists more than any other group were responsible for the opposition to the Spanish military putsch of 1936.

**E I :** In your book you come to the following conclusion: "Drawing from my historical knowledge and my own practical experiences, no revolution can remove all social evils from the world, once and for all. The Great French Revolution, which abolished feudalism and absolute monarchy, was unable to prevent the then just beginning exploitation by private capitalism. The Russian Revolution displaced the Tsar, yet the new rulers



established a state-capitalist hierarchial dictatorship and police state which yet today robs the people of their freedoms while continuing social inequality." You must admit that such doubt about the historical success of practically all revolutions is surprising coming from the mouth of an anarchist. If not revolution, what then?

**AS:** Let me clarify a misunderstanding. After a reference to symptoms of degeneration in the Mexican Revolution, which I knew from my personal experience, I continue in the book: "It is the task of the following generations to prevent new abuses and social evils through constant popular actions; but, when this can not be done through peaceful means, it is then their task to remove them *through new revolutions*. So it was in the past, and by all indications it will be no different in the near future. The pendulum of history always moves back and forth between two poles — authority and freedom." Revolution and evolution are two phases of the same process. Revolution is just an accelerated evolution which flows on into a new revolution when it is not restrained in its rhythmic movement.

**EI:** This brings us to the question of the relationship of anarchism to the Marxist theory of "class struggle."

**AS:** This historically controversial thesis, which says that the history of mankind is the history of class struggle, has no meaning for the fight for freedom and the progress of humanity. The Marxist objective, the seizing of political power, leads to the establishment of a new power elite. Anarchists have supported the workers' struggle for better living conditions and more freedom for a long time. No special theory is needed for that. Its "leitmotiv" was, and is, humanism. Proudhon proposed methods for the abolition of class differences. These included libertarian unions as well as cooperatives of producers and consumers, and federative cooperation on local, regional, and national levels. That was a class struggle of a special type. Since then, in over one hundred years, the cooperative movement has developed into a noteworthy factor in the political economy, an area in which there is no class struggle in the Marxist sense. Members of production cooperatives are simultaneously employers and employees.

In Germany the anarchist Gustav Landauer, murdered in Bavaria in 1919, advocated similar ideas. "Anarchism," he said, "has no other task but the following: to attain the end of the struggle of man against man in whatever form it may take, to assure that humanity strives upward in

union, and that each and every person is able to occupy that position which he is best suited to by virtue of his natural talents and abilities."

In 1897 Max Nettlau encouraged workers to think of themselves as producers and to refuse to manufacture weapons for purposes of war. He further encouraged them not to build low quality housing for the proletariat in the large cities, not to produce merchandise of bad quality, or to falsify groceries in the markets, and to expose unfair advertising where it occurs. If organizations would take part in these actions where the workers and consumer unions see themselves as producers, a higher degree of humanism would be instilled in the class struggle.

My conclusion is this: The practice of Marxism, as the experience of the twentieth century shows, leads to an anonymous submergence of individuality. The aim of anarchism is individual freedom paired with social responsibility.

**E I:** In your *Memoirs* you write that you have come to the understanding "that the nationalization of the means of production does not abolish exploitation, and that a state-planned 'economy according to needs' does not get rid of social inequalities." And finally, "Seen on the whole, the wage system will not let itself be totally abolished in a socialistic social order, and if social justice is to serve as a measure, then the wage system as such is no evil." Does this mean, if taken literally, a rejection of the conceptions of the classical anarchist theoreticians?

**A S:** Since it is opposed to the oppression of man by man, anarchism is naturally opposed to the exploitation of work by capital. On the question of work/value and wage/value there are differing theories in circulation. The individualist anarchist Benjamin Tucker saw the various forms of monopoly as the fundamental cause of social evil. Proudhon proposed an interest-free credit system and an exchange bank to go with it. According to the opinions of the communist anarchist Kropotkin the citizens of a village can run their own communal economy without wages and without money, based on the principles of collective land ownership.

The social theories of anarchism, socialism, communism, and so forth still circulating today were drawn up in the preceding century. In view of the technical, industrial, and social advances which have occurred since then, these theories must be revised and refreshed. The view that theories require constant revision was one that Proudhon believed strongly in.

In Proudhon's and Marx's time ideologies could only be compared with each other in theory. Today we are in a position to confront the invented theory with concrete reality and to test social revolution for its truth and contents. This is exactly what I have worked to do for the last fifty years. I would like to cite two examples from my experience in connection with the question mentioned earlier on wage systems.

First, in the *collectividades* (village collectives) established during the Spanish Civil War a unitary wage for all was established, including village doctors as well. The main idea was each according to his needs. That meant payment according to the number of members in a family. After the end of the harvest year, each person received the same share of the surplus, if there was one. In the collectivized industry and trade enterprises the high salaries of the directors were abolished, yet the engineers' wages were retained since the position required qualified craftsmen. The income differences were reduced and the workers in the factories took over the control themselves. The opposites of capital and work were abolished. I was in the country during the entire Civil War and experienced all this personally.

Second, in the Israeli kibbutzim, which were in part inspired by Gustav Landauer's anarcho-socialist ideals, the wage system was completely abolished. The kibbutz is very like Kropotkin's communist anarchism. At harvest time, however, it became necessary to hire wage earners to pick the fruits. There was a theoretical confrontation among the members of the kibbutz. "The employment of wage earners destroys the idealistic foundations of the kibbutz," said the old kibbutzniks. "If we pay them the desired wages and treat the wage earners as comrades, then we are not capitalistic exploiters," replied the new members, who were in the majority. I was there at the time of the discussion. Later when most of the kibbutzim established industrial enterprises, the organizational structure was transformed. Wage work, in the beginning the exception, became the rule. The kibbutz, however, has not become a capitalistic exploitation society.

**E I:** Anarchism, like Freemasonry, was always bitterly opposed by the Church. Do anarchism and Christianity fundamentally exclude each other or are models of cooperation imaginable?

**A S:** I hope you will not object to my answering your questions so often by referring to my personal experiences. But first a preliminary ideological re-

mark. Anarchists have nothing to do with a belief that one God the Father, sitting on His throne above the clouds, who crucified His Son, buried Him, and then out of repentance let Him ascend into Heaven where He sits today at His right hand. Tolerance, however, the Sister of Freedom, allows anarchists to live peacefully together with genuine Christians who are neither exploiters nor dictators. There were, and are today, Christians of charity who recognize the anarchistic principle of non-rule and the desire not to be ruled. I am reminded of Tolstoy, who was called the Christian anarchist. Also, in the Rhoen Brotherhood founded by Eberhard Arnold in Oberhessen after the First World War Christian and anarchist anti-militarists lived in an harmonious community, renouncing private ownership of the means of production. In a word, of course it is possible for anarchists and Christians to cooperate peacefully in worldly matters.

**E I :** In your book there is the warning, "The international workers' movement can learn one lesson from the Russian Revolution: how not to handle itself if it wants to achieve well-being and freedom for all!" Where do you believe the international workers' movement is heading today?

**A S :** In my warning, which dates from 1920, I was concerned because of my experience in revolutionary Russia that a party dictatorship — even in the name of the proletariat and with Lenin at the helm — can not build a just social order. The last 58 years have proved me correct. To date nothing has changed structurally in the Soviet Union. Russia has become the most conservative country in the world. Freedom of speech, assembly, and union do not exist; nonconformists and dissidents are persecuted, sent to prisons, concentration camps, psychiatric hospitals, and even exiled. Even in industrial development this great country still lags far behind the West. The fact that it has moved into second or even first place in the armaments race is no honor but rather a disgrace for a country calling itself socialist.

Your question about the direction of the international workers' movement today is not directly related to the situation that existed at that time. Between 1917 and 1920 we lived in a revolutionary climate. All of us, Lenin and Trotsky included, believed that world revolution was knocking at the door. Who could claim today that the industrial countries are at the doorstep of a new revolution? The aims of the workers' movement in the next decade are the following: the six hour work day, six

weeks vacation, a pension age of sixty, joint control and possibly even workers' control of profit growth, etc. As the twentieth century has reconformed, long lasting periods of evolution replace short phases of revolution. This is the alternating evolution/revolution cycle.

**E I :** When you stopped in Moscow in 1920 you asked Lenin what the Communist Party's attitude was toward the anarchists. Lenin's answer was, "In the first phase of the revolution the anarchists are useful, in fact invaluable. If, however, in the second phase they do not respect the revolutionary state power, they must be seen as counterrevolutionaries." Would you say that this Leninist strategy, which of course applies not only to anarchists, is still the fundamental strategy of the Communist movement?

**A S :** Lenin's followers walk the path of their master. His spirit hovered over the Red Army as it marched into Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968. Whoever deviates from the true belief must be converted by force. A familiar saying applies to Lenin's strategy, which his followers still adhere to today: *Und willst du nicht mein Bruder sein, dann schlag ich dir den Schadel ein.* (If you won't be my brother, I'll beat your brains in.)

**E I :** One hears talk of "syndicalism" and "anarcho-syndicalism" in relation to anarchism. What is the principal difference between syndicalism and anarchism?

**A S :** The word, *syndicalisme*, which is French, simply means "trade unionism." Elsewhere it means a special trade union tendency related to anarchism. The relation between the two can be defined by Schiller's phrase, "It is the spirit that builds its own body," with syndicalism understood as the body. Anarchism is the ideal, the abstract, the content, while syndicalism is the concrete, the organization, the form. Syndicalism had its beginnings in the Bakuninist wing of the First International (1866-1872). It was especially popular in France, Spain, Italy, Portugal, and Latin America. In the syndicalist view the trade unions should not only lead the fight for social improvement of the working class in capitalist societies, but also be the germ cell of a libertarian socialist order. Anarcho-syndicalism is then, if you will, a third choice after social democracy and Communism. The anarcho-syndicalist principles, the result of which is seen in the Spanish *Colectividades* or the Israeli *kibbutzim*, are not utopian. In a libertarian collectivism philosophical anarchism and economic syndicalism are united in an harmonious symbiosis.

**E I:** The Yugoslavian experiment in self-government is also heavily inspired by anarchist ideas. To what do you attribute the difficult crisis which the Yugoslavian government is increasingly facing?

**A S:** The kibbutzim were founded voluntarily by Jewish immigrants. The collectives during the Spanish Civil War also owed their existence to the free initiative of the energetic populace in the city and countryside. In both cases there was no regulation from above, no orders. They were libertarian, anarchist, had no rulers and were not ruled. The Yugoslavian self-government decree was issued by a Marxist, that is, authoritarian, regime. Of the three self-ruling economies I know very well, the Israeli, the Spanish, and the Yugoslavian, the latter is the most insufficient.

**E I:** How do you judge, from an anarchist standpoint, the popular initiatives cropping up everywhere today?

**A S:** Well, the anarcho-syndicalists were already propagating popular initiatives at the beginning of the century under the name *direct action*. After the Second World War, the pacifist youth movement organized peace marches first in England and then in Germany. Later the socialist youth even considered extraparliamentary action. Today popular initiatives are in vogue. The names have changed but the initiatives remain the same. It is a matter of the right to joint and self-determination of all social groups in public affairs and above all the right to question mankind's fate. Through popular initiatives the national conscience is awakened. They are a constant reminder against bureaucratization and corruption. They are the impulse to regenerate institutions. They fill a formal democracy with libertarian spirit and new social content.

I first took part in a popular initiative in 1911. The Socialist League in Berlin circulated a brochure, "The Abolition of War Through People's Self-determination." Fate took its course. In 1914 World War I, which our initiative tried in vain to prevent, broke out. And then dictatorship, 1939, World War II. If popular initiatives do not intervene, then World War III is imminent. No Kremlin, no Pentagon, no Soviets, no White House, no Parliament should have the right to declare war in the future. The final decision on such questions must be made by the people themselves. The single level of justice which can decide on war should be an internationally regulated plebiscite, accompanied by a campaign explaining the issues. This is the most important popular initiative today, for which I plead. Utopia? Was not the 40 hour week a Utopia in 1900? One day it

must begin. Nations must finally show their leaders the way. It is time, high time!

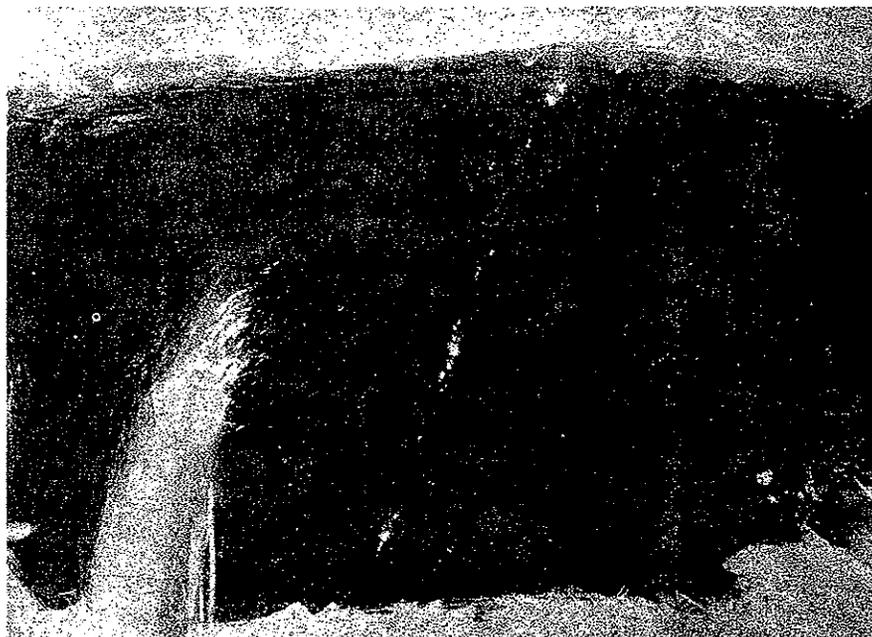
**E I:** On one of the first pages of your book there is a noteworthy comment. "Freedom for all can be attained only when it is based on the self-consciousness of every individual." What does "self-consciousness of every individual" mean today? Is freedom in this sense even attainable given conditions in the industrial-technological world?

**A S:** Among Marxists the words "class consciousness" are writ large and refer to the spiritual preparation for proletarian class rule. The anarchists deny rule by anyone and prefer the word "self-consciousness." Without self-consciousness there can be no impulses for freedom. An historical example in point: In the ancient Incan Empire the Indians lacked self-consciousness. They were completely alienated from all individual livelihoods. Forced to sing memorized songs of praise to their god rulers, they cultivated the fields and acreage for the upper classes. The feeling of personal human worth, however, was foreign to them, and the spirit of rebellion did not exist in their consciousness.

In Europe things took a different course. There were and are struggles for freedom. Time and again confrontations arise between social institutions and the desire for freedom, between legal fixtures and human variability. Freedom manifests itself in many ways. Freedom for what? What is freedom? A feeling, an idea, an ideal, a political postulate, a social category? There is discomfort and pain when one does without it, peace and happiness if one possesses it. Philosophers have interpreted freedom differently. Thomas Hobbes, the theoretician of absolutism, who thought man was wolf-like (*homo homini lupus*) understood freedom to be the absence of hindrance. William Godwin, the English anarchist theoretician at the time of the Great French Revolution, equated freedom with independent judgment. Goethe's words, "In the tightest bond there is freedom," may hold for the personal relationship between two souls but does not apply to social relationships in an autocracy or a dictatorship. The French Encyclopaedists defined freedom to mean respect for the freedom of others. Free action for autocrats and dictators means oppression of those being ruled. Practice of one's own freedom meets its limit when it damages others' freedom. This is aptly expressed by the libertarian poet J.H. Mackay who, if I may paraphrase, wrote, "Freedom for others is freedom for the self, and freedom kisses all or none."

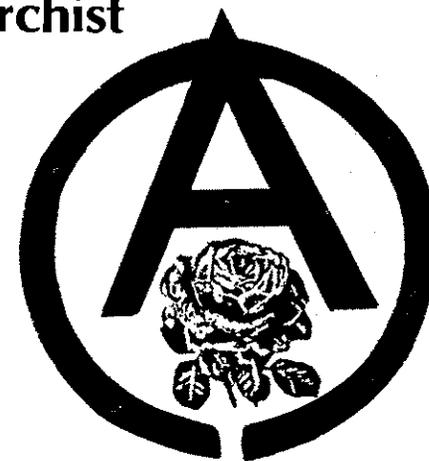
The struggle of the individual for freedom beyond what is allowed by law exists today as it did in the past. We know our current freedoms. The degree of freedom in the future depends on our self-consciousness and on the battles which we are ready to fight for freedom.

- E I:** Your conviction that "the worst democracy is preferable to the best dictatorship" stands in direct opposition to the saying of the Marxist philosopher Georg Lukacs that "the worst socialism is better than the best capitalism."
- A S:** Each sentence typifies the respective author's way of thinking. The Marxist thinks in a dogmatic framework, the anarchist in a libertarian one. On that I have nothing else to say.



## Northwest Passages: Notes From an Anarchist Symposium

Anarchism Symposium Committee  
Campus Box 134  
Lewis and Clark College  
Portland, Oregon 97219



The *First International Symposium on Anarchism* was held the week of February 17-24, 1980 at Lewis and Clark College, Portland, Oregon. During that week, at one time or another, every word in the title was challenged by one person or another. I felt the most telling criticism was delivered by two comrades from Mexico, concerning the use of the word symposium. They said it promised wine, but had delivered only words. Fortunately mutual aid societies sprang up very quickly to meet this need.

At any rate I think it is fair to say that this was the first international symposium on anarchism ever that has been supported so heavily and so openly by the State (in all its guises, federal, regional, local, foreign) and by established institutions. The remarkable list of sponsors, which included among others The National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities, Clackmas County CETA, Oregon Arts Commission, Northwest Latin American Council for the Arts and Humanities, the French and German embassies, and, of course, Lewis and Clark College, must appear to some old anarchist comrades a sardonic exercise in surrealistic fantasy, but I assure them it was so, though why it was so, I have no idea.

Not only that, but, after accepting aid from its nominal foes, every

word—well almost every word—of the Symposium was fearlessly recorded, video-taped, and filmed by somebody or other. The government, if it did not make its own recordings, may buy quite easily a tape of any session—as you may gentle reader—at a reasonable price from the Symposium Committee. Some 75-80 hours of talk. Openness—or was it noise?—with a vengeance. The conspiratorial anarchist did not seem to be in evidence at Portland.

Why did such a symposium take place in the beautiful, but seemingly incongruous city of Portland? It was undoubtedly because the first spark of inspiration was struck by Pietro Ferrua, who teaches at Lewis and Clark. The actual Symposium Committee, who organized/improvised the event (one may choose according to ideological conviction or interpretation of reality), consisted of a mixture of students, symposium staff, faculty (Lewis and Clark), and community (Portland), most of whom, I was told, were not avowed anarchists, though clearly either sympathetic to or interested in anarchism.

The desirability of putting together a symposium on anarchism in a manner consistent with anarchist principles was, I think, generally accepted in theory by the Committee, though when the Symposium began, the rather recalcitrant nature of some anarchists made them point out perhaps too rudely the shortcomings of the Committee's practice.

It did *not* seem appropriate, whatever aid they might have given, to have flags representing the city, state and federal governments behind the podium during the first day of the Symposium, but this was quickly and discreetly rectified by the use of a convenient curtain. (Though I did not hear any critical comments about flags when, toward the end of the week, the red and black banner was raised several times behind the podium.) And it was certainly indelicate to hold the session on anarchism and feminism in an auditorium which had the names of fifty "great" founders of Western Civilization in large letters on opposite walls—all of them men!—a fact which was quickly noted by the women present. But I think it is fair to note that in these and in other matters where differences and problems developed, the Committee always attempted to deal with them quickly and with great good will, all the more remarkable for the great pressure it was continually under.

The scheduling of the Symposium was clearly overfull; scheduled events ran usually from nine in the morning to ten at night, leaving too little time for socializing, discussion, affinity groups, etc., except at the

expense of missing sessions. This overfull schedule in the opinion of some led to a certain lack of "spontaneity," some over-control from the podium and frequently in the beginning, domination of the discussion by the panelists, but by the end of the week freer and often more fruitful discussions arose from more open procedures.

The contents of the various sessions encompassed theory and practice, contemporary and historical approaches, ideas and art-forms in a fascinating, if not always comprehensible, manner.

The largest audience, an enthusiastic full house of some 4-500, attended a round table on anarchism and literature, undoubtedly attracted by the first lady of science fiction, Ursula Le Guin. She appeared together with playwright Barbara Garson and poet Barbara Drake. Though in my eyes the content of the discussion was rather insubstantial, the readings from their works were quite enjoyable. It was a candidate for the most popular session of the Symposium, and it attracted the most general, least "political" audience of the week.

The next most heavily attended session was the round table on anarchism and feminism. The panelists gave very short and succinct statements of several minutes, all supporting the idea of anarcha-feminism, except for Marianne Enckell, who suggested the phrase may have created more barriers instead of removing them. Stephen Schecter, the only man on the panel, was attempting to rebut Marianne, but was suddenly silenced when it was pointed out to him by a woman that he had spoken longer than all of the female panelists combined. From that somewhat impolite beginning the session then proceeded to become one of the most wide ranging of all sessions and perhaps the first to have the genuine and full participation of all the audience.

The rest of the sessions had generally much smaller audiences, ranging from 20-30 to several hundred, most of whom were people who had come from outside of Portland to specifically attend the conference. I think that outside of some fearful few Portlanders, who were concerned that the Symposium may have been sponsoring seminars in bomb-making, most of the city and the Lewis and Clark campus took the presence of the Symposium and of some 80-100 anarchists within their midst with a great and calm indifference.

There were of course the controversial sessions. To say the least! Perhaps the most passion was released during Arthur Mendel's presentation, a psycho-sexual investigation of Bakunin called "Bakunin's Politics:

The Role of Violence and Leninist Organization", when Mendel made some extremely provocative suggestions; e.g., that Leninist vanguardism should be considered more properly descended from Bakunin rather than from Marx (was it more than coincidence that Portland had a shop called Marx Hearing Aids with the motto "Let us help your hearing"?), that Bakunin's calls to revolutionary violence were related more to his sexual impotence than to his political philosophy or analysis. Sam Dolgoff (ed. of *Bakunin on Anarchy*) hurrumped, "It's nonsense," more than once during Mendel's talk, while Arthur Lehning, perhaps the authority on Bakunin, tried to inform Mendel that Bakunin had fathered a child in Siberia. Though Mendel read very extensive selections from the letters of Bakunin to justify his ideas, instructive according to Mendel because of their pre-Freudian innocence in imagery, he was always saying, rather defensively I thought, that he had much more proof in his 700 page manuscript. Since the discussion generated more heat than light, we shall have to wait for the book and see for ourselves.

The session which prompted the most violent response in what was otherwise quite a peaceful week was the one in which the paper of C.R. Kordig, "Future Generations: Some Libertarian Arguments Concerning the Right to Life" was given. In his attempt to present his anti-abortion view, Kordig began by having a bent wire clotheshanger thrown at him (which he in turn threw back), he was continually interrupted, and finally, after he had finished, was told to sit down and let the audience talk; a procedure that would have been welcomed in several sessions, but that was applied, as far as I know, only in this session during the entire week. Kordig's paper was a poor one, poorly reasoned and poorly delivered by the nervous Kordig, but he seems to have had the audience he deserved.

"Anarchism and Religion—Are They Compatible?", a session which I did not attend, also, I understand, generated much heated argument.

Now I have nothing against a certain high spirits, and particularly during symposia, but surely when there are people who do not know each other well and who disagree, it is more appropriate to listen attentively... at least for a little while. It might be noted that the behavior of some anarchists in this respect was not especially praiseworthy. Like many other groups which have had controversial arguments presented to them, anarchists yelled, interrupted, and demonstrated without listening. Though on these occasions there were some who insisted upon the rights of anyone to be heard, they usually had little effect. At times decent

behavior seemed as distant as utopia. Without doubt another demonstration that the revolution within will be the hardest to achieve.

More quiet and sober values were also represented in Portland; many well-researched and stimulating papers were given and considered, too many to list and discuss—alas! quiet and sober values usually get short shrift—but I advise interested people that it is well worth their effort to write to the Symposium for their 22 page program of topics and speakers.

The attempt to integrate art, film, theatre, music, dance, and poetry into the program was successful on the whole, both instructive and entertaining.

Here the film program, which had "Anarchists in Film" as its theme, should be singled out for special notice. With the help of a useful pamphlet prepared by Pietro Ferrua, the program presented films daily, a mix of old and new, documentaries and dramatizations, that developed lively discussions, particularly "Rebellion in Patagonia" and "La Cecilia", the first concerning issues involved in direct action and revolution, the second issues involved in setting up a community based upon anarchist principles. The Pacific Street Film Collective also presented the premiere of their film, "The Free Voice of Labor—The Jewish Anarchists", which was one of the most warmly received presentations of the entire Symposium.

And finally the Symposium was quite successful as an occasion to personally exchange ideas and feelings, to begin friendships, and pace! our Mexican friends to drink more than enough wine. (Here in order to give a sense of the geographical scope of the participants at the Symposium I might mention that Latin America, Canada, Western Europe, and the U.S.—mainly the East Coast meeting the West Coast; the Midwest and South did not seem to be on hand in Portland—were the regions that I saw represented.)

Unhappily, a final session evaluating the Symposium and considering the questions that it raised both of content and procedure, which could have been useful if done when impressions were still fresh, (shouldn't an anarchist symposium value the spontaneous as well as the considered?) was not scheduled and, though some suggested it, not arranged. I would imagine this was largely because of lack of time to do so.

Some questions—and this is just a preliminary and very personal list—that might have been discussed are:

How should topics and speakers be chosen for an anarchist conference? (How were they chosen for Portland?)

How should discussions be held, moderated or not? Both?

What is the proper proportion between free and unscheduled time?

Should some of the topics and events have been chosen for the Portland Symposium? (Was ending the Symposium with a Catholic Anarchist Eucharist too ecumenical a concept? an eclecticism too uncritical?)

Was the Portland Symposium too uncritical of anarchism?

As a member of the Symposium Committee said in his closing remarks, words which I felt many were in agreement with, "If there was any message from the past week, it was that a beginning has been made."

It seems to me that putting together an anarchist symposium is a modest but useful way in which the anarchist idea can address itself to contemporary reality. Portland was at least a good beginning, something we should thank the Symposium for, and it now remains for others, if they so wish, to carry on the work they have begun.

—r d.



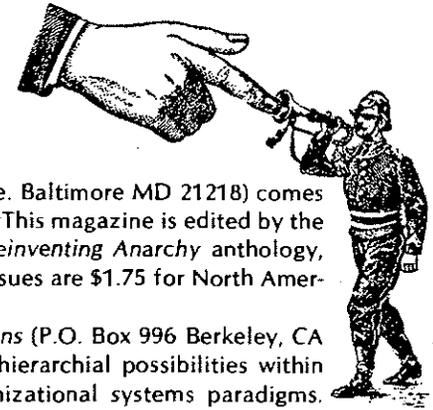
Seriousness is

the only refuge

of the shallow.

Wilde

## Last Writes:



*Social Anarchism* (2743 Maryland Ave. Baltimore MD 21218) comes our semiannually (February and October). This magazine is edited by the people who put together the excellent *Reinventing Anarchy* anthology, and features several of its contributors. Issues are \$1.75 for North America, \$2.25 elsewhere.

*Journal of Community Communications* (P.O. Box 996 Berkeley, CA 94701) is devoted to the libertarian, nonhierarchical possibilities within information, communications, and organizational systems paradigms. Subs are \$9/year (4 issues)

*The Free Voice of Labor—The Jewish Anarchists*, is a film documentary, color, 60 minutes, by Pacific St. productions. The film recreates the 87 year history of the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, a Yiddish-anarchist periodical which ceased publication in December, 1977. It consists of interviews with the Jewish anarchists themselves (including Ahrne Thorne, last editor, and Sam and Esther Dolgoff) and commentary by historian Paul Avrich. For information concerning viewing/distribution, contact Pacific St. Productions, 22 First St. Brooklyn, New York 11231. (212) 875-9722.

Registration for the draft is on the brink of reinstatement. Action is urgently needed. Contact your local anti-draft coalition, The Boston Alliance Against Registration and the Draft (BAARD), (617) 491-4694; The Committee Against Registration and the Draft (CARD), (202) 547-4334; or The Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors (CCCO), P.O. Box 15796, Philadelphia, PA 19103.

On the civil liberties front, the proposed new Federal Criminal Code (S.1722, S.1723) along with the revised FBI and CIA charters pose grave threats to rights of dissent, public control over the secret police, and public knowledge of governmental activities. All three are now before Congress, so prompt response is of the essence. The National Lawyer's Guild, the ACLU, and the National Committee Against Repressive Legislation (NCARL), all with offices in Washington, D.C. and elsewhere, are coordinating the defense.

We still have back issues of *Black Rose* numbers 1-4 on hand for \$1.50 per issue. Get them while they last!

The Coalition for Direct Action at Seabrook is staging an affinity group based, nonviolent occupation/blockade of the Seabrook, N.H. nuclear plant construction site for the week of May 24. Efforts are being made to establish an ongoing libertarian community (Freestate) nearby. A 63-page occupation handbook detailing the action's history, philosophy, strategy, etc. is available for \$1 per copy. For handbooks and information, contact your local anti-nuclear alliance or The Boston Clamshell Coalition, 595 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge, MA 02139 (617) 661-6204.

*Dandelion* (1985 Selby Ave., St. Paul, MN 55104) is a libertarian/anarchist quarterly featuring debates over critical areas of libertarian thought and contemporary issues, along with the history of American Libertarian currents. Issues are \$1.50 each, full sets of their 10 back issues are \$13.50 ppd.

Black Thorn Books (186 Willow Ave., Somerville, MA 02144; (617) 666-1798) is a new anarchist publishing venture also distributing books from Cienfuegos Press. They are announcing publication of *The Russian Tragedy* by Alexander Berkman (\$4.50 paper, \$11.25 cloth); *Land and Liberty: Anarchist Influences in the Mexican Revolution*, Ricardo Flores Magon, edited by Dave Poole (\$5.50 paper only); *A New World in Our Hearts: The Faces of Spanish Anarchism*, edited by Albert Meltzer (\$4.50 paper, \$11.25 cloth); *The Guillotine At Work V.I.: The Leninist Counter-revolution* by G.P. Maximoff (\$13.00 paper, \$27.00 cloth); and *Zapata of Mexico* by Peter Newell (\$5.50 paper only).

