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REVOLUTIONARY COMMITTEES AS A METHOD OF ORGANIZATION

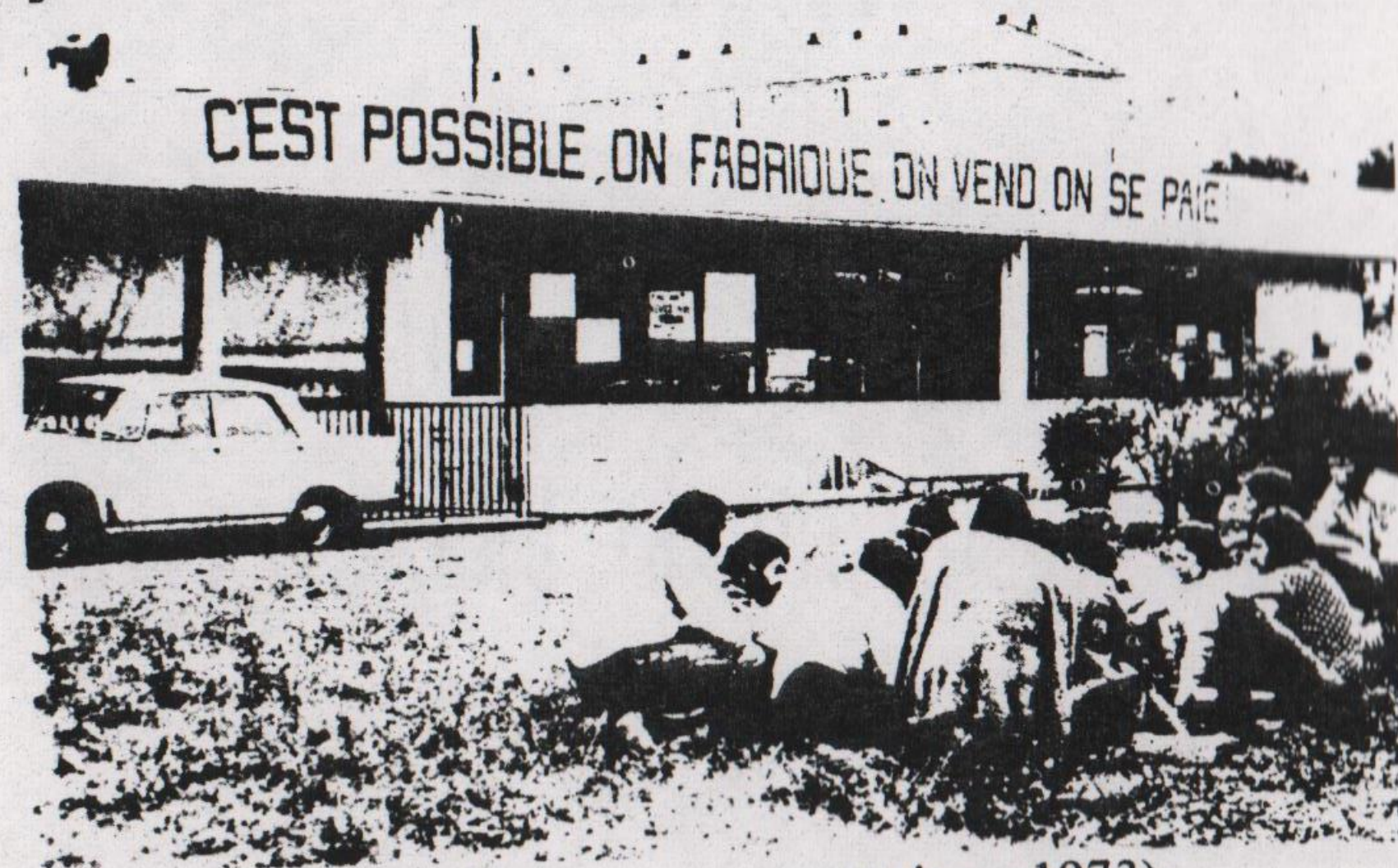
More to Come is a revolutionary committee with a vision of the organization of a new society. We are beginning to experience and express techniques of working together which lead directly to that vision. We often find it hard to weave our lives together in a way that makes sense. Some of us at times have needed brief vacations from the group. Some feel we are too much a therapy group. Some feel our "product"—including this pamphlet—is too important. But in spite of our problems and doubts no other organizational form is currently reasonable for us.

Our vision is of a society in which each individual decides directly on all matters that affect him/her.

—to “decide directly” means that each individual has the power to carry out his/her decisions and that the organizations of the workplace, living place, interest groups, recreation groups etc. facilitate this process.

—“all matters” means just that. Personal, neighborhood and shop matters will be settled where they occur. But also larger questions of how to conduct industry, trade, education, services etc. will be controlled by the people in any way involved in those activities.

Our programmed and limited experience has taught us that it is hard to decide large issues without a team of “experts” advising an authority (boss, politician, general) and having the authority make the decisions. However, history has shown us there is another way. That worker and living unit councils (assemblies) can successfully manage all spheres of life was shown most spectacularly in Kronstadt '21, Spain '36-37 and Hungary '56. These people proved that GOVERNMENT is not necessary.



(Lip watch factory occupation, 1973)

“It can be done: we manufacture, we sell, we pay ourselves”

This history teaches us that any question that cannot be settled directly by the assembled people need not be referred to a higher authority. The highest and only authority is the assemblies. No other power is needed. Problems requiring coordination and communication between assemblies are referred to representative bodies which are composed of delegates from the base assemblies. The delegates are strictly mandated and subject to immediate recall. That is, the

delegates have explicit instructions from the assemblies on all important matters. If they act out of their bounds they are to be called back and any actions beyond the mandate invalidated. Think how easy all this might be with the methods of instant communication available today.

The system of monopoly capitalism we live under today requires that we sell our labor power to survive. Our labor power provides the people who own the machines, the land, the tools (means of production) with the wealth that gives them control of our country and much of the rest of the world. In the race for profits these owners exploit us and waste the world's resources. Their legacy is endless war and ecological holocaust. They define progress as the production of more and more unneeded commodities and they have to produce constant costly propaganda to substantiate their imperialist aims and insure the purchase of their junk.

In some “socialist” countries the state owns the means of production. Although its relationship to waste and commodities may differ, state capitalism functions in much the same way as monopoly capitalism to exploit workers. Even though workers in these countries produce all wealth, they do not control the products. They are still wage slaves in a monetary exchange economy where they must purchase necessities. The control of their productive wealth is in the hands of the state bureaucratic class (party).

We want to stop this waste, destruction, and exploitation and redefine progress. This can be done only by restructuring the economic system toward decentralized control held entirely by worker and living unit councils. Through an efficient use of our own knowledge, skills and resources we can work for ourselves and our communities. Workers, free from trumped-up and unreal needs, are capable of determining, producing and rationally distributing the products of our labor.

Don't imagine that you can beat them without using force. . . Because if you believe them they will be completely in charge in their marble homes and granite banks from which they rob the people of the world under the pretext of bringing them culture.

Jean-Paul Marat



MAGNIFICATION &

MUMMIFICATION

Lenin, who (according to his widow) "wanted no memorials to him," could not escape this deification.

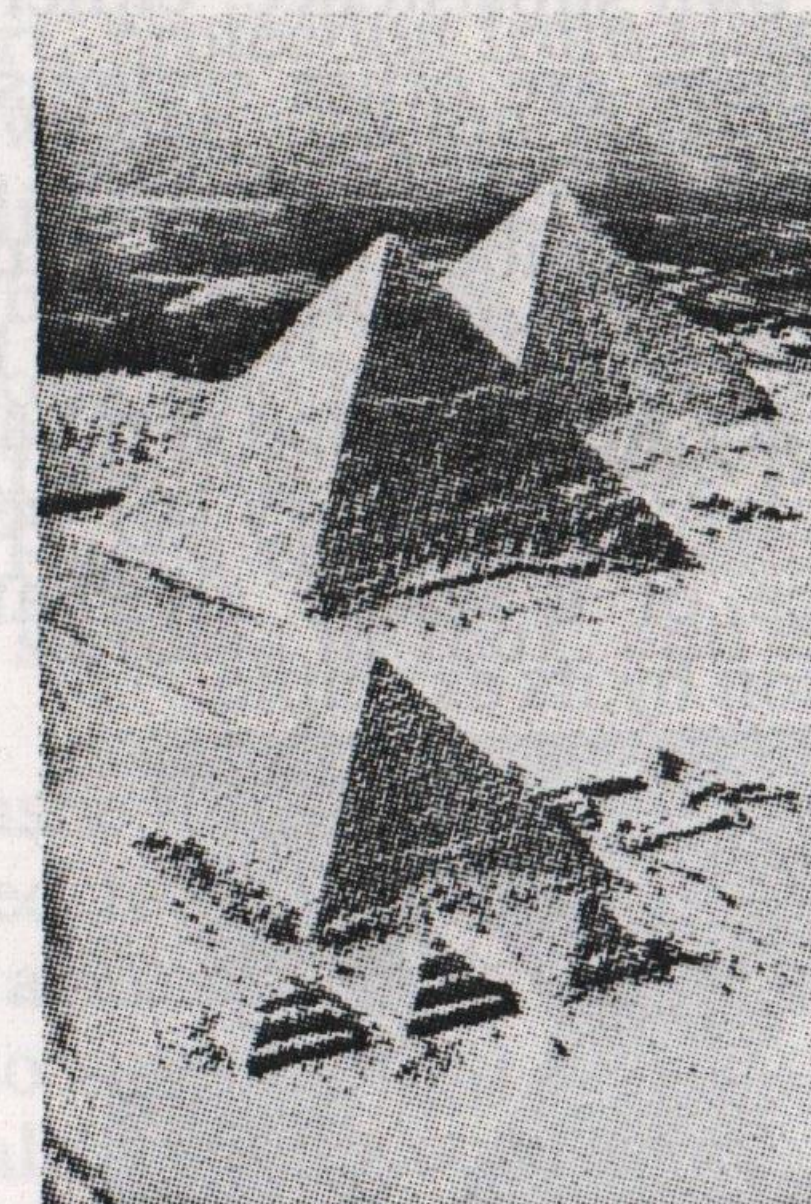
The functions of the councils are:

- to dissolve all power external to them
- to reach direct and total democracy
- to unify decision making and the carrying out of those decisions in the management of production, distribution and services.
- when necessary, to strictly mandate delegates who are subject to immediate recall
- to abolish all hierarchies and the power of independent, guarded specialization. As knowledge is power, its continuous generalization for the benefit and understanding of all is necessary.
- to facilitate the conscious transformation of all aspects of our daily lives
- to facilitate the creative participation of all individuals
- to implement international extension and coordination
- to establish mechanisms for self-defense

Experience in these methods of people's self-management will be gained in the struggle with authoritarian power.

.. ..

Looking closely at the history of revolutionary struggle we see that the people have consistently fallen for the illusion that the parties and the unions are our friends. Each time we have given up part of our power it was these very groups that betrayed us.



MONUMENT TO THE PHAROAHS OF THE PACIFIC RIM

We know there must be organization to prepare the way, to radicalize spontaneous revolt, and to support the councils wherever they emerge. But also we know that the heirarchical form of the party is the opposite of what is needed. At best the parties have been impatient minorities managing others' "liberation." It is no accident that Mao, Castro, Tito et. al. are entrenched in their party structures. It is in the very nature of their heirarchical process. Once there is an authority, there is a struggle for that power and a tendency to keep it at all costs. The parties have undermined or brutally suppressed workers' democracy in order to retain control.

Unions today function to provide the bosses with a disciplined work force. Removed from the workers, entrenched union leadership works against our interests to maintain their power. Like the parties, they fear democratic movements and disrupt them whenever possible.

We envision that committees of revolutionaries will influence the direction for revolutionary change in the increasing chaos of this time. These committees, by their own autonomous agitation and activity and by cooperation and coordination with each other, will present an organizational example for others.

Our effort is to unite our theory and practice. As a central part of our theory we see that the revolutionary committees, functioning in councilist patterns, will dissolve as the councils assume power.

We cannot exist together as free men and women producing for our own subsistence, either in a national or world economy where there are other systems based on the exploitation and disenfranchisement of anyone. We perceive that the councils, as we have described them, cannot exist in their actual form alongside any other form of power. The councils and direct democracy would be too great a threat. The systems of hierarchy (by whatever name they go) would strive to destroy us. For the existence of a viable alternative of total democracy incites revolution by its example.



In 1937, Spanish anarchist leaders joined the government believing they could win the revolution by fighting the war. In accepting responsibility for the capitalist economy, they undetermined the revolutionary councils.

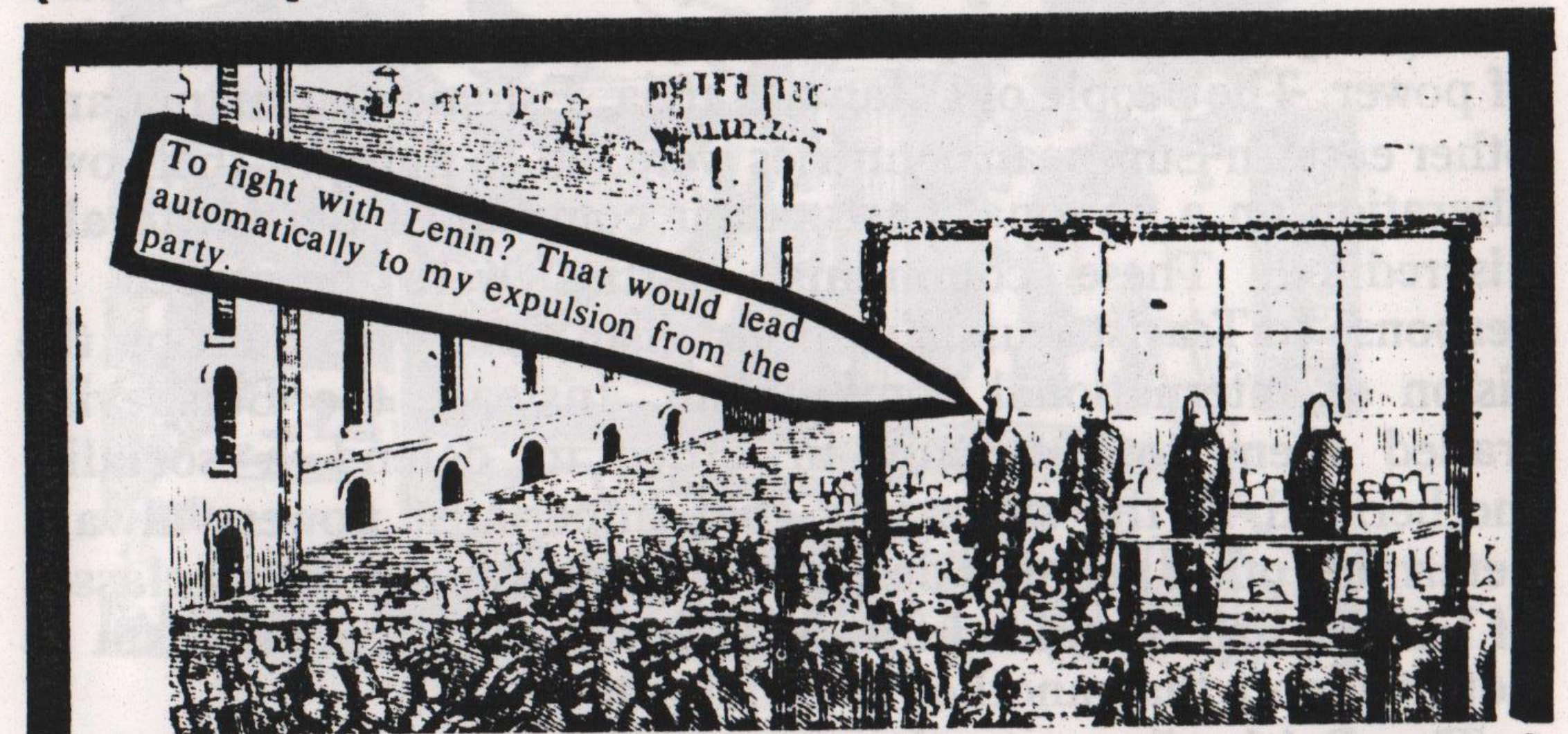
This does not mean that the councils must become predatory and extend their form by force. Nor do they need to call for revolution among others, since their individual success calls into question every aspect of the old society. However, the councils have always been crushed where they have appeared as popular movements in limited areas only or locales of national economies. The Paris Commune, the Spanish, Hungarian and the recent Chilean councils were all destroyed because their actions were not extended and co-ordinated internationally, not because they were ill-prepared to defend themselves. The same kind of forces are emerging in Portugal today. The councils and direct democracy will not survive until the form and the process of their existence is understood on an international scale by the mass of the people.

In the space of 60 years Russia has gone from a revolutionary society to an iron fisted authoritarian state managed by the new rulers, the party. This development has had a profound effect on the worldwide revolution. As a large, stable "communist" state Russia has influenced or controlled movements for social change nearly everywhere. What happened?

Russia is one example of councils (soviets) developing from a pre-existent cultural basis of cooperation. The *mir* or village

community was that basis. The *mir* not only guaranteed everyone a fair share in common land, but was also a union for common culture, mutual support, protection from violence and for further development of knowledge and moral codes. Every change in judicial, military, educational or economic matters had to be decided by the assembled members. The first soviets were formed by industrial workers who because of their rural upbringing or ties knew that self-management would help solve their problems. In great rural Russia the village communities flourished after the abolition of serfdom in 1861, and especially after the 1905 uprising.

The soviets of 1905 were crushed by the Tsar because they were too small and not prepared to seize and hold power. All labor organization was then against the law. In 1917 the stronger soviets were fooled into surrendering their power to a new form of nationalism: "socialism in one country." While the Socialist-Revolutionaries and the anarchists went about fighting for the social revolution (self-management in daily life) in the countryside and factories, the Bolsheviks (forerunner of the Communist Party) organized to seize power for themselves. In October 1917 the Bolsheviks seized the state apparatus in a palace coup.



Bukharin maintained unity within the party by suppressing his objections to matters of principle. He was executed four years later.

One of the key issues in 1917 was World War I. The Russian people were weary of war. At first the German army operating along the Russian border remained inactive, but in February 1918 it started an offensive against revolutionary Russia. The Bolsheviks considered two courses of action. The first was to abandon the front, draw in the German Army and defeat it through guerrilla warfare. In addition, to do this might have extended the revolution to Germany. The second proposal was



to negotiate with the German command for peace at any price to stabilize the situation and defend the border.

Flushed with the conquest of state power, Lenin betrayed the proletariat in making peace in the treaty of Brest-Litovsk. The Bolsheviks traded Russia's old imperial conquests of eastern Europe and the Balkans to Germany to maintain their position of power. The people of Poland, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania and other eastern European countries were left to fight for their own liberation on a national basis, their communist parties totally discredited. These communist parties were developed in response to Tsarist Russia's imperialism, and were built on the vision of international communism. Instead, the Bolsheviks traded them to Germany in order to defend a socialist motherland in the same way that imperialist powers always determine other people's destinies. In this way the ruling classes of Europe had contained this new movement of communism as nothing more than another national elite.

The Bolshevik party then proceeded to consolidate their power and control over the running of society. Entrenched as the new government they fought the reactionaries and the anti-government revolutionaries. The industrial and rural soviets were taken over administratively or, when necessary, crushed militarily. Major wars were waged by the new state against popular democratic movements in the Ukraine 1918-21 and in Kronstadt 1921.

Today the USA and Russia mirror and mimic each other in their global game of death. They are still engaged in the same

battles against movements of the oppressed. Some modern forms of their tactics are: patriotism, wage labor, depressions, inflation, "limited" wars, international monopolies and drugs. The entire social welfare system of schools, health care and service for the needy is used against the people.

In the USA our culture is being destroyed by the developments of modern capitalism. Capitalism poisons every social relationship with value. We learn to prey on common weakness to get ahead. Every benefit means someone's loss. The media glitters with things to consume to try to help satisfy our cravings. Between every desire and its satisfactions is placed something to buy. For hunger there is plastic food and McDonald's, for warmth it's making your husband a good cup of Folgers, for beauty thousands of chemical pastes. In fact, Coke is for anything because "it's the real thing, Coke is!" All this erodes our solidarity, not to mention our stomachs. And it's just plain depressing to be making and distributing all this junk.

We set ourselves to subvert all of this.



We must remember that it is the ruling class and leaders of all kinds who are afraid of revolution, of "chaos," not the people. Every day we go to work and create the wealth that everyone shares (though unequally). We do not seize what we make and run home with it. We do not occupy society and destroy it for our own greed. No! We do not even rise up and take possession of all we have made and use it for our own benefit. Without the rulers and the leaders we would still go about our daily tasks, getting things done, only making decisions as we must at the moment when answer is of necessity.

"The International is broken! But woe to any government should red and black again be united, for no force on earth shall stand before them."

—Bismark

We need to carry on the revolution for ourselves, not waiting till "after the revolution" to become free and strong. Unless each of us develops our strengths we cannot win. We have to work in a climate that challenges us to change into the people we need to become. Within each of us is the beast of competitive america which yearns for an authority. It corrupts and degrades our differences (age, sex, race and culture) causing hostile divisions where there would be enrichment in diversity. In order for the relationships among us and between our group and others not to mimic the dominant culture, we must work to change all aspects of our daily lives.

For now, when people are grappling with forms for study, propaganda, action, organization or personal change, they may jump into forms in which they become dominant or manipulated, or even invisible. We have chosen a form in which we integrate our experience; in which we demand of ourselves and each other that we become strong and competent and able to change. Therapy should not be left to therapists. Family should not be left to mom and dad, community to community organizers, sexuality to lovers, revolution to party functionaries.

"We must act with the power that we will not have until we've won." —Marge Piercy.

We do not limit what we can do together. The group is a challenge to the process of weaving our thoughts together, experiencing the power of letting go of our defensiveness, drawing on each other for strength and letting ourselves feel joy as we move. We embody the process of opening to each other. We change more rapidly than we could alone, or with a lover, or in a group in which we are anonymous.

We are aware of our fear to succeed, and careful not to reinforce the personality mechanisms which mask our fear of change. Since our fears exist we encourage them to emerge so we focus on them too. We consciously move to the ecstasy of growth,

to see ourselves as actors in history with the power to change the script.

To become the people we need to be, we see some qualities to encourage in ourselves. We need to be imaginative, creative, ready to learn, ready to teach. Mad as a hatter, as a pawn, as a human. Ready to work, ready to change, ready to adapt to an unknown as well as to a known. Ready to die most moments of our lives. Ready to live. Ready to act. Sane at times, insane at times —whatever times it counts. Sense of joy. Sense of outrage. Consciousness of the oppressor and the oppressed in oneself and others. Inability to let personal matters slide. Sense of justice, respect for life and death. Fluid in definition of a revolutionary.

In our lives we all participate in other work and we use the group for support, analysis, and direction in our other activities. We act together when we are all turned on by a project and can each contribute something particular.

We have both natural and self-imposed limitations. We are not farm workers, we do not live in a third world ghetto, all of us are whiteskinned, all are from ethnic minorities, we are not children or elderly, some have not been to college, all of us are workers. We are three women and three men. Because at times we are the oppressors and at times the oppressed we must be aware of the limitations of our experience. In this way we can recognize when we are protecting our privileges or accepting our status as victims.

As we strip away the false needs and prizes of competitive america, we see that we must be involved in a revolutionary process to determine and satisfy our real needs. But we are aware that, due to our limitations, we can't generalize our true needs with those of all peoples. We are not looking for the lowest common political denominator in order to find unity with other peoples. It is necessary to study and respect other people's needs as articulated by themselves, and to cooperate with them in common struggle whenever possible. To us, this is a practical, not philosophical, basis of unity and we need to develop this practice to extend our own experience and to further revolutionary activity.

Since we do not see ourselves either as a vanguard party or as an organizing committee for a mass party, it is not necessary to impose our specific ideas of what is needed upon other people. This is a self-imposed "limitation."



Basically, we would all choose to be pacifists. We would rather resolve our differences and conflicts with understanding love, and intelligence. We will attempt these solutions first, whenever possible. In the insanity that reigns, however, we acknowledge the utility of preparedness. It is too dangerous a world to be ignorant of the ways to defend ourselves so that we can continue our revolutionary work. Being acquainted with a weapon and its uses does not mean you must use that weapon, but that if you need to use it you can use it well.

The more we succeed at our work, the more dangerous will our situation become. Since we live in a society that trains people to prey on each other, and since we refuse to be victims, we will willingly defend ourselves. We are not talking about building an army to rival the U.S. government. We are talking about a spontaneous rising of the vast majority of the people and the necessity to defend our social revolution.

The extreme sincerity of the farmers of Lexington in America's revolutionary war of 1776 becomes an inspiration and an example; it is the point at which passive resistance (civil disobedience) merges with self-defense. The farmers stood and would not let the British pass; once fired upon, they fought back.

We do not depend upon war to achieve our liberation, for our struggle cannot be won by the force of arms alone. The armies of

oppression are always better armed and equipped. No, the people must be armed with trust and love as well, and our weapons be only an expression of our organic spirit and solidarity. Where one falls, another must take the place, and the rage of each death renew the reason for the fight.

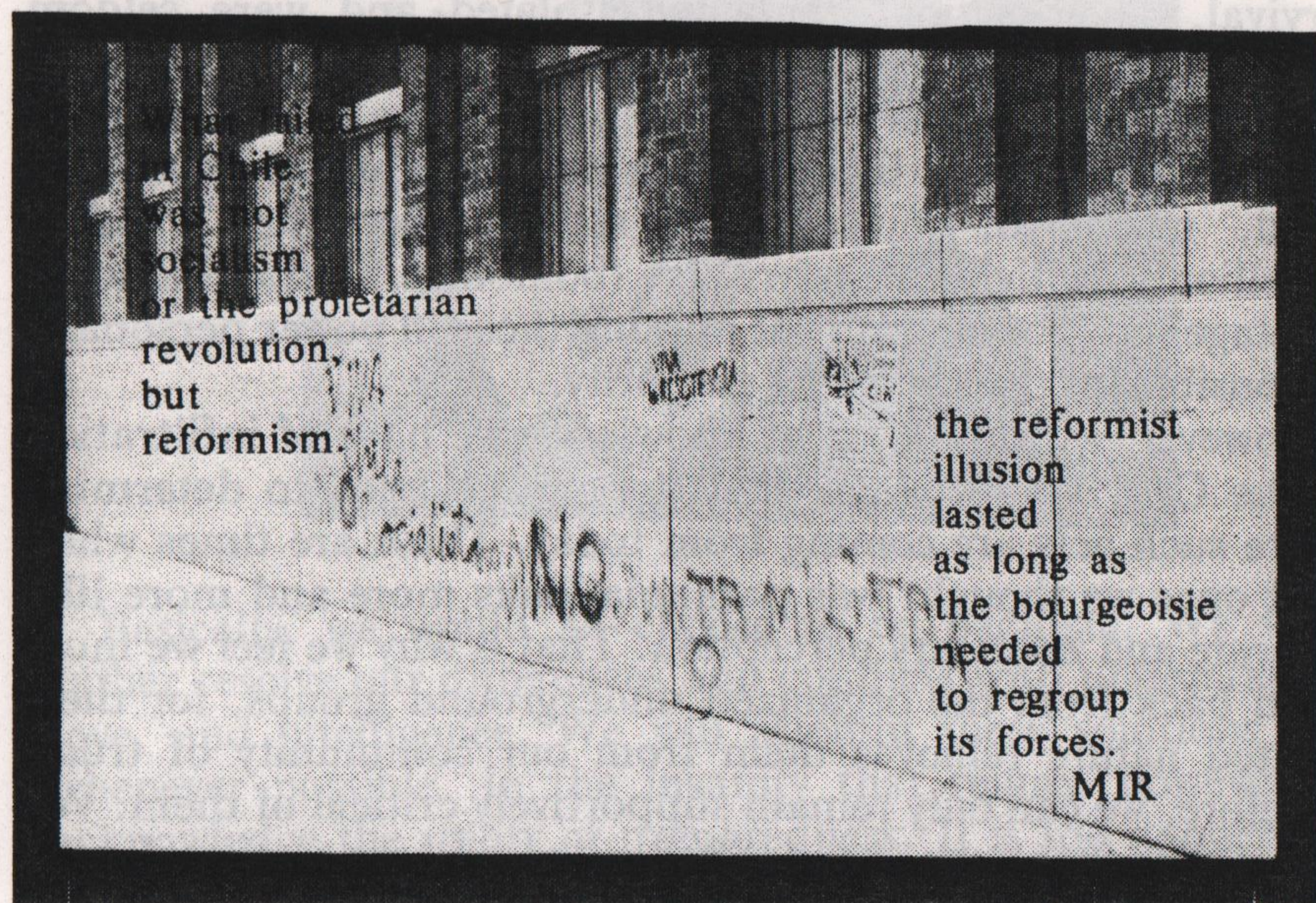
We are forced to acknowledge that the American progressive and radical movements have been too pacifist. Any exception to this was a situation in which people were pushed to defense for survival. Their actions remained isolated and were seldom successful.

Crimes of repression against the people have benefited those in power. How many thousands protesting injustice have been jailed, murdered, injured and set-up since the Whiskey Rebellion? Individual reprisals (bombings, assassinations, sabotage) have been efforts at making those in power personally responsible for their acts and authority.

However, with the current knowledge we have of infiltration by the CIA, we recognize that it becomes hard to determine where such acts are coming from today. These are times when what once we thought was paranoia looks more and more like accurate and necessary perception. That is why we feel we must stand back from the organized underground groups, for their isolated nature removes them from our community of trust; therefore, we can only remain supportively critical of them. We also realize that open groups that proposed cooperative change and were basically nonviolent, especially the IWW, were crushed violently. Some mid-place between the two must be found.



For us, good health and confidence are essential to self-defense. We have experience with the following techniques of self-defense: persuasion, aikido, judo, small weapons, first aid, street fighting, and escape. These have all been practiced individually. For the future, our work will include the development of collective techniques of self-defense.



We have supported and will support and initiate projects that reflect people's need to wrest control of their lives from the hands of others, and bridge the gap between the personal and political sides of life. Projects like rent strikes, building occupations, housing and health collectives, food co-ops, wildcat strikes, direct job actions and occupations excite our imagination and foreshadow things to come. In these situations people are taking direct control over aspects of their lives without mediators (government officials or any other bureaucratic leadership). This spirit is contagious and inspiring toward broader struggles. By using the process of direct democracy they are going through the kinds of personal battles, changes and experience that all of us have to go through in the process of revolution. In these and other projects we have noticed that the problems stemming from race, sex, age and class emerge and have to be confronted.

There is much frustration in developing our social revolution. The task seems overwhelming and sometimes it seems we are

not growing at all. Too often we are told we must broaden our appeal through so called mass organization or electoral reform. But the electoral process is not an effective arena for it legitimizes a system designed to protect property and subjugate us. It takes people's time, imagination and vital energies and returns only disappointment or perhaps at best, a few reforms to reward the supporters of the "good candidate" who wins. It does nothing to combat powerlessness, sexism or racism (even if a woman or a black is elected). Unfailingly it leads us to abdicate control over our lives.

To be sure we cannot ignore the effects of the legal system. Daily realities demand that we face the state and its laws boldly to defend ourselves.

The problem we see facing small groups is how to extend themselves when they reach the inevitable place of wanting to reach others. The trend to enlarge the small direct action groups into larger organizations (mass organizations) runs the risk of losing direct control. We would rather see such groups maintain their effectiveness on a small scale and duplicate themselves by their example. They could organize into larger groups in order to co-ordinate activities as their needs become apparent (federations along councilist lines), rather than by centralized bureaucratic dictate.

We are extending the process of More to Come through: correspondence with other groups in an effort to build a local network; agitation at our individual work/living places; action with like minded groups; support of larger struggles; and education about councils. We will avoid sectarianism and learn about other left groups. We are increasing our self defense capabilities and cultivating our mutual support gardens of delight. We don't evaluate other groups with whom we might work by what they call themselves (revolutionary, marxist, anarchist or otherwise), but by the work they do. That is how we want to be considered as well. We will support expressions of revolutionary consciousness wherever they appear.

In our projects we will try to expose the mass culture's (media's) role as handmaiden of the capitalist class which teaches us greed and self hate and deepens our alienation and hopelessness. We encourage the flowering and confluence of the many cultures which express people's best visions, needs and solidarity. We will strive to increase our own revolutionary courage and express our growing trust in ourselves and our movement, our work, our writings, and our love.