

## This Pamphlet...

The Tyranny of Tyranny was produced as a response to the pervasive influence of the Tyranny of Structurelessness, and can be seen as a constructive critique of it. Dark Star has already reprinted the Tyranny of Structurelessness - it has reprinted Cathy Levine's article so that the dialogue between consciousness raising and modes of organisational activity can be seen in context.

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**CATHY  
LEVINE**

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

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

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

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

Joreen associates the ascendancy of the small groups with the consciousness-raising phase of the women's movement, but concludes that, with the focus shifting beyond the changing of individual consciousness towards building a mass revolutionary movement, women should begin working toward building a large organisation. It is certainly true and has been for some time that many women who have been in consciousness raising groups

for a while feel the need to expand their political activities beyond the scope of the group and are at a loss as to how to proceed. But it is equally true that other branches of the left are at a similar loss, as to how to defeat capitalist, imperialist quasi-fascist Amerika.

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

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

The other extreme, from inactivity which seems to plague politically active people, is over-involvement, which led, in the late sixties, to a generation of burnt-out radicals. A feminist friend once commented that, to her, 'being in the women's movement' meant spending approximately twenty-five per cent of her time engaging in group activities, and seventy-five per cent of her time developing herself. This is a real important time allocation for 'movement' women to think about. The male movement taught us that 'movement' people are supposed to devote twenty-four hours a day to the Cause, which is consistent with female socialisation toward self-sacrifice. Whatever the source of our selflessness, however, we tend to plunge ourselves head-first into organisational activities, neglecting personal development, until one day we find we do not know what we are doing and for whose benefit, and we hate ourselves as much as before the movement. (Male over-involvement, on the other hand, obviously unrelated to any sex-linked trait of self sacrifice, does however smell strongly of the Protestant/Jewish work/achievement ethic, and even more flagrantly, of the 'rational', cool, unemotional facade with which Machismo suppresses male feelings).

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

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

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

Culture is an essential part of a revolutionary movement - and it is also one of the greatest tools of counter-revolution. We must be very careful to specify that the culture we are dis-

cussing is revolutionary, and struggle constantly to make sure it remains inveterately opposed to the father culture.

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

The women's culture faces that very danger right now, from a revolutionary new liberating girdle to 'MS' magazine, to 'Diary of a Mad Housewife'. The New Woman i.e. middle-class, college-educated, male-associated - can have her share of the American Pie. Sounds scrumptious - but what about revolution? We must constantly re-evaluate our position to make sure we are not being absorbed into Uncle Sam's ever-open arms.

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

The question of our lost humanity brings up the subject that vulgar Marxists of every predilection have neglected in their analysis for over half a century - the psycho-sexual elements in the character structure of each individual, which acts as a personal policeman within every member of society. Wilhelm Reich began to describe, in narrow, heterosexual, male-biased form, the character armour in each person, which makes people good fascists or, in our society, just good citizens. Women experience this phenomenon every day, as the repressed feelings, especially obvious among our male friends, who find it so difficult to express or even 'expose' their feelings honestly. The psychic crippling which capitalist psychology coerces us into believing is the problems of individuals, is a massive social condition which helps advanced capitalist society to hold together. Psychic crippling of its citizens makes its citizens report to work, fight in wars, suppress its women, non-whites, and all non-conformists vulnerable to suppression. In our post-technological society, every member of which recognises this

as being the most advanced culture, the psychic crippling is also the most advanced - there is more shit for the psyche to cut through, what with Jonathan Livingston Seagull and the politics of 'You're okay, I'm okay', not to mention post-neo-Freudians and the psycho-surgeons.

For the umpteenth time, let it be said that, unless we examine inner psychic shackles, at the time we study outer, political structures, and the relationship between the two, we will not succeed in creating a force to challenge our enemy; in fact, we will not even know the enemy. The left has spent hours and tomes trying to define the ruling class; the ruling class has representative pigs inside the head of every member of society - thus, the logic behind so-called paranoia. The Tyranny of Tyranny is a deeply-entrenched foe.

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

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

Because the women's movement is tending towards small groups and because the women's movement lacks direction at this time, some people conclude that small groups are to blame for the lack

of direction. They wave the shibboleth of 'structure' as a solution to the strategic stalemate, as if structure would give us theoretical insight or relief from personal anxieties. It might give us a structure into which to 'organise', or fit more women, but in the absence of political strategy we may create a Kafkaesque irony, where the trial is replaced by a meeting.

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

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

Considering how much the various derivatives of the term 'Anarchism' are bandied about, very few people in the left have studied anarchism with any seriousness. For people priding themselves on cynicism about social taboos, we sure are sucked in by the taboo against anarchism. Like masturbation, anarchism

is something we have been brought up to fear, irrationally and unquestioningly, because not to fear it might lead us to probe it, learn it and like it. For anyone who has ever considered the possibility that masturbation might provide more benefits than madness, a study of anarchism is highly recommended - all the way back to the time of Marx, when Bakunin was his most radical socialist adversary.... most radical, because he was a dialectical giant step beyond Marx, trusting the qualities of individuals to save humanity.

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

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

The style, the audacity of Emma Goldman, has been touted by women who do not regard themselves as anarchists... because Emma was so right-on. Few women have gotten so many men scared for so long as Emma Goldman. It seems logical that we should study Emma, not to embrace her every thought, but to find the source of her strength and love of life. It is no accident, either, that the anarchist Red Terror named Emma was also an advocate and practitioner of free-love; she was an affront to more capitalist shackles than any of her marxist contemporaries.

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