

The New Formulation:

An Anti-Authoritarian Review of Books

The Police/Prison Edifice by Lex Bhagat

Two Prison Anthologies by Rebecca DeWitt

Theory of the Anti-Globalization Movement by Chuck Morse

The Panther Insurgency by Paul Glavin

An Anti-Authoritarian Response to the War Efforts by Marina
Sitrin & Chuck Morse

The New Formulation
2620 Second Avenue, #4B
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Statement to Contributors:

Contributions are encouraged. This journal is restricted to comparative book reviews. Reviews must examine the failings and virtues of books for a contemporary anarchist theory and politics. Anarchism is understood here as a doctrine seeking the abolition of capitalism, the nation-state, and hierarchy generally, and the creation of a cooperative economy, a decentralized confederation of communes or municipalities, and a culture of liberation. The deadline for the next issue is April 1, 2002.

Each review must treat at least two books and one must have been published in the previous two years. In some cases, reviews of works in other media (such as a film) will be accepted.

Reviews of two books should be between 2,500 to 3,000 words and reviews of three should be 3,500 to 4,000 words.

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Program

Welcome to the first issue of *The New Formulation: an Anti-Authoritarian Review of Books*. This biannual journal contains comparative book reviews examining the value of recent publications to the development of a contemporary anarchist theory and politics.

The purpose of this journal is to help clarify the distinctness of an anarchist approach to social affairs, to provide a forum for the integration of new works and insights into the anarchist project, and to give authors struggling to redefine the tradition a setting in which to share their research and reflections.

Although the anarchist movement is currently enjoying a renewed influence on social movements and political life generally, there is a compelling need to clarify the principles, goals, and strategies that constitute the anarchist perspective. This is a precondition of the movement's ability to become genuinely revolutionary and we hope this journal, and other sympathetic projects, can help facilitate this clarification.

Contributions are welcome. All book reviews must examine the failings and virtues of books for a contemporary anarchist theory and politics. Anarchism is understood here as a doctrine seeking the abolition of capitalism, the nation-state, and hierarchy generally, and the creation of a cooperative economy, a decentralized confederation of communes or municipalities, and a culture of liberation. The deadline for the next issue is April 1, 2002.

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Lex Bhagat

The Police/Prison Edifice

Lockdown America: Police and Prisons in the Age of Crisis
by Christian Parenti
Verso, 1999

The Perpetual Prisoner Machine: How America Profits from Crime
by Joel Dyer
Westview Press, 2000

We Were Waiting for Books Like These

In 1994, Bill Clinton's election-promised "anti-crime bill" was passed. Young people in urban America could feel its effects almost immediately, as our cities were seized by a new occupying army of soldiers in blue. A new phase of revolutionary struggle was begun in earnest: continued revolution from the Right. If the election of Nixon in 1972 amounted to a sort of Bourbon Restoration of 1814, then Democrat Clinton was Napoleon III, ready to create a new landscape.

The appearance in the coming months of so many police was like the appearance of a scaffolding—a scaffold pinned securely to the ground on either coast by California's Three Strikes Law, and in New York by the ascension of Giuliani. As the edifice then emerged within, none of it came as a surprise: checkpoints, curfews, rampant street frisking, "Truth in Sentencing," "Contract on America," etc.

But, as that edifice grew, and as friends and loved ones disappeared from the streets, a generation was galvanized into political struggle against police and prisons. For many years, it was an intuitive movement—motivated by rage, and informed by first-hand experience, by Public Enemy and KRS-1, or in some cases by letters to loved ones or mentor-comrades inside. We read what we could—Cleaver's *Soul on Ice*, Sykes's *Society of Captives*, Soledad Brothers, Assata, Marighella's *Minimanual for the Urban Guerilla*—and tried to apply what we learned to the current situation. Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* was precious water, and well-worn copies passed through many

hands and opened many minds. Yet, it held a stark gray area that pointed to the originality of the current crisis, since the evidence in our guts told us that the root of our American situation was *not* Panopticon but the slave ship.

Current analysis was what we needed. Prison Activist Resource Center pamphlets—Bill Dunne's "The New Plantation," Angela Davis's "The Prison Industrial Complex," Linda Evans's "Prisons in the Global Economy,"—and the writings of Mumia Abu-Jamal all contributed as best they could. Still, a whole generation of committed activists were waiting for something integral, an account both deep and broad that resonated with our experiences.

It was to this waiting movement that *Lockdown America* arrived in 1999.

Lockdown America

Lockdown America by Christian Parenti is an in-depth history of the emergence of the contemporary police state. The Alphabet Soup of government police and corrections policies—from the LEAA (Law Enforcement Assistance Administration) through IIRIRA (Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act)—are defined, demystified and contextualized. It is this context which is truly impressive about Parenti's book, for he presents his exhaustive research in a format which is all too rare these days: to strongly support a clear and radical argument.

The argument is this: "Beginning in the late 1960s, U.S. Capitalism has a dual social and economic crisis, and it was in response to this crisis that the criminal justice build-up of today began. After a surge of expansion in the late 60s, the growth of criminal justice plateaued in the late 70s, only to resume in earnest during the early and mid-80s, with Reagan's war on drugs. Since then, we've been on a steady path toward ever more state repression and surveillance.

"Initially, this build-up was in response to racial upheaval and political rebellion. The second part was/is more a response to the vicious economic restructuring of the Reagan era. This restructuring was itself a right-wing strategy for addressing the economic crisis which first appeared in the mid and late 60s. To restore sagging business profits,

the welfare of working people had to be sacrificed. Thus, the second phase of the criminal justice crackdown has become, intentionally or otherwise, a way to manage rising inequality and surplus populations. ..."¹

From prison rape and gender construction within prison, to urban renewal, gentrification and the Finance Insurance and Real Estate (FIRE) economy, to George Jackson, radical movements within prisons, to the gang culture of California prisons, the history of the California Correctional Peace Officers Association, to the complex ways that America criminalizes immigrants: Parenti leaves few topics untouched in his account.

In unmasking the emergent police state, Parenti demonstrates what many on the Left intuitively guessed: that at its root, this whole "prison thing" is about disrupting revolutionary struggle. But, while it is counter-insurgency that gets this ball rolling, in the history Parenti charts out, it is the inevitable weight of Statist bureaucracy which turns this ball into a massive, unstoppable train. Because counter-insurgency against the Left and continued war on Native and Afrikan communities could not be acknowledged, some public mask had to be presented. A sinister quote by Nixon's Chief of Staff H.R. Haldemann sums up the hypocritical germ of the police state: "[President Nixon] emphasized that you have to face the fact that the whole problem is really the blacks. The key is to devise a system that recognized this while not appearing to."² Just as the FBI (as demonstrated in Ward Churchill's *Agents of Repression*) constructed its public presence as a "gangbuster" organization to mask its true work of disrupting Communist and Afrikan organizations, so Nixon's call to "law and order" was "thinly veiled code for 'the race problem.'"³

In honor of the "gangbuster" tradition, the first set of wheels built by Nixon for the prison juggernaut was the Racketeering Influence and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) act: a set of liberty demolishing "tools" including "special grand juries" with the powers to subpoena anyone about anything, and the admittance of heretofore illegally obtained evidence. Of course the public face of this law was the "fight against

1. Parenti, *Lockdown America*, p. xii.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

organized crime," while the actual use of this law was the crackdown on the Left. More importantly, Nixon built this set of wheels for the newly designed engine of American politics: the evil of narcotics. Soon the specter of the junkie and the pusher will be evoked by politicians across the land, as the source of all social ills. This specter then arouses a frighteningly useful and effective machine, which produces anxiety and converts it into political capital.

Perpetual Prisoner Machine

In *The Perpetual Prisoner Machine*, journalist Joel Dyer analyzes the workings of this "impressive and complicated mechanism." "It was during the late 70s and early 80s that the original three components of the machine appeared on the scene as a result of three separate and initially unrelated occurrences: the accelerating consolidation of the media industry, the rise in influence of political consultants, and the emergence of an organized Prison Industrial Complex (PIC) that is perhaps best described as a collection of interests whose financial well-being rises and falls with the size of the prison population. As a result, the media, our elected officials and [the PIC] each developed a unique method for turning crime into some form of capital—individual techniques that were, in the beginning, not particularly dependent upon one another....

"Subsequent changes within our political system—primarily the increasing use of public opinion polling and rapid increase in the cost of political campaigns—have effected the various components of the machine the way the lightning bolt affected Frankenstein's monster.... They begin ... to function as a single mechanism."⁴

Dyer's account is an extremely comprehensible dissection of the vicious cycles of alienation in modern culture and the instrumental role played by broadcast media. People know less and less of their neighbors and of actual reality, becoming more dependent upon mediated information, and in turn more alienated and more dependent. Dyer lists numerous studies of television's effects on consciousness, and agrees with his sources that in America the cycle has spun to the point where a fabricated "viewed" reality has displaced the fabric of lived realities. He repeatedly asserts that it is only because of "a mediated sense of reality" that the current criminal justice build-up is possible. From this

4. Dyer, *The Perpetual Prisoner Machine*, p. 3.

perspective, Dyer could make a powerful indictment of the integral function of the bureaucratic state in this culture of alienation. Instead, he frames the criminal justice build-up as a threat to electoral democracy, never faltering in his belief that liberal democracy is reparable. The naiveté of such a position is almost laughable, if not for the author's eminently respectable motivations.

Dyer is a frontlines writer: his former Yugoslavia is Texas.

The book's topics include: an argument unmasking the PIC; an informative history on the growing centralization of media ownership and distribution; the project of "manufacturing fear"; the rise of public opinion pollsters; a history and effects of mandatory minimums; the corporate interests in prison expansion; and an examination of private prisons, including exposés on private prison cover-ups. Much of the writing is repetitive, intended for an audience of Joe and Jane Suburbanite, who Dyer believes are completely duped and must be browbeaten into enlightenment. But his writing is compelling when it moves to his first-hand experience as a journalist investigating the private prisons of Texas, where Colorado was sending inmates. We hear, between the lines, the shock he felt as his exposés were denied daily by officials of the Colorado Department of Corrections.

Professional integrity also comes through between the lines, along with a sincere desire for change. "Eventually, an enlightened Federal judge in Denver ordered all payments to the private prison suspended until an independent expert could determine conditions.... Fortunately, for the Texas-Colorado inmates, a surprise inspection of the facility revealed that the conditions were at least as bad as I had reported. In the end, Colorado terminated its contract and moved the inmates from the Texas hellhole."⁵ From this success story of journalistic activism, it is no small jump to the proposal that "choosing more informative news" will damage the market forces that keep the perpetual prisoner machine rolling.

That is, if one lacks, as Dyer lacks, a clear critique of capitalism. Throughout the book, capitalism is constantly fragmented into "shareholder interest," "profit motives," and "corporate power." This fragmentation cripples the radical potential of the book, which

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 201-202.

becomes, in the end, a source of highly informative dirt on the Corrections Corporation of America and the Bobby Jones Group, and verification of the well-known facts that you cannot trust the evening news, your vote does not count, and Wall Street dividends are ultimately blood money.

Re: The Prison Industrial Complex

Parenti anticipates this weak link of Dyer's, and offers advice: "Much of the current critique of the prison industrial complex relies on showing the direct involvement of specific economic interests. This 'interest group model,' the preferred style of muckraking journalists, borrows heavily from the accurate left critique of how the arms lobby created the military industrial complex. Making direct causal links and finding proverbial 'smoking guns' is a powerful path of argument. But interest groups go only so far. Ultimately, the whole of capitalist society is greater than the sum of its corporate and non-corporate parts. To really understand America's incarceration binge and criminal justice crackdown, we need to move from a narrow, interest-group-based model to a more holistic class analysis that looks at the needs of the class system and class society in general."⁶

To uncover how such a holistic class analysis may inform one's critique, let us conclude by examining one of the shared topics: the nature of the PIC.

Parenti asks: "Is prison building the current delivery system for Keynesian stimulus in a post-Cold War, demilitarized America? Is the emerging PIC replacing, or augmenting, that behemoth constellation of civilian government, military power and private capital that Eisenhower dubbed the 'Military Industrial Complex' and which for two generations was America's *de facto* industrial policy?"⁷

Dyer would answer indubitably yes. The driving force of America's economy is crime and punishment. The most lucrative construction bonds are those set for prison construction, and no corporation in America does not have its fingers bound up in prison expansion or the war on drugs. And, to this, Parenti agrees.

6. Parenti, *Lockdown America*, p. 238.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 213.

But, it is not economic functions which attracts Dyer to the PIC model: it is the place of the prison in Washington. To paraphrase his argument: Since the "war on crime" began in the early 80s, "crime" has been the top, or near the top, issue in every public opinion poll. By 1992, 41% of Americans felt unsafe in their own neighborhoods after dark—all of this while the vast majority of people were quite safe. By 1995, 79% of Americans thought that crime was the biggest issue facing the nation. What we have here, to borrow a term from the Military Industrial Complex (MIC), is the Crime Gap.

Dyer explains: "On January 17th, 1961, [Eisenhower warned] Americans that the military-industrial complex had gained a dangerous level of influence over our political system and its defense policies.... In particular, Eisenhower was concerned over the fact that the defense industry was using its influence on Capitol Hill to put forward the perception that there was a severe 'missile gap' between the United States and the Soviet Union, the idea being that Soviet military capabilities were far superior to our own and that we needed to spend much more money on defense in order to restore the balance of power and thereby keep America safe. In response to the fear created by the 'missile gap' propaganda, the public enthusiastically supported the government's massive increases in defense spending at the beginning of the cold war....

"Eisenhower ... understood that there was in fact no 'missile gap.'"⁸ Thus, for Dyer, the emergence of the PIC makes perfect sense: the propaganda about the wars on drugs and crime had replaced the propaganda about the war on Communism and Russian imperialism.

For Parenti, this is not enough. Indeed, there is a government backed juggernaut of mutually reinforcing corporate interests. Indeed, mandatory minimums and prison expansion are discussed as pork belly giveaways within the legislative halls of Washington, Sacramento, Albany and Tallahassee, yet framed as public safety issues before the cameras on the congressional steps. But the economic function of the PIC can never approach that of the MIC. Prison construction will always be a small-scale form of economic stimulus, which may revive "occasional economically moribund areas," but they are "tiny islands in a vast sea of stagnant agriculture, deindustrialization, and a post-

8. Dyer, *The Perpetual Prisoner Machine*, pp. 29-30.

organized, downgraded manufacturing.”⁹ More importantly is the issue of spin-off. “Cold War pork and government incubation of defense industries helped develop the U.S. interstate highway system, state universities, commercial jets, most of telecommunications including the Internet, microprocessors, fiber optics and laser surgery.... No such economic linkages can be attributed to the prison boom.”¹⁰

Because of a book like Dyer’s, because the PIC model may be deployed to make an argument which muddles the role of capitalism in the prison crisis, Parenti takes the controversial stand of imposing limits on the PIC model. As Parenti says, “Even if prison building created no Keynesian stimulus, and there were no private prisons to profit from locking up the poor, and if prison labor was abolished—in other words, if all directly interested parties were removed from the equation—American capitalism would still, without major economic reforms, have to manage and contain its surplus populations and poorest classes with paramilitary forms of segregation, containment and repression. At the heart of the matter lies the contradiction: capitalism needs the poor and creates poverty, intentionally through policy and organically through crisis. Yet, capitalism is also directly and indirectly threatened by the poor. Capitalism always needs surplus populations, creates surplus populations, yet faces the threat of political, aesthetic or cultural disruption from those populations.”¹¹

While both authors agree that the PIC must be exposed for what it is, Parenti warns us repeatedly against locating it in specific interests, as if those could be dealt with one by one. The PIC must be viewed as class war, waged from above. This spirited argument, which runs the PIC model through such a strictly economic still, is surprisingly liberating when mixed with Parenti’s tonic point that the PIC is the mechanism, not the root, of the current situation. There is something latent in American culture which finds this murderous project acceptable—so long as it is sanitized and hidden from view.

Change

Their differing notions of the PIC, of electoral politics and of capitalism lead to a stark contrast in their proposals for change.

9. Parenti, *Lockdown America*, p. 217.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 216.

11. *Ibid.*, pp. 238-239.

Dyer, in his chapter on “Pulling the Plug” recommends “a couple of things that we can realistically do.”¹² First, “simply educate ourselves and our neighbors about media content.”¹³ This way, “viewers may still choose to watch the same sensationalized newscasts, but [knowingly for] it’s entertainment value rather than informational worth.”¹⁴ Secondly, people may begin to “vote with their viewing minutes,”¹⁵ by choosing more informative news and less violent entertainment. Lastly, (perhaps most ambitiously) Congress may enforce antitrust laws against Disney and Time Warner in an effort to legislatively reduce violent media content.¹⁶

These “proposals” speak volumes of the assumed powerlessness of citizenry in a representative democracy, unconsciously reduced by Dyer to “viewers,” a step below the monikers of “constituents” and “taxpayers” employed by the professional politicians. Are people truly so powerless and manipulated? Dyer concludes his appeal with well-intentioned liberal hope: “nothing can change until we, meaning all of us, or at least a majority of us, find the wherewithal to make our actions—whether they are watching TV, voting or investing—a manifestation of our ideals.”¹⁷ Yet, haven’t a majority of Americans been manifesting their ideals for centuries? The Westward Expansion with its Indian Wars and free-for-all land stakes; or the creation of suburbia, the physical space of the alienation which Dyer finds so frustrating: these have been social efforts, cooperative labors, cultural works. The prison expansion of today is also a manifestation of prominent values in the American culture, of social ideals.

Parenti makes no proposals in his conclusion, except to point out that the solution to the prison and police build-up lies in “popular resistance and economic justice.” This is no evasion. Rather he makes a political proscription when he identifies “the roots of change” in grassroots opposition to the PIC and police state. These include inmates filing grievances against staff, forming alliances with outside activists, in some cases attacking abusive correctional officers in an organized fashion; the movement to establish police accountability and civilian

12. Dyer, *The Perpetual Prisoner Machine*, p. 276.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 276.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 276.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 277.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 278.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 279.

review boards; the lobbying movements like Families Against Mandatory Minimums; the gang-truce movements; and youth organizing "Schools Not Jails" demos. Like a writer who believes in true democracy and not in the myth of an "enlightened electorate," he urges us to listen to these movements, of people articulating a grounded struggle against oppression in their daily lives, to find the way forward.

Conclusion

I would add that any movement that would claim to be democratic in principles must listen to the voices of these grassroots efforts against police and prisons; that any utopian proscriptions for a new society that do not take account of the facts of the prison are, at best, narcissism, or something more sinister: something akin to Soviet propaganda under Stalin, where images and symbols of the revolutionary moment are parroted about, while the fact of the Gulag is masked.

This police/prison edifice has grown to magnificent proportions. People everywhere are waking up to the fact that it must be put in check, if not eliminated. There is always the possibility that it may be struck down, like a Tower of Babel, by some higher power.... The people coerced into creating the tower then must live under the rule of a different master. Liberatory potential snatched away again by the changing of leaders.

For the story to end that way would be a shame. Listen to the furies and frustrations of this movement. Fury against an intolerable world: this is the seed of utopia. Frustration against the legislative machine, and its carrots of promised justice: this is a living primer in anarchist critique. This movement is our generation's laboratory of democracy.

Rebecca DeWitt

Two Prison Anthologies

A Field of Broken Stones

by Lowell Naeve with David Wieck
Swallow Paperbacks, 1959.

Doing Time: 25 Years of Prison Writing

by Bell Gale Chevigny (editor)
Arcade Publishing, 1999.

Imprisoned writers often try to conjure up the freedom that is denied them: whether they focus abstractly on the complexity and beauty of life or strive to reveal the cycle of oppression that put them there, it is as hard for them to articulate a sense of freedom as it is for those of us who have never been incarcerated to grasp prison's full human impact. William Orlando, a prisoner, declares, "writing is all I have, a lament and a boast." Much more than a cry for help, Orlando, among many others, writes to probe and prove his very existence as well as ours. That these writers and others continue to struggle from prison is an affirmation of the anarchist claim that the human spirit cannot be destroyed, even by the most onerous conditions.

While not all prison writing is explicitly political, it has always been important for radical movements. Anarchism has a long relationship with prison writing, the most famous cases being Peter Kropotkin and Alexander Berkman's prison memoirs. However, prison writing pertinent to anarchism did not stop with them. The practice has been carried on by lesser-known anarchists as well as those who do not identify as anarchists. For anarchists, an awareness and appreciation of the continued efforts of prison writers is crucial to understanding the prison system as well as figuring out the type of society we want to create.

A Field of Broken Stones,¹ by Lowell Naeve in collaboration with David Wieck, and *Doing Time: 25 Years of Prison Writing*, edited by Bell Gale Chevigny, guide the reader through the prison system with fiction, poems, and sophisticated memoirs. Through these books, the

1. First published by Libertarian Press in 1950.

reader forms a political consciousness via well written literature, develops ideas about resistance to increasingly complicated forms of social coercion, and understands what the prison system is, how it works, and how it shapes people.²

A Field of Broken Stones, although largely unknown, is a classic in revolutionary prison writing and should be placed alongside Kropotkin and Berkman's memoirs. With a preface by Paul Goodman, it shows us what it was like for anarchists during the 1940s and 1950s. There is little information on WWII draft resisters in general (much less the WWI draft resisters, a few of whom Naeve met in prison), and specifically anarchist WWII draft resisters are virtually forgotten. Naeve was first imprisoned for around five years for refusing to register for the WWII draft. He met and became life-long friends with his co-writer and fellow draft resister, Wieck, while in solitary confinement. During his imprisonment, Naeve became the radical he always wanted to be and later joined the anarchist group Why? along with Wieck.³

The real impact of *A Field of Broken Stones* lies in Naeve's personal transformation. The book is about his awakening and clarification of the type of world he was supposed to accept and the price he pays for rejecting it. (Wieck, on the other hand, was radicalized before entering

2 Lowell Naeve traces moral and political dilemmas that seem grand and simplistic when compared with those found in contemporary prison literature. A WWII objector and anarchist, Naeve does not wish to engage in any form of oppression and is sent to prison. He is an actor in an age-old political scenario that anarchists today can relate to and understand: Naeve refuses to engage in oppressive behavior required by an oppressive society and inevitably pays the price. The prisoners represented in *Doing Time* are more complex not only because we rarely know who they are and how they got there but also because the political scenario increasingly lacks any rationale. Their fates cannot be broken down into clear rights or wrongs. While each book offers equally valuable insights, there is one major difference: in Naeve's case it merely depends on whether you're for or against the war, *Doing Time* takes away this easy dilemma and presents much more complicated moral and political issues.

3 The Why? group was active from 1942 to 1947, and was founded by former members of the Vanguard Group. Why? mainly published a magazine and held weekly meetings where figures such as Paul Goodman, John Cage, James Baldwin, Paul Maddock and Robert Duncan made appearances. Many members moved to San Francisco in 1947 to join Kenneth Rexroth's anarchist group, although a group continued in New York (under the name Resistance) until 1954.

Naeve never mentions anarchism by name in *A Field of Broken Stones*. It is only by knowing the history that the reader can make the connection.

prison and his idealism greatly affected Naeve.) Naeve reveals the prison world with words as well as in stark and sometime funny black and white line drawings throughout the book. These drawings, with their lack of color, continuity, and reality (officials touring the prison are drawn riding an ostrich, sheep-like animal) were ironically created by wiping the ink off the pages of *Life Magazine*.

We travel with Naeve from his hometown of Bronson, Iowa to New York City where, in almost complete political isolation, Naeve decides to resist the draft. What first put such thoughts into his head? Indiscriminate killing of small animals regularly practiced by country folk, the experience of killing a rabbit by his own hand, and then the celebration of war in school textbooks. Thinking that he would be free of such brutality as an adult, he encountered college level compulsory military training and American imperialism. Upon traveling to Mexico, Naeve remarked: "Outsiders owned most of Mexico's resources, were dictating production, wages. The USA, along with other imperialists, was, I saw with my own eyes, positively driving the country with a whip. To me, War, the battle for the whip, made no sense unless you wanted to be the whipper."⁴ Resisting the Communists, who Naeve thought were just another group of would be whippers, he found himself "an individual caught in between, literally a man without a country."⁵

Unlike many revolutionary autobiographies, this one fortunately lacks the hard, almost fanatical tone we have come to expect. Naeve is not overtly persecuted nor is he subjected to outright violence meant to destroy one's soul. His personal transformation seems to be a mystery even to him and lends credence to the anarchist idea that the desire for freedom is inherent. Even though his opposition to WWII began as a personal, almost instinctual choice, it gradually evolves into a political conviction. On an individual basis, Naeve decided that no matter how terrible the fascist presence was, war was not acceptable on any level. On a political basis, he carried this rejection of oppressive force into the prisons and struggled daily for a more just society.

Naeve actively begins his transformation when he goes to the draft office to declare himself a resister and is tricked into signing up for the draft. Upon realizing what happened, he furiously tears the card up and

4. Lowell Naeve, with David Wieck, *A Field of Broken Stones*, p. 8.

5. *Ibid*, page 9.

sends it to the Secretary of War with the following note:

Mr. Stimson,

I wish in no way whatsoever to participate in the draft, as I feel it is the machinery to put the nation into war. I regret that I ever registered. I hereby return my draft card and wish to be classified as a non-registered objector to war.

Sincerely,

L. Naeve.⁶

Afterwards, he nervously awaits the authorities for six months. He is then subpoenaed by the FBI and questioned extensively about party affiliations, of which he has none. In general, the authorities are as mystified with Naeve as he is by what is going on. Eventually, all he wants to do is go to jail because he believes that this is the only way he can make his point. But, they won't arrest him. Several interrogations later he ends up in court with a judge who tries to lecture him into changing his mind. Finally, Naeve interrupts him and says, "It seems to me there is a race going on here between God and the United States Government. And who do you think is going to win?"⁷ The judge, embarrassed and angered by laughter from the peanut gallery, has the guards cart Naeve off to jail to await sentencing.

The year is 1941, Naeve is sentenced to one year and sent to New York City's West Street Jail. Draft resisters were generally treated with respect if not bewilderment by the rest of the prison population, partly because the U.S. involvement with the war hadn't started yet. However, to most of the prisoners, you had to have done something really bad to be there. One day, Louis Lepke, fellow inmate and famous boss of the Murder, Inc. crime syndicate, asks to speak with Naeve. After conversing for a bit, Lepke says, referring to the fact that he was headed to the electric chair for ordering the killing of hundreds of people, "It don't seem to me to make much sense that they put a man in jail for that" (i.e., refusing to kill).⁸

Soon afterwards, Naeve is transferred to Danbury Prison, in Connecticut, to serve his year-long sentence. While in prison, Naeve

6. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 29.

makes contact with other draft resisters but he tries to stick to his goals prior to prison. He just wants to paint and draw and tries to do what he can but work detail keeps getting in the way. Soon, he recognizes that the work is meant to keep the prisoners busy and concludes that if he is to be kept busy, why not do it by painting. Surprisingly, the Warden all too eagerly accepts Naeve's request for supplies and a space to paint. It turns out that the Warden wants to use Naeve not only as a example of the "model prisoner," but also to produce free portraits of his family. When Naeve refuses to play the part for visiting officials touring the prison and refuses to paint portraits of the Warden's children, Naeve's idyllic time in prison comes to an end, although his idealism perseveres. His solution, he said to the Warden, was to draw lots—prisoners as well as officials—to see who would get their portrait painted. Of course, the Warden refuses any attempt to equalize prisoners and officials and thus Naeve becomes a political activist.

The war objectors were the only inmates not afraid to protest against the authorities and they paid a price. Naeve was placed in quarantine for ninety-seven days after the portrait incident and his refusal to do any prison work. But Naeve and his friends continued their solidarity work and constantly challenged the authorities. They protested against censorship, poor food quality, and the segregation of black prisoners.

Eventually, Naeve completes his first prison sentence and is free but not exactly hardened or streetwise from his experience. His bewildering re-arrest occurs when he finds himself in a small town with no place to sleep. A local points him to the county jail whose sheriff occasionally rents out beds for the night. Once there, the deputy sheriff becomes suspicious and asks if he is a draft resister. Naeve answers yes and finds himself charged again for resisting the war. Not only was his arrest suspect but his new five-year sentence was also probably illegal because he had already served time for his offense.

Once back in Danbury Prison, Naeve found even more draft resisters and together they made their presence felt. No offense committed by the authorities went unnoticed. Soon the war resisters were placed in solitary after staging a work strike protesting the Jim Crow treatment of black prisoners (the segregated mess hall was their initial target). There they stayed until the war was over but they did continue to stage protests from within solitary. When the war ends and they are still not

released, they stage a "lie in," barricade their cellblock, and picket inside the prison (supported by their families and others picketing outside the prison). They are denied amnesty and, instead, are broken up and shipped to other prisons to serve out their sentences. Naeve goes to Ashland federal prison in Kentucky.

Naeve is released on May 14, 1946. He has plans to exhibit paintings done in prison and, once Wieck is released, plans to write the book. Upon release, he follows through with his plans but he realizes that not only is he a changed man but the world seems irrevocably different. Naeve writes prophetically: "This country is tightening up, tightening up much more than many other countries. The US has become a nation of atomic bombs, a military giant. It is at present having a try at permanent military peace-time conscription, a sign that the country is not only creeping toward a fascist way, but already has crept a long way in that direction. Put one or two more ingredients into the national way of doing things, just tighten up some more on labor congressionally, and the country will be almost there. Instead of a double chin or square mustache, it appears this country will get its fascism by congressional law and congressional committee. Everywhere there are signs that democracy has lost ground."⁹

Fast forward to 1973 when PEN (Poets, Playwrights, Essayists, Editors, and Novelists) begins its Prison Writing Program (PWP). Founded in 1921, PEN is dedicated to world peace through a global association of writers. Despite a long tradition of celebrated prison writing, foreshadowed by people such as Naeve and Wieck, it was not until the Attica uprising that PEN decided to fully support U.S. prison writers. PEN's writing contest was launched, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) sponsored prison writing workshops, academics began to take notice, journals were launched, and prison writers became a *cause celebre*. It seemed that, through their writing, prisoners started to be generally acknowledged as victims of an oppressive society. Then Jack Henry Abbott's prison letters to Norman Mailer, *In the Belly of the Beast*, were published in 1981 and things changed yet again.

At the whim of prison writing popularity, Abbott was probably overwhelmed with press and expectations when released in 1981. While he was glorified for the fact that he had been incarcerated, his supporters

9. *Ibid.*, p. 230.

as well as opponents demanded that he properly reintegrate himself into society. He made an appearance on *Good Morning America* where Mailer answered all the questions. The Fortune Society offered help with the de-institutionalization process, which Abbott refused. Shortly afterwards, he killed a man in a fight, was reincarcerated and society's love affair with prison writers came to an end. Support for prison writing virtually ended: under Reagan, the NEA cut most of the funding and prison journals and newspapers folded or were suppressed. Even the PWP began to lose support from PEN members, although they continued to award the annual writing prize.

Doing Time is comprised of fifty-one works of poetry, fiction, and autobiography, all written by winners of PEN's writing prize. The sections reflect the prison routine: "initiations," "time and its terms," "routines and ruptures," "work," "reading and writing," "players, games," "race, chance, change," "family," "the world," "getting out," and "death row." These works present a far more complex and frightening picture of the prison system than Naeve had experienced.

While I knew much of the history behind *A Field of Broken Stones*, I purposefully did not read any of the introductions to *Doing Time*. Just as I had learned from Naeve and Wieck about opposition to WWII, I suspected that I would learn everything I needed to know about the contemporary prison struggle and search for freedom from the PEN writers. This turned out to be true and the snapshots provided by *Doing Time* presented a comprehensive image of the prison system. And, of course, the desire and argument for freedom was only amplified as both a crucial goal and difficult path.

I marveled at the purposeful monstrosity of a maximum-security prison presented in Victor Hassine's "How I Became a Convict." "Graterford State Prison, Pennsylvania's largest, was built in the early 1930s to hold the state's most violent prisoners. On June 14, 1981, while it could not contain all eight thousand of the state's most wanted, it certainly had enough room to hold me. Its steel reinforced concrete wall measures four feet thick by thirty-two feet tall and encloses over sixty-five acres of land. The five cellblocks are huge, each containing four hundred cells. Each cellblock is a three story rectangular structure, measuring about forty-five feet by eight hundred twenty feet, over twice the length of a football field. I knew none of this as I sat handcuffed and shackled

in the back seat of the sheriff's car. All I could see was a blur of dirty, grainy whiteness from the giant wall that dominated the landscape before me. It made me feel small and insignificant and very frightened."¹⁰ With a life-without-parole sentence, once he enters the building he will never leave.

The blood and ghosts of prisons and prisoners past and the substitution of prison labor for slavery is evoked by Easy Water's poem, "Chronicling Sing Sing Prison." "The prisoners labored/To build their own cells/7 feet deep, 3 feet 3 inches wide/And 6 feet 7 inches high/What could be crueller/To dig their own graves/Or to suffer the added indignity/Of having the graveyard called/Mount Pleasant State Prison/Stone upon stone/Granite known as Sing Sing marble."¹¹

We learn that the desperate hope for parole is a prisoner's form of belief in the system. The betrayal expressed by Larry Bratt in "Giving Me a Second Chance" is the result of arbitrary decisions on the part of the prison system. "From the perspective of those inside the prison, it seems there's a new breed of mean-spiritedness among politicians, and more of a concern with public opinion polls than rehabilitating criminals. We've been told that if we worked hard, and followed the rules, that the system would work fairly for us, as it does equally for law-abiding citizens outside these walls. We had to earn parole, they told us."¹²

There are the old-timers who lived with a code of ethics now forgotten, as described in Patrick Nolan's poem, "Old Man Motown." "Old Man Motown/times have changed/The once noble beasts/of this barren Savannah/are almost extinct,/ravaged by the vicious sweep/of rat packs that make prey/of the aged, sick, and weak."¹³ In "Skyline Turkey," by Richard Statton, there are those who "came to prison not because they were failures at crimes, but because in their contempt for the law they were not trying to get away with anything."¹⁴ In J.R. Grindlay's "Myths of Darkness: The Toledo Madman and the Ultimate Freedom," there is the stoic's discovery that "Nobody expects anything of you and there's not a thing they can take away from you. That's freedom."¹⁵ We meet a

10. Bell Gale Chevigny (ed.), *Doing Time: 25 Years of Prison Writing*, p. 14.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 38.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 59.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 80.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

prisoner on death row through Jackie Ruzas poem, "Easy to Kill," whose perspective is painfully childlike. "The prison priest, a sometime visitor,/his manner warm, asks/'How are you today? Anything I can do for you son?'/Is it just that I'm so easy to kill, Father?'/His face a blank, he walks away."¹⁶

Gender inequality is, of course, not forgotten in the anthology. Of the fifty-one contributors, ten are women. Female prisoners frequently do not receive as much support, education, or encouragement as the men. The women's writing workshops often begin as empowerment exercises and end up producing high-quality, written work. Some of the work is collaborative, written by the whole group. Women face distinct problems such as lack of privacy and harassment by pre-dominantly male guards. But they are first and foremost writing about what they know: prison. Vera Montgomery's "Solidarity with Cataracts" describes a scene familiar to any prisoner. "One afternoon/a sister wept and/I wept inside for the/wreckin'-crew sisters/I can't erase this scene:/a water soaked mountain of/broken/empty toiletries/shredded literature/cut up garments and/atop the heap/our sister's loved one's/pictures hate torn/to bits/all the while/I stood and wondered/ where was the solidarity?"¹⁷

Paul St. John's story, "Behind the Mirror's Face," focuses on what the prisoner becomes when picking up the pen. Is he a writer who happens to live in prison or a prisoner who happens to write? "A con may write fiction, but everybody will know where it comes from. His fiction wears the stink of prison for a belt. Her fiction is pregnant with loss disguised as possibility. His outlaws always get the better of a wicked status quo. Her heroines grope through a jungle of shame for their stolen womanhood, and perhaps a piece of heaven. A convict may write about Mars, the sea, rebirth, cats, needles and pins; without the 'convict point of view' there is no prison writing. Take this goddamn place out of your art is what I'm trying to tell you all."¹⁸ Yet, Paul St. John cannot take prison out of his writing, anymore than he or anyone can take the desire for freedom out of their life.

The idea of freedom is everywhere in these two books. For these prisoners, their writing embodies it. They have chosen to tell their

16. *Ibid.*, p. 304.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 140.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 119.

stories, through fiction, poems, and memoirs, to shift our focus from them as individuals and onto the society that brought them there in the first place. They succeed in putting themselves forth as human beings who dream of communal and individual freedom as much as anyone on the outside, and give us an idea of their struggle. How to do justice to their efforts is the hard part.

What to do about prisons could very well be the biggest challenge anarchists face in envisioning a free society. What happens to all those who have been damaged by society, as well as those who have contributed to the damage of society? An anarchist idea of freedom will have to address the role of rehabilitation in a future revolutionary order. Does our ideal future include some form of prison and, if so, why? Certainly, if our free society were to include some form of prison, it would not be based on the current model and, at the very least, would have to incorporate the issues of equality and decency that prisoners fight for.

How much do we rely on accounts that are not journalistic, analytical or even completely factual, but poetic, fictional, and autobiographical? I began reading these books simply out of a preference for literature and the knowledge that we can enjoy and learn a lot from a well-written story. In the search for ways to introduce people to ideas of resistance, these books offer a transformative experience above and beyond any academic tome.

Ultimately, the ideals of human dignity and freedom, for which anarchists and these prisoners struggle, might not be any clearer after reading these books, but the reader will know that people continue to fight for them on a daily basis. Intellectually, readers will recognize the power of literature to shape political consciousness, follow the search for freedom in an increasingly unfree world, and understand the prison system itself. If all else fails, turn directly to the writers themselves and the emotional impact is unavoidable: "I wrote to sublimate my rage, from a place where all hope is gone, a madness from having been damaged too much, from a silence of killing rage. I wrote to avenge the betrayals of a lifetime, to purge the bitterness of injustice. I wrote with a deep groan of doom in my blood, bewildered and dumbstruck; from an indestructible love of life, to affirm breath and laughter, and the abiding innocence of things."¹⁹

19. Jimmy Santiago Baca, "Coming Into Language", p. 160.

Chuck Morse

Theory of the Anti-Globalization Movement

Naming the Enemy: Anti-Corporate Movements Confront Globalization

by Amory Starr
Zed Books, 2001

Globalization from Below: The Power of Solidarity
by Jeremy Brecher, Tim Costello, and Brendan Smith
South End Press, 2000

Finally, after years of disintegration and defeat on the Left, a new movement has erupted upon the political landscape. It is not organized around a single issue, identity based, or somehow "implicitly" radical. On the contrary, this movement directly attacks global capital's economic and political infrastructure with a radically democratic politics and a strategy of confrontation. It is bold, anti-authoritarian, and truly global.

And also quite effective. This movement has already introduced a radical critique into the debate on the global economy and demonstrated the capacity to physically shut down meetings of trade ministers. It seems possible that this movement will continue to grow, deepen its radicalism, and revolutionize the world according to the radically democratic principles it embraces.

The emergence of the anti-globalization movement has produced a feeling of near euphoria among anarchists. Not only are our commitments to direct action and decentralization shared broadly in the movement as a whole, but we are also enjoying a political legitimacy that has eluded us for decades. We can now articulate our anti-statist, utopian message to activists around the world and we are no longer dismissed as terrorists or cranks. In many respects it seems like we should just mobilize, mobilize, and mobilize.

Unfortunately this would be a grave mistake. The movement's anti-

authoritarian, revolutionary character is currently under attack by a informal network of reformists, who want nothing more than to see this movement accommodate itself to the basic structures of the present world. They are not waging a direct assault upon revolutionaries in the movement: they recognize that this would alienate them from the movement's base. Instead, they are fighting us indirectly, in the realm of ideas. In particular, they hope to define the movement in a way that renders its most expansive, utopian potentials literally unthinkable.

As important as it is to mobilize, anarchists will have to respond to this challenge on the theoretical terrain: we cannot afford to lose the battle of ideas. Above all, we must link the anti-globalization movement to a broader revolutionary project in a way that is coherent, concrete, and irrefutable. However, as a defensive measure, we should expose the reformist's attempt to sever this link and reveal their designs to the movement as a whole. The reformers will respond by declaring their good faith or complaining about our divisiveness, but we should not be swayed by such pre-political subterfuge: on the contrary, we should be merciless with those who would hinder the realization of the anti-globalization movement's most radical possibilities. Popular revolutionary movements have been betrayed countless times before: we should not let this happen again.

Naming the Enemy and *Globalization from Below* are exemplary documents of the reformist wing of the anti-globalization movement. They are more reflective and sophisticated than the majority of books on the movement and focus on the deeper questions upon which its identity hangs. These two works celebrate the movement's radicalism emphatically, but in terms that make the revolutionary transformation of the social order inconceivable.

In *Globalization from Below*, Jeremy Brecher, Tim Costello, and Brendan Smith (BCS) argue that the economic, political, and cultural interconnectedness signified by globalization is irreversible and possibly a good thing: this interconnection, they assert, could potentially serve the interests of people and the earth, not just the elites. Although the rich and powerful have shaped globalization in their interest thus far (BCS call this "globalization from above"), there is a counter-movement that seeks to reshape our interconnected world in the interests of people and the planet (which BCS call "globalization from

below"). They believe that the movement for "globalization from below" is disparate but growing, and their book is meant to provide a framework for uniting it into a common, grassroots struggle. They want to build a world structured by "human values other than greed and domination," one "less dominated by the culture and values of global capital, even if it is still constrained by them," and believe their book provides a realistic strategy for doing so.¹ They believe that the movement for "globalization from below" can transform the world by leading people to withdraw their consent from dominant social relationships, which will prevent the reproduction of the social order, and thus create a situation in which the movement can impose different, more just norms upon society as a whole. BCS try to concretize these norms with a detailed program for reducing poverty, limiting environmental destruction, and enhancing democratic control over the economy. They believe their program embodies values "already shared by many in this movement and that [it] is implicit in much of what the movement actually does."² Their attractive and short book (122 pages) is clearly conceived, written without jargon, and can be read for its programmatic suggestions as well as deeper speculations into the nature of social movements.

Amory Starr's *Naming the Enemy* is a comparative analysis of the ways activists in the anti-globalization movement criticize global capital and the types of alternatives they envision. She offers a panoramic view of the movement structured around three responses to global capital: restraining it, democratizing it, or building local alternatives to it. In her first category, which she calls "contestation and reform," she examines movements that want to restrain global capital through state regulation. Here she treats movements against structural adjustment, peace and human rights groups, movements for land reform, the explicitly anti-corporate movement, and cyber-punk. Her second category is "globalization from below," or movements that want to democratize globalization by making governments and corporations accountable to people instead of elites. Here she looks at the environmental and labor movements, socialist movements, anti-free trade movements, and the Zapatistas. Her final category is "delinking," in which she treats movements that want to separate from global capital and build locally based alternatives to it, such as the anarchist movement, movements for

1. Brecher, Costello, and Smith, *Globalization from Below*, p. 122

2. *Ibid.*, p. xi.

sustainable development, the small businesses movement, sovereignty movements, and religious nationalist movements. *Naming the Enemy* is international in scope, although based on English language sources exclusively, and tries to engage an academic and activist audience. While the book is sometimes suffocated by absurdly academic jargon,³ she provides a sweeping, ground-level view of the movement through studies of manifestos, campaigns, and virtually any resource in which anti-globalization activists articulate how they “understand their enemy and envision rebuilding the world.”⁴

Both BCS and Starr embrace the anti-globalization movement and clearly hope their books will contribute to its growth and self-understanding. BCS advance a program and framework for uniting the movement into a broad struggle against “globalization from above” whereas Starr offers a comprehensive analysis of the goals (and opponents) identified by movement activists. It is tempting to regard these works as statements from sympathetic participants in a diverse, growing movement, and I suspect that Starr and BCS hope we will.

Revolution

But those of us who believe that “another world is possible” need to approach these books with very specific concerns. We should ask: do they link the anti-globalization movement to a broader revolutionary project or do they at least provide insights that could help us establish such a link?

Naturally the answer to this question depends on the meaning of the word “revolution,” which has been subject to considerable and ongoing debate. The Left has normally used the term to designate not only a sweeping change in political, economic, and cultural relationships, but also the moment when one historical epoch gives birth to a totally new landscape of historical experience through a process of contradiction, collapse, and renewal. It is in this sense that the Left has always had a utopian dimension.

The idea of revolution is barely a concern for Starr or BCS and, to the

3. The level of jargon is suffocating and sometimes nonsensical. For example, she mentions “potentially agentic forms of subjectivity” (p. 32). The invention of the word agentic is strange enough, but the phrase is also redundant: anything that possesses agency—the capacity to act—possesses subjectivity.

4. Starr, *Naming the Enemy*, p. x.

extent that it is, they seem to restrict it to the transformation of political institutions (instead of society as a whole). BCS mention the idea of revolution in passing and, even then, only to state that it depends on “solving problems by means of state power.”⁵ Starr does not discuss the idea at all, although she suggests a theory of revolution in a treatment of reformist movements. For her, reform means “mobilizing existing formal democratic channels of protest, seeking national legislation, mounting judicial challenges, mobilizing international agencies, boycotting and protesting.”⁶ Thus, presumably, revolutionary movements are not oriented toward the existing political structures but rather fight for new ones. This suggests that Starr, like BCS, thinks of revolution only in terms of the transformation of political institutions (and her distinction between movements that engage existing political institutions and those that fight for new ones is not substantive: movements are not revolutionary merely because they fight for something new).

But do they provide insights that could help us link the anti-globalization movement to a larger revolutionary project?

Many anarcho-syndicalists and communists link the anti-globalization movement to revolution by affirming the analysis of capitalism advanced by late 19th and early 20th century socialists. According to this view, capitalism’s central and fatal contradiction is the class conflict between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Specifically, capitalism creates an industrial proletariat that must, in turn, fight for its interests as a class. Ultimately the proletariat becomes so numerous and impoverished that it will not only fight for immediate benefits but also against the social order that has produced it as a class: the class struggle then unfolds into revolution and capitalism as a whole is destroyed. Although communists and anarcho-syndicalists recognize that the anti-globalization movement is not a revolutionary working class movement, they believe it will become one when the movement grasps the real nature of economic inequality: in this sense the movement is a first, but partial step toward a broader revolutionary struggle. Ultimately groups that explicitly embraced a revolutionary socialist perspective, such as the Russian Bolsheviks or the Spanish anarchists, will have to provide the model for the movement as a whole. (This is

5. Brecher, Costello, and Smith, *Globalization from Below*, p. 24.

6. Starr, *Naming the Enemy*, p. 45.

why communists and anarcho-syndicalists are so focused on political lessons derived from pre-WWII events such as the Russian Revolution and Spanish Civil War.)

We will not find support for this idea in *Naming the Enemy* or *Globalization from Below*. Neither believe that capitalism is subject to fatal contradictions (class, or otherwise) nor that it should be transcended as a social form. In fact, BCS seek not only to retain but also to improve the capitalist mode of production: for example, they argue that their economic program will “expand employment and markets and generate a virtuous cycle of economic growth.”⁷ Starr eliminates the question altogether by defining the anti-globalization movement as anti-corporate instead of anti-capitalist.⁸ Accordingly, the category of class is not important for BCS or Starr’s analysis of the anti-globalization movement and neither attempt to relate the interests of the working class to the fate of the movement as a whole (Starr explicitly argues that labor struggles based on class interest do not challenge the corporate form⁹). For them, anarcho-syndicalists and communists are mistaken to draw a link between the anti-globalization movement and the older revolutionary socialist movements.

But clearly there are other ways to conceive of revolution than as a consequence of class contradictions: for example, it is possible to imagine revolution in a democratic populist sense, in which people draw upon shared values (as opposed to class interests) to overthrow elites. This vision of revolution is not premised upon the exacerbation of class conflict, but rather the emergence of a democratic sentiment that rejects exclusive, non-participatory social institutions. BCS and Starr offer some support for understanding the anti-globalization movement in these terms. BCS explicitly define the movement as a people’s movement designed to “restrain global capital”¹⁰ and Starr implies the same thing by focusing on the ideals, not class positions, of activists within the movement. However, Starr and BCS fail to articulate this democratic perspective in a way that could make a revolutionary transformation of the social order comprehensible.

7. Brecher, Costello, and Smith, *Globalization from Below*, p. 69.

8. This is quite weak: for Starr “corporate” refers not to a legally constituted corporation but something that functions according to “corporate principles.” Starr, *Naming the Enemy*, p. xiv.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 93.

10. Brecher, Costello, and Smith, *Globalization from Below*, p. 17.

BCS want to place global capitalism under the control of democratic political institutions at the local, national, and international levels (they call this a “multi-level alternative”). However, their program for democratizing the economy is not complemented by a program for democratizing political power (in fact, campaign finance reform is the only explicitly political demand they advance). This is because they do not advocate (or even mention) direct democracy: on the contrary, they believe in representative democracy and are thus largely content with the political structures it presupposes. For example, they are oblivious to the inherently anti-democratic nature of the nation-state and institutions based upon it (such as the UN), not to mention the political apparatuses they imply, such as politicians, political parties, and advocacy groups. So, despite their democratic rhetoric and enthusiasm for extra-parliamentary social movements, their vision preserves the political structure of the world as it presently exists.

BCS’s theoretical premises also make it impossible to conceive of a significant historical leap. For BCS, the social order is shaped by a balance between the powerful and the powerless (not necessarily classes). They write that the power of any society “is based on the active cooperation of some people and the consent and/or acquiescence of others. It is the activity of people—going to work, paying taxes, buying products, obeying government officials, staying off private property—that continually re-creates the power of the powerful.”¹¹ This is why social movements can transform these social relationships when they lead people to withdraw their consent from the dominant arrangements: people stop acquiescing and thus prevent the reproduction of the social order, enabling the movement to impose its own norms on society as a whole (for example, think of the civil rights movement). This vision of social change seems laudable, given its emphasis on the power of the oppressed in the reproduction and transformation of societies, but it has two fundamental problems. First, BCS do not explain why a people may develop norms that contradict the status quo, and thus cannot explain why they would want to withdraw their consent from the prevailing social relationships in the first place. Second, their assertion that society is always defined by a truce between the powerful and the powerless could characterize any social formation, from the birth of society to the end of history, and thus lacks any historical content. However, if we wish to retain this trans-

11 Brecher, Costello, and Smith, *Globalization from Below*, p. 21.

historical principle, then we must conclude that social movements can only strike a new balance of disempowerment at the very best. There is no transcendence, no realm of freedom, in this vision.

While Starr does not advance a democratic revolutionary perspective, her work is more amenable to such a stance than BCS's. She treats movements that explicitly assert a democratic vision against the existing power structure and suggests that this orientation is both coherent and legitimate (she tries to defend anarchist as well as other decentralist tendencies against their academic and social democratic critics).¹² Also, the fact that she studies how actors in the anti-globalization movement conceive of their opponents and want to rebuild the world suggests that Starr regards our ideals and commitments as the most important factors in political action, not the "objective development of class contradictions." This value-based approach is a precept of any revolutionary democratic politics.

Although she tries to support anti-statist movements that are fighting global capital, her efforts are theoretically and empirically unsound. Instead of treating these movements as instances of a democratic, anti-statist tradition she defines them merely as localist movements that want to "delink" (or separate) from the global economy. This makes little sense: there are virtually no localists in the anti-globalization movement, but rather decentralist movements that regard the community (not the state) as the locus of political life and want to reconstruct the world around a new relationship between communities.¹³ These movements are not localist—they do not simply want to retreat into their own enclaves—but rather communitarian movements fighting for the decentralization of political power. But also, on a theoretical level, her definition severs these movements from a broader democratic legacy, and thus obscures a tradition that connects (for example) Zapatista municipal radicalism to Proudhon's federalism. She even mentions the Proudhonian federalist tradition, but fails to theorize its presence in these decentralist movements. Thus, her defense of the most radical wing in the anti-globalization movement presupposes a sharp misreading of its politics. Even worse, her conception of localism-as-radicalism leads her to defend religious

12. For example, she states that anarchism is "the oldest and richest Western tradition" of local radicalism. Starr, *Naming the Enemy*, p. 226.

13. One can find a few localists, such as flippant academics like Jerry Mander, but they are the exception rather than the rule.

nationalists and their efforts to impose parochial, blood-based restraints on the world economy: for example, she mentions radical Islamic nationalists and the U.S.'s racist Christian Patriot movement. While these groups may share an emphasis on the locality with decentralist tendencies in the anti-globalization movement, religious nationalists are regressive to the extreme, whereas decentralists are confederal and cosmopolitan in the best sense of the terms. Starr's effort to soften this divide is less than compelling.

But even if Starr related her analysis to a democratic tradition, there is a problem in the very constitution of *Naming the Enemy*. She does not study movements on the basis of their "size, scope, practices or chances for success,"¹⁴ but only on the basis of their ideals. This tends to broaden her picture of the anti-globalization movement, given that the most exciting developments in the movement are not always the largest, most influential, or most likely to succeed. However, some criteria must be applied to determine whose intentions are relevant: after all, countless groups *declare* their opposition to the consequences of global capitalism, from the Cuban Communist Party to the Catholic Church. But of course one cannot study a movement solely on the basis of its declarations any more than one can study a person on the basis of his or her self-description. Starr knows this, but refuses to spell out the criteria she uses to select movements for consideration. It is clear that she embraces some form of left-wing, democratic populism (à la *Z Magazine*) but theorizing these commitments would put her in opposition to the radical skepticism and liberal resignation prevailing in academia at the moment.

Conclusion

That Starr and BCS welcome the emergence of a democratic, direct action-based movement against global capital is an indication of the success of the anti-authoritarian tradition. Years ago they might have called for a small "c" communism or some form of Green Party-like electoralism but, instead, they praise this anti-authoritarian movement for its democratic sentiments, commitment to protest, and oppositional stance. They want to speak the language of the growing movement against global capitalism.

Yet they would lure us into a trap: they are not revolutionaries, their

14. *Ibid.*, p. xi.

books do not provide terms through which we can link this movement to a broader revolutionary project, and their basic theoretical commitments are fundamentally antagonist to the goal of revolutionary transformation. BCS's *Globalization from Below* is comprehensible because it affirms the basic structure of the present world—that is, capitalism and the nation-state—and is thus written with the clarity and repose of those who have already won. They descend into platitudes when they try to relate their ideas to a project of radical social transformation precisely because they do not want such a transformation. Starr becomes incomprehensible, dipping into jargon and an absurd defense of religious nationalism, because she wants to reject the present but is unwilling to embrace the terms that would make such a refusal coherent.

Neither BCS nor Starr should be regarded as deceitful or malicious and, besides, their motives are of little significance. What must be recognized is that they are on different sides of the debate over the anti-globalization movement than those of us who genuinely believe that a new world is possible. They celebrate the movement, but the terms of their analyses are hostile to its best, most visionary dimensions.

Our capacity to push the anti-globalization movement from opposition to revolution will be destroyed if we accept the premises of their books, either passively or otherwise. Even if demonstrations and militant conflicts with the police were to continue, we cannot fight for a revolution that we cannot conceive.

I think anarchists have been correct to greet the anti-globalization movement with enthusiasm: I believe that extraordinary potentials are at hand. However, to realize these potentials, we must confront those who would erase them from the historical agenda. This will allow us to preserve the idea that new, emancipated landscapes of historical experience are available to us and to set about creating them.

Paul Glavin

The Panther Insurgency

Liberation, Imagination, and the Black Panther Party: A New Look at the Panthers and their Legacy

by Kathleen Cleaver and George Katsiaficas (editors)
Routledge, 2001

All Power to the People!: The Black Panther Party and Beyond
directed by Lee Lew-Lee

Electronic Film Group, 1996

“Decolonization never takes place unnoticed for it transforms individuals and modifies them fundamentally. It transforms spectators crushed with their inessentiality into privileged actors with the grandiose glare of history's floodlights upon them.”

Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*

The movement against capitalist globalization has revived a spirit of resistance not experienced since the 1960s. Anarchists have played a central role in this movement, not only by forming Black Blocs for actions but also by advocating direct democracy, propagating the use of affinity groups, and emphasizing a movement from below, not dependent on vanguard parties or established liberal groups. Anarchists also qualify the globalization process as a dynamic of capital, while contributing a broad critique of hierarchy and domination.¹ The integral role played by anarchists has not been lost on those in power. Recently departed FBI Chief Louis Freeh testified that “Anarchists ... have an international presence and, at times, also represent a potential threat in

1. Capital has always sought to expand, pursuing profit in all corners of the globe. This dynamic of capitalism was already apparent to Marx in the mid-1800s. What is unique today is the attempt by capitalists to consolidate a hegemonic global bloc as well as the truly international nature of resistance to this process. Although communists and socialist groups play a part in today's movement, anarchists have been the most centrally involved, visible, and militantly anti-capitalist. The result is that anti-capitalism has become a core identity and protesters are routinely identified as anti-capitalists by the corporate press.

the United States.”²

With this new movement—in many ways a revival of the movements of the 1960s and 70s—it is crucial to look at historical predecessors. One of the most prominent, well organized, and controversial organizations of that period was The Black Panther Party (BPP). In the 1960s, Freeh's predecessor, J. Edgar Hoover, identified the BPP as “the greatest threat to the internal security of the country.”³

Continuing the Spirit of the Panthers

Kathleen Cleaver and George Katsiaficas's book, *Imagination, Liberation, and the Black Panther Party*, widens the information available with great detail and analysis, while continuing the spirit of the Panthers. It is a collection of essays, organized into four sections, plus an introduction and appendix of documents.

The first section, “Revisiting the Liberation Struggle,” contains a very good essay on the Black Liberation Army (BLA) by Akinyele Omowale Umoja; one concerning the Panthers in the international arena; a look at life in the Party from Mumia Abu-Jamal; and an essay on organizing for Mumia in France by Cleaver. The second section, “Understanding the Fight for Freedom,” goes into depth with several contributions on the daily activities and politics of the Panthers and an assessment of “Black Fighting Formations,” by Russell Shoats, a captured member of the BLA. “Envisioning the Imagination of the Movement” contains an essay by Katsiaficas on the little known but essential story of the Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention of 1970; Ruth Reitan on the relation of the Black Liberation struggle in the United States to Cuba; as well as articles on Panther influences in the Bahamas; Emory Douglas's artwork for the Panther newspaper; and relations between white radicals and Panthers, plus others. The final section, “Continuing the Resistance,” includes a critique of Hugh Pearson's reactionary *Shadow of a Panther*; a short essay called “Remembering King's Assassination,” plus, among others, an excellent piece on the Angola 3 who have spent twenty-nine years in solitary confinement due to their political work in prison.

2. “Threats of Terrorism to the United States.” May 10, 2001 statement before the Senate Committees on Appropriations, Armed Services and Select Committee on Intelligence, U.S. Congress.
3. Kathleen Cleaver and George Katsiaficas, *Liberation, Imagination, and the Black Panther Party*, p. 8.

The book also addresses the role of women in the BPP, Panther theory, and the FBI war against the Panthers. This book supplements the recent outpouring of Panther literature, mostly autobiographical, filling a niche similar to *The Black Panther Party: Reconsidered*, edited by Charles E. Jones.

The BPP survived severe government repression to become a player in municipal politics and community development, but whereas recent books such as Elaine Brown's *A Taste of Power* and David Hilliard's *This Side of Glory* concentrate on this aspect of the BPP, *Imagination, Liberation, and The Black Panther Party* deals more with the post-BPP activity of the Black Liberation Army (Both the Party and the Army lasted into the early 1980s). Unfortunately information on the BLA is still rare, but essays by Umoja and Shoats help fill the gap.

Authoritarian or Communitarian?

Anarchists seem to have one of two responses to the Panthers: they will either denounce them for their authoritarianism or celebrate them for their insurgency. In fact the Panthers were a mix of both communitarian and authoritarian elements, which need untangling, and this book can help us here.

As this book makes clear, the Panthers emerged organically out of the North American social context and developed a distinct form of radicalism in response to it. Today's anti-authoritarians should study the Panther's militancy and organizational cohesion, and learn how they grew from a handful of folks to a mass-based group with tremendous social influence.

Certainly the Panthers emphasis on organization is preferable to tendencies within contemporary anarchism which disdain any kind of structure. For the majority of revolutionary anarchists involved in social movements today this is not an issue, nor was it amongst social anarchists in the 1960s. The question is: what kind of organization?

As communalist Murray Bookchin argued in a 1969 open letter to Huey Newton: “If a revolutionary organization(s) ... forms are not similar to the libertarian society it seeks to create ... then the organization becomes a vehicle for carrying the forms of the past into the revolution. It becomes a self-perpetuating organism, a state machine that, far from

'withering away,' perpetuates all the archaic conditions for its own existence."⁴

The authoritarian, top-down structure of the Panthers, combined with their reliance on Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, is objectionable from an anti-authoritarian perspective. The Panthers saw themselves as a vanguard Marxist-Leninist style Party with hierarchical ranks and they were influenced by Mao. For example, Michael L. Clemons and Charles E. Jones's essay, "Global Solidarity," points out that fifty percent of BPP political education classes were devoted to Mao's Little Red Book. Key members were given State titles, such as Minister of Information and Minister of Defense.

In this collection, Mumia argues it is hard to generalize about the BPP because it had many offices and a diverse membership reflecting regional and cultural differences. Yet by the 1970s the BPP did become increasingly authoritarian and centralized. It has been argued that the move toward centralization in Oakland, and the top-down command structure originating with Newton, ultimately led to the Panther's demise, after the destruction caused by government repression and the split in the Party.⁵ This makes sense: increased internal democracy would have produced a stronger, more resilient base within the party. This would have made it harder for the government to stop the Panthers by taking out key leaders and would have helped morale and the strength of the Party as Newton became isolated and erratic.

Yet the authoritarianism of the Panthers was combined with communal elements, such as the free breakfast programs and community health clinics, as well as an uncompromising emphasis on freedom. They were as influenced by Malcolm X—although X's revolutionary nationalism might be objectionable to some anarchists—and by the daily conditions in the Black community, as they were by Marxism.

The Panthers were not strictly Marxist-Leninists. Beyond classic Marxist-Leninist literature, the Panthers were also influenced by Bakunin's *The Catechism of the Revolutionary*⁶ and Frantz Fanon's *The*

4. "Anarchy and Organization: A Letter to the Left," *New Left Notes*, January 15, 1969.

5. See Ollie A. Johnson, III in *The Black Panther Party: Reconsidered*, ed. Charles E. Jones, Black Classic Press (Baltimore: 1998).

Wretched of the Earth. The Panthers, and later the BLA, also produced anarchists such as Kuwasi Balagoon.⁷

In addition to Panther ideas, the Panthers developed mass community participation and mobilization largely on a liberatory, communal level. For example, the Panther's free breakfast program fed between 10,000 and 50,000 kids daily, their street patrols are the antecedent to today's Copwatch (monitoring the police activities in neighborhoods where cops are prone to brutality and harassment) and set the basis for the movement for independent civilian police review boards. Every day Panthers were out selling their paper, which had a circulation of 100,000 to 250,000, they lent support and advice to Native peoples, aided in the creation of the American Indian Movement (AIM), and inspired The Young Lords Party (Puerto Rican activists based primarily in New York and Chicago) and the Brown Berets (Chicano/a activists in California), not to mention international organizations that sprung up from India to England (the essay by Clemons and Jones on international groups inspired by the Panthers is very interesting).

The Panthers constituted the beginnings of a dual power to capital, racism, and the State. They demonstrated that it takes more than ideas to create change. Certainly their ideas resonated with millions in the Black community, internationally, and amongst the white revolutionary Left, as this book amply demonstrates. But it was their practice which made a difference in the daily lives of tens of thousands of people. If it is true that one can gauge the effectiveness of an oppositional organization by the level of repression it receives at the hands of the state, then the Panthers were effective indeed.

State Repression

Ward Churchill's article tells the grim story of killings, frame-ups, and disruption against the Panthers as part of the government's counter-intelligence program (COINTELPRO). Churchill lists twenty-nine "police induced fatalities" of Panthers and reports "that the police were very nearly as busy coming up with pretexts upon which to kill

6. Eldridge Cleaver, BPP Minister of Information, wrote an introduction to this book in 1969.

7. Solidarity Publishing has recently produced a 120 page pamphlet containing essays by and about Balagoon. *Kuwasi Balagoon, A Soldier's Story: Writings by a Revolutionary New Afrikan Anarchist* is available from Kersplebedeb, CP 63560, CCCP Van Horne, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, H3W 3H8.

Panthers as they were finding excuses to arrest them."⁸

From reporting on today's protest movement, we know the press to be hostile to oppositional ideas and actions. We should pay attention to Churchill's documentation of how the FBI worked through various reporters to paint derogatory pictures of Panthers through planted newspaper and TV news reports. This domestic propaganda effort cost the Panthers some support amongst liberals and its effects can still be felt today in many people's skewed perception of the Panthers.

Donald Cox's contribution laments the tragic loss of life with instances of Panther killing Panther, in part precipitated by COINTELPRO. COINTELPRO helped set Newton and Chief of Staff David Hilliard against East Coast Panthers and Eldridge Cleaver's international section in Algeria, and divided Panthers on the West Coast against each other, as in the case of Geronimo Pratt. This ultimately led to a permanent split in the BPP.

The book describes the split between Newton and Cleaver as resulting in reformist and revolutionary directions, but also chronicles the existence of a Black Liberation Army before the BPP and running parallel to it. Ultimately many Panthers went underground in response to government repression and initiated offensive guerrilla-style action. Although Newton always advocated armed self-defense—this is how the BPP first attracted public attention—he publicly opposed developments which led to the organization of the BLA. Essays in this collection shed more light on underground armed action: Shoats critiques the loss of connections to an above-ground movement but shows the mass support the BLA enjoyed when they liberated Assata Shakur from jail in 1979.

Idealism and Downfall

Perhaps the highlight of 1960s aspirations occurred in response to a call by the Panthers for a Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention in 1970 in Philadelphia. Against the backdrop of police terror, 10,000 to 15,000 turned out to democratically draft a new Constitution. This diverse and multi-cultural group "generated documents that offer a compelling vision of a more just and free society than has ever existed."⁹ Katsiaficas, who attended the event, reports, "The twin

8. Kathleen Cleaver and George Katsiaficas, *Liberation, Imagination, and the Black Panther Party*, p. 108.

aspirations of the global movement of 1968—internationalism and self-management—were embodied throughout the documents."¹⁰ This little-known moment in U.S. history countered the conservative myth that "people never change": "Within the constraints of the existing system, it takes moments of exhilarating confrontation with the established powers to lift the veil concerning people's capacities."¹¹ Katsiaficas offers an excellent account of this momentous event and the documents produced are included in an appendix.

The authoritarian and liberatory elements in and around the Panthers came to a head in Philadelphia: the convention was the ultimate expression of 1960s idealism followed by downfall. As Katsiaficas points out, the Philadelphia conference "became the pivot around which mutual synergy, celebration of difference, and most importantly, unity in struggle turned into their opposites: mutual self-destruction, internecine warfare, and standardization in the ranks."¹²

An internal democratic structure may have mediated liberatory and authoritarian tendencies in the Panthers, offering more room for internal debate and directly democratic means of charting future strategy and politics. Instead Newton perceived the Convention as a plot by Cleaver to seize control of the organization and responded by shutting down all the Panther offices across the country in order to centralize power in Oakland. Katsiaficas reports that the results of the convention were never followed up on by the Panthers. Although an historic opportunity was missed, the politics democratically articulated in 1970 laid the basis for social movements for years to come.

It is important to maintain a critical perspective about the Panthers. But it would be a mistake to simply see the Panthers as Marxist-Leninists with nothing to offer today's anti-authoritarians. One has to look at how Panther thinking developed over time—for instance, Newton advocated what he called inter-communalism by the late 1960s and promoted the rights of women and gays, whom he suggested may be the most oppressed in society. Also, the mass of people mobilized and inspired initially by the Panther's Ten Point Program eventually transcended the thinking of their leaders, as articulated in 1970 at the People's

9. *Ibid.*, p. 149.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 150.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 151.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 153.

Revolutionary Convention, lending credence to the view that the so-called masses are always smarter than the intellectuals and activists.

Revolution and Counter-Revolution

Lee Lew-Lee's film is also an excellent introduction to the history of the BPP. Unlike 1994's *Panther* by Mario and Melvin Van Peebles, this film is a documentary.

Lew-Lee, a former Panther, was a network camera man during the LA rebellion following the acquittal of the police charged with brutally beating Rodney King in 1992. His coverage of the rebellion inspired him to do this film. It sets the Panthers's emergence within the historic context of racial domination in the United States and as a reaction to the assassination of Malcolm X. He creates a whirlwind of events and personalities, concentrating mostly on key figures rather than rank and file members. The film addresses the central role played by women in the Party, but ignores struggles over sexism. A section covers the efforts of Chicago Panther Fred Hampton to create a Rainbow Coalition (he was the first to use the phrase) with street gangs, poor whites, and organizations like the Young Lords Party.

Also included is information on the work of Mutulu Shakur, a Panther, BLA member and acupuncturist, to force the City of New York to include experimental acupuncture for detox and general health in low-income, underserved areas. The film includes footage of police attacking just such a program in the Bronx, which was, although not stated in the film, probably Lincoln Hospital. Lincoln Hospital was taken over by the Young Lords. Mutulu and the Panthers helped out in part by establishing an acupuncture clinic there. Today acupuncture is a cornerstone of any street level detox program. The Panthers are largely to thank for this, and for initiating screenings for sickle cell anemia—a disease particularly affecting people of African descent.

The film documents the role of U.S. intelligence agencies in destabilizing and disrupting Panther operations, especially New York's Panther 21 case (in which Panthers spent two years in jail only to be found not guilty) and, in 1969, coordinating attacks on every Panther office in the United States. It also documents the U.S. government/Chicago Police Department assassination of Fred Hampton and Mark Clark, and the role of FBI informants in framing and killing Panthers. Lew-Lee relies

on reputable intelligence agency defectors as well as government documents.

Unfortunately the film's coverage of the Panthers largely ends with the 1970s, only mentioning the electoral activity of the period and not really getting into much BLA history. It does however show the Panthers link to AIM and covers the U.S. government siege at Wounded Knee in 1973 and the subsequent frame-up of Leonard Peltier.

All Power to the People shows that despite the Church Committee Congressional investigation into COINTELPRO—and subsequent vows of reform—the same old tactics continue to be deployed. It covers covert operations up to the CIA-Contra-Cocaine connection and the existence of hundreds of U.S. political prisoners and prisoners of war. The film ends with a call for love and forgiveness. In the context of the bloodshed chronicled this call has an authentic ring to it, although forgiveness is difficult given the continued imprisonment of captured BPP/BLA members and unchanged U.S. government practices.

The main problem with the film is its reliance more on the repressive apparatus of the state in discussing the Panthers rather than on politics. Certainly repression was a major part of Panther history, but the film advances arguable theories in place of political analysis. For instance, the film claims provocatively that Newton was the victim of psychological warfare, with the CIA playing off his weaknesses to turn him towards drug abuse, paranoia, and brutality. It also suggests that Elaine Brown, who led the Party in the 1970s, was a police agent.

It would have been interesting to see Panthers address various strategic and political discussions that took place, or to examine the responses to repression that sent Oakland-based Panthers in a reformist direction and East Coast Panthers towards armed struggle. Also interesting would be debates over the alliances Panthers formed with other left groups and the tension in BPP politics between revolutionary nationalism and multi-cultural coalition. But as an introduction this film is a must see.

Conclusion

Perhaps more important than whatever aspects of the BPP/BLA anarchists feel most comfortable with is the fact that the BPP stood up to state power and mobilized tens of thousands in an effort to bring

about improved conditions and self-determination for Blacks in America and people around the world experiencing the brunt of U.S. foreign policy.

Both this book and the film demonstrate how the Panthers combined militant activism with community organizing; they both confronted the state and created changes in people's daily lives. They also show the way those in power react to this potent combination; like this summer against anti-G8 protesters in Genoa, Italy, the government both demonized and brutally repressed them.

In talking of a Panther legacy, it would have improved these contributions to include more about post-Panther work in community organizing, new social movements, and feminism. Also interesting would be more on anarchists and anti-authoritarians that came out of the BPP/BLA, looking perhaps at Kuwasi Balagoon, Lorenzo Komboa Ervin, or others. In balance, though, the book more than the film really looks at both the strengths and the weaknesses of the Panthers.

The struggles of Blacks in America, for civil rights in the 1950s and early 1960s, then Black Power, served as inspiration to white 1960s activists. In a similar fashion people in the Southern Hemisphere, once called the Third World, first rebelled against the International Monetary Fund and World Bank. Riots and large scale mobilizations against "austerity measures" imposed by these institutions predated "the battle of Seattle" by years. It is essential that white activists keep this in mind and understand that predominantly white movements and organizations did not emerge out of a vacuum. Capitalist globalization not only has its most brutal and dehumanizing impact on people of color, but they have led the way through their critique, resistance, and rebellion.

A successful movement against capital and the state must keep the struggle against white racism at the forefront of its theory and action. As part of this, today's revolutionaries should study groups such as the BPP. The BPP not only opposed racism at home, but also developed an analysis of the related phenomenon of neo-colonialism and U.S. imperialism which has laid the basis for what is today commonly called globalization. This is why the Black Panthers were a threat to those in power and why today's movement, if it embraces their lessons, may be even more so.

Editorial note: the exceptional nature of the September 11th terror attacks and the consequent war seemed to merit a momentary departure from *The New Formulation's* book-review-only policy.

An Anti-Authoritarian Response to the War Efforts

September 21, 2001

Dear Comrades,

We are living through scary times. Clearly the U.S. Government and its allies believe they have a grand opportunity to realign domestic and international relationships in their interest. This is frightening: major shifts in the political landscape threaten to tear the ground from beneath our feet.

However, these glacial shifts in the political scene also offer anti-authoritarians a unique opportunity to obtain a new, more secure footing in our struggle against economic exploitation, political hierarchy, and cultural domination. Political conditions are changing radically and, if we respond correctly, we have the chance to advance our movement to a much higher level.

First of all, we must not be cowed by present circumstances, as disturbing as they are. On the contrary: recent events call upon us to exercise political leadership in the best, most principled and visionary sense of the term. This is our challenge, and one that we can meet with an anti-authoritarian vision and politics.

We believe it is imperative that anti-authoritarians formulate a coherent response to the war build-up and their role within the growing peace movement. We must not allow our perspective to be subsumed under more prominent but less radical tendencies in the Left. Also, the peace movement is presently defining its politics and structures and we have a great opportunity—at this moment—to engage the movement and push it in the most radical direction.

This purpose of this letter is to explore the contours of an anti-authoritarian position on recent events. We encourage you to discuss this letter with your friends and comrades and to prepare for broader discussions that we intend to initiate in the near future.

We want to address three important issues in this letter: structure, politics, and the future.

Structure

We anticipate that the anti-war movement will experience divisions similar to those that beset the peace movement during the Gulf War. In other words, national organizing efforts will be split into two organizations: one will be pacifist and more libertarian in character, and the other will be more militant and Stalinist. Both will be top-down mobilizations, built around well-known "leaders", and awash with a moralism that would turn off even the most open-minded citizens and activists.

Thus, we think our immediate challenge is to ensure that the anti-war mobilizations are decentralized and democratic in structure: specifically, that those doing the work make the decisions in these organizations. We recommend the model of assemblies, spokescouncils, or other horizontal networks of small, decentralized groups that are unified around an anti-authoritarian vision of social change. This will assure that those at the base hold decision-making power and thus that the mobilization reflects the political consciousness of the base, which is typically more radical and sane than that held by the leadership. It will still be possible for sectarian groups to infiltrate the base, but much harder for them to seize control. We believe that instituting such a decentralized structure is consistent with a principled commitment to democracy and should be our first act of defense against the party building hacks and the omnipresent "leadership."

Politics

Decentralized political structures have little significance unless complemented by a decentralized, radically democratic politics. We need to have radically democratic goals as well as methods, anti-authoritarian means and ends. Our response to the war must be concrete, immediately comprehensible, and one that gives political content to our democratic structures.

Presently we are aware of two positions on the war:

The right-wing position asserts that the United States is entitled to take unilateral military action against whomever. This position is not reasoned, just retaliatory, and is thus utterly barbaric. The argument crumbles when faced with questions of social justice.

The liberal-left position condones military action against Osama Bin Laden if—and only if—the UN or some pre-existing international legal body decides that such action is required and determines its nature. This appears to be *Z Magazine's* position, as well as many others.

This position is inadequate because it appeals to the political authority of the UN (and/or similar bodies). This is untenable because the UN is an illegitimate political body and thus incapable of determining a just or unjust response to the terror attacks. The UN is illegitimate because a) it presupposes the nation-state, which is inherently anti-democratic and b) because the United States has veto power over many of the UN's most important decision-making bodies, such as the Security Council.

The anti-authoritarian position must obviously be much more radical than the liberal-left position. We believe that anti-authoritarians should advance the following demands:

- First, all war criminals must be brought to justice (and judged by an international people's tribunal). Osama Bin Laden, Augusto Pinochet, Henry Kissinger, and those who have committed acts of terror and violence must be held accountable for their actions and dealt with accordingly.
- Second, there should be an international grass roots assembly/plebiscite/encuentro/assembly/truth and reconciliation commission on global terror. This assembly will define the terms of terror and the appropriate responses to it. There are existing decentralized, grassroots networks and organizations that could provide the basis for such an initiative.
- Third, we must oppose military action against Osama Bin Laden, Afghanistan, or anyone else until these first two conditions are met.

Future

We believe that anti-authoritarians should work to radicalize the anti-war movement. We should ensure that it is democratic and decentralized in structure, that its demands are anti-authoritarian in content, and that we use this movement to build cooperative relationships with the oppressed and enraged throughout the world who share our horror at the U.S.'s impending military action and the world it seeks to create.

We believe there is a great potential to create a radically democratic and deeply oppositional movement against the war. We believe this movement could sustain the accomplishments of the struggle against global capital and bring our movement to a new level of engagement, diversity, and radicalism.

Another world is possible,

Marina Sitrin (active with the Direct Action Network)

Chuck Morse (active with the Institute for Anarchist Studies)

Notes about Contributors

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