

**whatever
happened**

to

'for ourselves'?



INTRODUCTION

All of you who are being sent this letter, whether you are a long-standing correspondent of FOR OURSELVES or someone who has written to us within the last six months for the first time, will have noticed our silence and wondered what it meant. This letter and the signed statements which it introduces are intended to clarify what has happened.

FOR OURSELVES has dissolved as a distinct group with a more or less continuous shared activity. However, the fallacy of the traditional "letter of dissolution" is that it implies an abstract negation; that what was "something" has become "nothing". It is rather the case that something has become something else. We do not see the dissolution of FO as a regression, but as the beginning of a process of supersession, of going beyond what we were and did together. Thus, in the statements which follow, we attempt to define what we are becoming, as well as to clarify what we were, and what went wrong with it.

In past letters of dissolution we have seen, there has been a tendency to discuss only the theoretical differences which led to the break; or to imagine that, because this particular organization proved impossible, all organization of revolutionaries is impossible. For our part, we want to avoid both these ideological tendencies: we want to locate FOR OURSELVES in its historical context and to reveal something of our "interpersonal" processes, our day-to-day practice, as the concrete conditions in which our theoretical and practical differences evolved.

Because a unity of perspective can precisely no longer be assumed among the former members of FO, we are in no sense agreed upon this document as a whole. Instead, the former members who so wished have each contributed their own analyses and perspectives, which are contained in the signed statements. These individuals can be contacted through the names and addresses they have given.

ex-FOR OURSELVES

1/12/76

FOR OURSELVES
A HISTORY AND A PSYCHOLOGICAL CRITIQUE

Preface

I've been blocked in writing this statement. Acknowledging the end of a period of intense association and activity is difficult and saddening. We've produced a lot of highs and learned a tremendous amount from each other. At its best our group practice has gone beyond any that I have encountered. We have absorbed whole parts and talents of each others. And at our worst we have bored, frustrated and hurt each other.

Lately, our process of dissolution has dismayed me. I am alluding not only to the delays, which I would attribute to an avoidance of more pain, but also to the distance and competitiveness that I suspect I will find in our statements. I sense that we are unconsciously competing to have the best explanation of what went wrong, who saw it first, and who has the best prescription for the more correct practice of a future group. If this is so, it represents a disowning of our own actions and not real growth. It is justification and not explanation; it will focus on the lacks and not explain the early coherence, avoiding the questions of group dynamics which will be problematic for any association.

The culmination of all of this will most likely see us these documents without ever having discussed them.

We will be asking others to draw the lessons of our experience - lessons that we are unwilling to explore.

FOR OURSELVES -- the name still speaks loudly. A group of people came together, not at all by chance. Their life experience had driven and led them to this place at this time. Each had a well of negativity that had been nurtured through years of experience with the left, and a knowledge and vision that life held more - had to hold more - than the promise of endless sacrifice for others. It was no accident that Berkeley was the home of a group who would the vision of politics to once again include a psychological perspective of themselves and their desires. Nor was it coincidence that this group would function collectively while affirming subjectivity, would embrace political economy and deal with unconscious motivation.

While our printed works are impressive, our breadth and theoretical coherence went beyond them, and a wide variety of projects that were generated are now being undertaken (individually and in new groupings). The positive collectivity, the learning from and about each other, produced in each of

us a developmental acceleration that is unique in my experience.

And through the early period there was a joy and excitement of affirmation, of knowing we were right, of knowing that the next step in revolutionary theory lay somehow in our direction. We were into a new synthesis that preserved much from the past while taking it a step further -- a process of supersession.

What, then, did happen? Nothing. No thing happened. A slow process of disintegration was underway. It grew partly out of our success - we had "used up" our initial basis of unity, had taken it as far as we could. Differences in style were worked through until we reached the underlying character blocks, and then would yield no further. Individuals began to feel that they were not being heard and would repeat themselves. The repetition as well as criticism of it became a part of our group process. In this atmosphere of increasingly competing voices, unclarities or potential differences more easily solidified into "theoretical differences".¹

Where we truly foundered was in an attempt to generate a new basis of unity. This took the form of a total critique of civilization, past and present. While from one perspective this may appear grandiose, from another it is precisely what we knew to be needed. Our specific failure was to succumb to what I call the tyranny of the totality. While we may look upon

Marx's lifetime of research as a valid revolutionary practice,* we were unable to face up to the magnitude of the research we had set for ourselves. We insisted upon pretending that what we were actually doing was writing the first issue of a newspaper, so that our activity would be immediately praxical.²

THE UNDERSIDE

As well as the positive basis for our unity, there was the underside, the shadow, the unconscious motivation. As well as the greater effectiveness of group practice for developing and sustaining a coherent critique, there was the need in each of us to merge with the others and to find validation for ourselves. This led at times to the re-creation of an environment reminiscent of the school experience, and all its competitiveness to be the one with the right answer. And beyond the natural desire to assert ourselves, there often lay the need for the validation that comes when the group as a whole takes the direction that each of us desired.

This last dynamic has a very crippling effect, leading to inaction, frustration,

*I know that he did many other things. And I know the necessity of having to say that I know this, is a defense against an aspect of the tyranny of the totality - having to say all sides even when you only want to refer to one.

conflicts and splits. The need for individual validation promotes a situation in which no one wins and everyone loses, in which the compromise is a continual attempt at a synthesis that envelopes all the disparate elements.

From this perspective, our "newspaper project", with its vague and ever changing form and content, can now be seen as the perfect fiction that would embody everyone's desires. While it also could realise ends that were collectively agreed to be needed, it actually became the vehicle and repository for each person's pet projects.

This underside, I believe, is what became the motivating force behind the dogged energy and compulsive repetition that characterized most of our later meetings.

REALITY

To be a revolutionary means, above all, to be aware and to seek increasing awareness. The rewards we get from our insights, from our understanding of history, from our praxis, and from relations with comrades, enable us to overcome our lurking feelings of hopelessness and helplessness.

Everyday life is a struggle, and generally a meaningless one at that. It loads us with a backlog of frustrations that we cannot shrug off at meetings.

Together we conspire to affirm and make possible a vision we know to be a positive destiny for ourselves and for humanity. But always, our individual well being, or lack of it, is the starting point of our activity. Thus a necessary requirement for effective revolutionary activity is, paradoxically enough, the ability and courage to function well in capitalist society. We need independant ways of making money so we can take better care of ourselves, our desires, and also our practice. The alternative is to continually see the bulk of our energy dissipated into survival. Somewhere between the older, long term view of life that embraced a career, and the newer, short term one that embraces foodstamps, we need to work out ways of existing that leave us as free and as alive as possible -- right now.

AND A FEW SUGGESTIONS

While our knowledge and awareness of individual psychology was impressive for a revolutionary group, our ability to monitor and direct our group process was not. Inevitably, the dynamics got out of hand and began to direct us. Unconscious of our process, we were to that extent at its mercy. Efforts at correction often led to long discussions that tended to raise anxiety and to become similar to the discussions

they were trying to change. Without some expertise, the problem only magnifies.

How does one learn about group dynamics without the attendant wreckage of a few revolutionary organizations along the way? In the abstract, we know that attention to dynamics necessitates (at least momentarily) the withdrawal of attention from the content of a discussion. Further, we know that such a withdrawal of attention is least likely when one is deeply involved with what is being said. Since this is usually the situation for a revolutionary group, dynamics will initially best be studied elsewhere.

Aside from reading or forming a group that would study and discuss its own processes, one other interesting idea has come to mind. One could, as an exercise, participate in an encounter or mild therapy group. In this type of adventure any critique of such groups would be put aside temporarily, in the service of larger revolutionary desires. As one begins to understand and later to predict the outcome of specific dynamics, it will become easier to influence the direction taken by the group. Eventually one would be skilled enough to manipulate the group both consciously and unconsciously.

As a long term student and critic of the practice of therapy, I can only approach what I will say next in a qualified way. I don't know anyone who couldn't use some good therapy. Yes, I know that good therapy is hardly available, that it costs a lot of money, that the therapy relationship is also a political one, that blah, blah, blah, blah. And I also know that I only have one life to live and don't want to live it as a pattern of repetitions. And I further know that I'm even less tolerant of this same behavior in my friends.

To the extent that a revolutionary group is successful in overcoming personality and background differences, it will then come up against character blocks. If these do not soften or dissolve, the group will. (Or, the group may become less tolerant, more authoritarian). Although a revolutionary group can, and a revolution will, go a long way towards permitting character to relent, we need all the help we can get -- right now.

FOOTNOTES

1) When a person recurrently has a feeling of not being heard, he will interpret it as a rejection of what he says or of himself. Similarly, any persistent unclarity and unresolved questions may tend to become thought of in terms of theoretical differences or mistrust. While any of these are valid possibilities, the tragedy of this kind of muddled process is that you will not clearly know whether they are actualities or merely possibilities. Any growth of mistrust or resentment, if not dealt with, becomes a filter through which all of the practice of the group is viewed. In this atmosphere differences due to misunderstandings (unintentional, and otherwise) or to an uneven development between comrades while become magnified. This is just the opposite of our early experience, where openness and trust turned differences into an opportunity for rapid learning.

2) We often had difficulty in saying exactly what we were actually doing, or in deciding what type of audience we wanted to reach, or even in agreeing to whom a finished work would appeal and to whom it would not. Again I feel this to be a result of the tyranny of the totality, together with its sin of "separation". We secretly wanted to do and say and be everything at the same time, even though we openly wanted it.

But in practice this desire could feel like a loss, an incompleteness, a vulnerability--we simultaneously embraced our writings and deserted them in favor of something newer. The flavor is more like succession than supersession.

The same tendency towards immediate globality had a dampening effect on the introduction of new ideas. Novelty only seldom appears in its final or most useful form, and therefore it is easy to criticize anything new in terms of an older, fuller perspective. This is a critical aspect of any group practice, and its mishandling leads to insularity and dead ends.

The relevant part of a new thought, its "positive moment" or "kernel of truth" emerges only when encouraged. Once apprehended, the "kernel" is often the key to a broadening or unblocking of the prevailing synthesis. In the case of FOR OURSELVES, more openness to this process would have allowed us to break out of our formalist approach to councils at an earlier stage.

New ideas are a source of excitement and joy as well as a source of anxiety. The anxiety depends on the extent to which the ideas are in conflict with the collective definition of a group, and the excitement depends on the extent to which they already point in the direction of a new synthesis. The premature dismissing of novelty or answering of criticism may relieve tension, but it is ultimately not more satisfying than its sexual counterpart.

FOR OURSELVES IS GONE

LONG LIVE THE PROLETARIAT FOR ITSELF!

The necessary precondition for association is a minimum definition of that association in terms of the priorities, aims and conditions of its realization. In the case of revolutionary communist associations this minimum definition refers to a dialectical understanding of the global reproductive process of humanity under, for, and as capital, as well as to the necessary immediate and mediate steps (tactics and strategy) for the overthrow, expropriation and supersession of the capitalist mode of reproduction.

Until recently (1973), the collective understanding of the reproductive process of capital, within "For Ourselves", was basically centered around general Marxian theory. Influenced by the theories of the International Situationist, diverse currents of non-authoritarian communism and the most lucid (non-heteronomic) anarchist ideas, we thought of social revolution in a somewhat voluntaristic and eclectic manner, as a matter of "free will". Sectarianism and negationism, less from our part and more from the part of other groups and individuals, plagued our revolutionary activity. In this period we were extremely isolated and grew for a while to be the curators of radical theory, a rare enclave of abstract lucidity in the midst of the prevailing concrete leftist confusionism. We felt "ready" for the social revolution and utterly frustrated by the reigning miscomprehension of our ideas, which we presumed to be in everyone's head, albeit in an embryonic state. Whatever appreciation we may have had of the "objective factors" governing capitalist reproduction, i.e. the world market of capitals and its interaction, was posited in abstract theoretical terms, without an understanding of the origins of capitalist crises.

Nevertheless, with the manifest appearance of contracted social reproduction (1973/74), as exemplified by the so-called "stagflation", the subsequent shortages and the lowering of the general standard of living, the group "For Ourselves" found itself in front of a sudden transition. A qualitative leap was necessary. The task of understanding our historical present became of utmost importance. Becoming actually praxical thus occupied the center of our activity.

During this second period we investigated the most advanced sectors of the counter-revolution, i.e. historicism, ecologism, anarchism, bolshevism, local-controlism, therapyism, mysticism, radical-nihilism, etc. Finally, we were faced with the problem of superceding our previous doctrinaire principles through actual communist praxis, or becoming just another communist fraction, with our own brand of ideology, our "positions", our sub-group tendency competing in the market of consciousness. The visible outbreak and intensification of the economic crisis, coupled with the political side-effects of Watergate-CIA-FBI scandals and the final defeat of the US in Vietnam helped to intensify both here and abroad what had been, up to then, marginal proto-revolutionary activities. As a consequence, we undertook collectively several projects among which I could mention a) the extensive study of the critique of political economy, attempting at last to disprove, prove and/or complement the analysis of Marx and Engels, especially their theory of crisis b) we formulated an attempt to create a new communist international which received mild support and did not lead to the expected results c) we began an investigation of the strategy of the bourgeoisie at different levels, i.e., ideological, military, psychological, administrative, etc.

Most of the casualties of association within "For Ourselves" occurred during this second period. Evidently the social disintegration existing around us was congruent with the disintegration of our previous doctrinaire group identity. Several comrades left the group, always at their own initiative, giving various reasons for their decision, which were quite often vague and unclear. The departees felt that an understanding of the capitalist crisis, i.e. the historical process of capital accumulation, was not necessary or important in order to posit how such crises could be eradicated permanently, i.e. communist society. The rest of us embarked on an expansively pleasurable understanding of ourselves as part of capital and as part of its negation: class struggle.

During this period most of the interventions and publications of "For Ourselves" were carried out under different names, for reasons similar to those that led to the dissolution of "For Ourselves". Among those reasons were a) our inability to agree on everything in order to present a collective publication (The ideology of monolithism) b) because of the increasing polarization of the group around subjectivist or objectivist lines (the famous Kantian antinomy of Freedom vs. Necessity) c) because our theoretical or ideological dissensions were often as character-problems (the ideology of psychologism), d) because of our inability to assume our inequality of skills, desires, approaches, etc. as expressed in the real communist movement (the ideology of egalitarianism) e) because of our incapacity to defuse and supercede our contradictions in time (the ideology of cover-up, diplomatism and indirect criticism) f) because of our failure to expand numerically and geographically g) because of our incapacity to deal with competitive, aggressive and other a-social tendencies arising within the group, etc., etc. The only exception among our publications/interventions during this period remains a very vague and historically abstract publication, "In Portugal", signed collectively by "For Ourselves" as a reply to a leaflet published by the International Communist Current (ICC). Theoretically correct as it may have been at the level of general Marxian theory, this publication still remains non-actual as a means of understanding the crisis of world capital as it appears in Portugal. The rest of the publications and interventions were a result of the collaboration of three to four people, according to the situation. It is not my purpose here to account for the content and the form of these interventions, but in my opinion what created the final dissension can be located in our failure to discover a common revolutionary interest can be located in our failure to discover a common revolutionary interest i.e., the lack of a coherent strategy and a methodology of approach.

There came a point where, "lack of energy", "compulsive interruption", "bad mood", "resistance to association", "character problems", and other original sins of disintegration made their appearance with predictable regularity. A desperate attempt from our part to fight back encroaching corrosion was made in trying to open our group to outsiders as well as making a regular publication. The drafting of the central article dragged for six whole months without ever reaching its completion. Other articles on the capitalist crisis and the critique of political economy never saw the light of day. An incredible critical constipation was holding us back. The journal failed to materialize and with that the last hope for a regroupement around what used to be "For Ourselves" disappeared.

It is obvious that the present period of acute economic crisis offers an ideal terrain for class-wide regroupement. Nevertheless the possibility of and necessity for such a regroupement should not blind us to the point of accepting anything as better-than-nothing. For just as the proletariat needs to reorganize itself to fight back against the cannibalization imposed

on it by capital in crisis, we should bear in mind that the bourgeoisie as well reorganizes itself to better implement such unpopular measures as cutbacks, shortages, speed-ups, lay-offs, etc.

Actually it is impossible to view the strategy of the organized proletariat as formally separate from that of capital, to the extent that capitalist production relations reproduce both. Our strategy therefore has to take into account the manoeuvres of the capitalist class and analyse its strategy (economic, political, military) in such a way that our response is adequate and capable of dealing a fatal blow at the right moment.

We can distinguish between immediate and mediate programmatic suggestions. The former aim at the creation of an organized proletariat capable of undertaking a successful mass upsurge, and only indirectly at the overthrow of capital and the establishment of communist society itself. I would call these immediate programmatic suggestions a provisional revolutionary strategy aiming at the creation of a unitary class-wide organization of the proletariat. The program will be drawn up by the organized proletariat, and not by any political party or other agency acting in its name. This communist program cannot be the pre-digested list of points or demands presented so often by various leftist sects, groups or fractions. It can only correspond to the creation of a common critical identity within the proletarian class and therefore can only be drafted and implemented by a large section of that class. The function of the existing communist revolutionary groups and individuals is to present as many common or diverging strategical suggestions class-wide, aimed at the creation of a permanent debate and a consensus which would lead to the communist program

For the creation of such a revolutionary debate and eventual consensus I therefore propose:

1) The creation of a newspaper, not uniquely representative of our tendency, but rather of the minimum basis of a communist-revolutionary international perspective. I see this newspaper as an attempt to create a critical basis within the revolutionary working class in a non-monolithic manner, i.e. allowing divergences to appear and be debated class-wide. Presenting the differences of the social individuals involved in communist revolutionare praxis can help us more than the patching up of those differences.

In practical terms the newspaper can be divided into sections or committees each of which can undertake specific tasks according to needs and affinities.

The sections can include such subjects as:

- a) the critique of political economy
- b) the critique of political psychology (character-ideology)
- c) the critique of environmental design (urbanism, ecology)
- d) the critique of all the existing "left" and state-capitalist tendencies
- e) the analysis of the strategy of the bourgeoisie in economic, political and military terms

The articles of the newspaper could come from different sources. Great importance should be given to the correspondence section in such a way that people who feel more comfortable writing "letters" instead of "articles" are stimulated to express themselves. Our main aim should be to encourage revolutionary debate in order to create a large group around the newspaper.

2) The undertaking of an extensive critique of all existing pro-revolutionary tendencies with the aim of accelerating the social movement necessary for the creation of a revolutionary program. In order to accomplish this, an immediate practical study of the actuality of capital (the present international economic

and political crisis will have to be made. A supersession of the present world interaction as capital seems impossible without knowledge of this process on a world scale. It is not so much a question of where to start in that the world market is omnipresent.

A sensuous appropriation of what capitalist interaction is on a global level starts with an understanding of our own sensuous reality, wherever we may live. Locating therefore the historical specificity of our environment is a task involving a political-economic-strategical analysis of our immediate physical environment (where are the factories offices, schools, etc.: how do they interact with the rest of the world market; an input-output matrix of the area concerned, in economic, political and military terms, etc.).

I do not remember whose idea it was to call this part of our work/pleasure, Expropriation Manuals, nonetheless I think the title fits perfectly the tactical/strategical practice to which I refer. Furthermore, I should add that unless this task is undertaken internationally and from the standpoint of a revolutionary and not a reformist perspective, it could easily degenerate into radical-economism.

3) The creation of a "school" where both our paper and the expropriation manuals could be debated in greater detail while at the same time meetings of people could co-exist with the meeting of ideas. Some form of building seems necessary. There, discussions could be held, literature could be made available and important decisions concerning the participants could be taken in group.

The "school" can be organized in the form of study groups on the one hand, concerned with the investigation of a subject, and as well in the form of ad-hoc committees or groups concerned with the execution of a collective project or intervention. The relation between study groups and the ad-hoc committees or affinity groups is the unity between theory and practice within each one of us. The study groups and the ad-hoc committees can function in congruity with the newspaper. The subjects discussed and investigated being similar, it is hard to see how these two projects could exist separately.

The expropriation manuals can become the basis for a new social contract (the revolutionary program); the newspaper the means of creation of an international association of revolutionary communists, and the school a source of the immediate critical activity of our present, the direct sensuous confrontation between our aims and their realization.

The means to change our lives cannot be given to us, they will have to be taken. The expropriation of the capitalist class (bourgeois, bureaucrats and technocrats) starts right here and now with the understanding of our lives under capital, for capital and as capital. This understanding involves a sensuous reappropriation of the totality of social relations and products thereof. Understanding the interaction of the world as capital will begin to unite the subject with the object, presently alien, because the relations that produce both as such are alien if not pernicious to the further existence of the subject-producer of those relations.

The No Growth Political Economy of For Ourselves

At the outset of the autopsy proceedings I had declined to participate in the inquest, being somewhat embittered by the frustrations encountered while working in For Ourselves, and feeling double unique and isolated-- firstly unique in having participated in what I felt to be a so far theoretically unique organization, and secondly unique in having been the only woman to participate in the group. Eventually I overcame my masochistic tendencies to withdraw, then my embarrassment at the prospect of hanging out our dirty linen, then the re-discovered pain at having beaten my head against walls for too long. In the final realization that our problems are perhaps all too common, I decided to put in my bit.

While agreeing, for the most part, with the statements herein by Louis and Gerard concerning the history of the group, I would here like to discuss a few aspects of where I think For Ourselves foundered.

Overall, a major problem of F.O. was its failure to locate itself (ourselves) in its concrete specificity, both objectively and subjectively: that is, we remained in isolation from the larger community, developed insufficient understanding of our objective reality (the global economy, the local economy), and remained largely unconscious of our subjective, or emotional realities.

But a deeper inquest into the dynamics of For Ourselves reveals internal contradictions that were perhaps equally, if not more causal in the groups' inability to continue in its original form. The projectile of F.O. contained the age-old contradiction of Western civilization: the traditional mind-body separation. Initially the group did come together in a real burst of enthusiasm, with a vibrant awareness of the totality of human experience. The original emphasis on conceptual coherence was quite appropriate at the outset of the group's practice: our past experiences and praxes, and our contemplated future praxis, needed a coherent theory. The initial creative theoretical work was indeed exhilarating. But when the initial charge wore off, the present caught up to us in the form of glaring survival anxiety: we found we had insufficient funds and labor-hours to disseminate adequately what were felt to be unique theoretical contributions. Then came anxiety around insufficient response, and the not-ver-gratifying form of that response, i.e., correspondence rather than face-to-face daily contact. We needed to feel! we had a community large enough, furthermore, to generate a quantum leap in the coherence of revolutionary theory globally.

As megalomaniac dreams faded and we were left alone with ourselves and our correspondents, the internal manifestations of the contradictions increased in intensity, and the general social contraction outside proceeded apace. We were caught unprepared to be our own lifeboat.

As the anxieties took on characterological manifestations of nightmare proportions, Mr. Concept competed with Mr. Performance (sound like a fast car ad? Well, that's no coincidence) to arrive at the exchange value of our continued social interaction. When personal spectacles were threatened with extinction, they colluded to exclude any alternative ways of interacting as a group.

I would here like to hypothesize that anxiety as evidenced in F.O. could be seen as a result of the historical obsolescence of the traditional mind-body split. When a civilization, or mode of production, decays and no longer provides the institutional settings which support this separation, which nourish each part severed from the personal whole, we in our small groups come face to face with the pain resultant from the separation: most typically with men, unawareness of, or discomfort with, one's feelings is compensated for by sublimation. When sublimation is no longer possible, because nurturance is no longer available, the emotions again clamor for attention. The non-acceptance of feelings and the failure to deal with them at the level of the proto-revolutionary group from which one seeks to derive sustenance, itself leads to acute feelings of anxiety. Then the characterological monsters return with one last mighty effort to absorb, or bind, the anxiety.

The dominance of For Ourselves by men would lead me on a superficial level to conclude that the sexual imbalance was to blame for the emotional inadequacy: even if women with inadequate theoretical coherence had been present, there might have been, had these women at least been assertive, sufficient reminder of the importance of emotional awareness to have prevented the narrow channels of partial sublimation from choking off the sources of pleasurable feeling among the men involved. While some grudging assent was given to the importance of having more than one woman in the group, no one knew what to do about it. The fragmentation of social groupings in Berkeley, the increasing polarization of the sexes due to sexism, anti-sexism, and anti-anti-sexism does render the terrain for recruitment without recruiting somewhat difficult. There was, nonetheless, a tendency in F.O. to stick to the purity of coherence and the purity of a non-recruitment policy: "If they like our stuff, they should come to us." My subsequent forays into several women's groups have further illustrated the difficulties in finding women who would be comfortable with a group such as For Ourselves: strong tendencies toward anti-conceptualism, various degrees of men-hating, separatism, are just the surface phenomena of the Berkeley women's movement, loosely defined. However, the question should not be dropped here. Some kind of reaching out seems to be essential, combined with a continued growing awareness and actively supportive understanding on the part of men towards their potential female comrades. If the integration of a group on sexual lines takes longer, if lots of hard work has to be done on the part of "conceptually coherent" men into bringing women "up to their level" of coherence, and likewise, if women have to work hard to make men more aware of their emotional beings, to bring male consciousness "up to the level" of female understanding of emotional dynamics, then so be it. I see no future in the continued separation of the sexes. Isn't a growing number of real comrades half the point of the battle anyway?

If a proto-revolutionary group has not yet recognized or found its larger community, it must at least strive to have a balanced home base -- a full interaction among its members. Only a strong sense of community, small or large, can allay the anxieties resulting from trying to live in a decaying social system. Conceptual brilliance proved insufficient for F.O., as I was myself long in admitting in any kind of determinate way. I took it for granted that everyone understood what "radical subjectivity" was, but in fact, retrospectively, it is clear that there was only a fragmentary and incomplete understanding. The term was never defined beyond the fervent intonations of the "necessity to take ones desires seriously." Radical subjectivity was left in a positivistic coma; formal logic was made to dance instead. How in keeping with Western tradition:

For the immediate present and future, I intend to continue my work in furthering my understanding of character armour and to deal with this phenomenon at the level of group process. Some former members of F.O. plus some other comrades and myself are now working with a group trying to develop a synthesis of Marx, Freud, and modern-day "therapeutic" movements; I am now participating in two different types of "therapy" groups, for myself, as well as to further my understanding of character armour and to develop an analysis of the proletarian character, a theory of therapy, and a practice which includes characterological transformation (of myself, and of my comrades and the class as a whole.) I am also working with a group of women interested in making a sympathetic critique of feminism, although I now think the group needs to be a mixed group (men and women). And I intend to participate in the creation of the journal being planned by several ex-members of For Ourselves and others, and to participate in the production of some cabaret-style "political" theater.

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No More "FOR OURSELVES", But Still For Ourselves

FOR OURSELVES was founded in the realization that a global resonance of egoisms, a universal self-interest of world humanity, was being born, and in the struggle to locate that interest concretely and in the clear light of deliberate self-consciousness. In the very name we chose, in its manifold yet unified meaning, we sought to objectify that founding realization.

"FOR OURSELVES" refers to the coming-to-be of humanity as an object of consciousness for itself; to the practical self "reflexion" of humanity which is the historical conditio sine qua non of the communist revolution; to the collective mastery of our own social self-reproductive praxis which is the content of communist society. Our name is a reference to the proletariat becoming class-for-itself, the necessary revolutionary precondition within terminal capitalist society for the overcoming of the abortion of humanity which it portends, and for the historical realization of humanity as communist society. Our name reflects the critique of all fetishism, fundamental to all theory, the critique of all projected forms "otherizing" our self-recognition--thus not only the critique of capital, but also that of all Causes, Ideals, and Principles into which our being-for-self has been alienated. It expresses the realization of humanity, ourselves, as the subject and object, identical, of history, which is none other than the continuum of human (re)actions. It reminds of that continuum of improving self-reflexion of the historical labor of our own self-production, unmediated by any reified abstraction, which is communist theory. Finally, it points to the dissolution of both the prevailing identity-structures of capitalist humanity; bourgeois egoism and altruism (moralism) equally bourgeois, alike--the dissolution of their antithesis itself, into the communist (human) identity of the realized social individual.

Our name had many uses. One was as a test. Groups which reacted hysterically to our name, seeing in it the narrow "we" of a gang of Stirnerian individualists "in favor of itself" as its "obvious" interpretation, only betrayed, in this projection, the limitations of their own (capitalist) identities, in their reflex interpretation of "ourselves" as less inclusive than the entire human race, them included.

However, FOR OURSELVES was also a product of our isolation, of the isolation of tendencies toward the realization of this human interest in humanity as a whole, as reflected in the abysmal condition of the then extant claimants to the heritage of communist theory and practice. We set out to make a contribution to remedying this abysmal condition, a product of the historical period in which we were emergent. But we formed in the midst of an historical turning point, and found ourselves unable to make the turn as FOR OURSELVES. Changing social conditions

in the form of a global capitalist breakdown crisis of unprecedented synchronicity and proportion rendered our isolation shortlived, and our environment dynamic in accelerating evolution toward revolutionary consciousness, as reflected in intensifying presence and proliferation of communist groups in Europe and, though much less so, in North America; in increased outbreaks of proto-revolutionary activity, as in Portugal, and in accelerated breakdown of the capitalist state and of the standard of living of the working class worldwide. Our emergence itself was an early result of the subterranean build-up toward this crisis, though we were largely unconscious of this at the time. We shortly found ourselves swamped with international communications responsibilities, research needs, and theoretical self-education tasks, requiring continuous reforging of our fundamental basis of accord, plus the growth of a receptive local milieu, all of which stretched the resources of our original organizational form and agreements to the limit~~z~~-- and then to the breaking point.

We intended to contribute to the creation of a new communist international. We never got beyond being a theoretical research and study group that published its findings, with only that -- publishing -- and our stated intentions distinguishing us objectively from so many other "silent" communist study groups which formed about this time. Our form became obsolete for this task just as we neared the real possibility of undertaking it. Accelerating social developments led to a growing awareness how far below the mark of what a revolutionary tendency for us needed to be FOR OURSELVES (and all the formations like it in its international milieu) had fallen. To try to hold onto the form and reputation of FOR OURSELVES after this realization of its obsolescence would be akin to the capitalist accumulation of fictitious capital -- which, fortunately, no socially-determined necessity or blindness forces us to do.

What, then, was the nature of this "historical turning point" in which FOR OURSELVES centrifugally left the road, forcing us to leave it behind? The deepening of the global crisis of capital to the point of its universally undeniable empirical appearance for our class: global contracted social reproduction; a world depression putting a rapidly tightening vice on our lives. The intensified crisis of capital became also the crisis of FOR OURSELVES, revealing our back-door complicity with an element of capitalist ideology: the ideology of permanent capitalist prosperity.

Without exception, the members of FOR OURSELVES had developed their communist identities in the middle-to-late 'sixties, a period characterized by the global exfoliation of more or less vaguely anti-capitalist outbreaks marking the end of the post World War II "Dim Ages". However, at this time, the movement toward a renewed global breakdown of capitalist reproduction was visible only to the most profound dialectical inspection of the empirical data, and the bubble of capitalist "crisis free" prosperity delusions was far from having burst for the general social consciousness. It was next to impossible to speak publicly (to any resonance) of the fruition of Marx's theoretical work in the critique of political economy or of the inevitability of renewed explosions of the self-contradictions of capital accumulation, so most of us abandoned or avoided such considerations except, in a few cases, in the depths of our private notebooks.

Consequently, we were attracted to the ideology of the Situationist International, the only current visible to us at the time which represented genuine Marxian communist theory, drawing especially on its early theoretical beginnings, if only, as especially evident later, in a one-sided and fundamentally vitiated form (vitiating by the failure to solve, or even genuinely pose, the dialectic of individualism # collectivism and even more of "freedom # necessity", theoretically). Without undue elaboration, it would be sufficient to characterise this ideology as the realization of the subjective necessity of communist revolution alienated from realization of its objective necessity. It belonged to and was viable strictly within the limits of the first "pre-shocks" of proletarian revolution on the eve of the manifest capitalist breakdown of the 1970's, i.e. to the '60's, a period when the deep historical causes of these outbreaks were still obscure even to their very creators and participants. It was the most coherent available expression of the immediate, relatively empiricist self-consciousness of their acts on the part of these early actors, but therefore likewise the most coherent expression of their historical self-unconsciousness. It was thus necessarily subjectivist, tending to collapse by the end of its period back into the most decadent forms of capitalist individualism, nihilism, and, potentially, even Fascism, in response to its own inevitable abysmal failures, and to the direction of the continuing crisis.

The deepening of the crisis attacked the most reactionary side of our original roots in Situationism: the failure to come to a conclusion on the central conclusion of Marx' theoretical work: the prediction of the self-negation of capital as a result of the fruition of capital accumulation itself, and to base revolutionary strategy coherently on that conclusion. What this comes down to is the failure of Situationist ideology to master the theory of capitalist social reproduction, that is, the failure to know the existing human praxis -- hence leaving the opening for a point of contact with the post war capitalist ideology of "crisis-free capitalism".

Our appropriation of the heritage of the S.I. put us in a strategic impasse that was tolerable, if only barely, only so long as the appearance of social quietude in the immediate aftermath of the '60s upsurge and its failure, and of local (advanced sector) capitalist prosperity, lasted. Our self-knowledge limited to the personally felt subjective need for communist revolution, our endurance as revolutionaries was rendered difficult. We oscillated from high-energy peaks of production and distribution of subjectivist-pitch pro-revolutionary advertizing, to troughs of despair as we recognized the flimsiness of a merely subjectivist orientation and the superficiality of more propaganda work in any case. Casualties, periodic or permanent, to nihilism or social pessimism trimmed our numbers and sapped the commitment of those remaining.

The de facto assumption that the capital-relation was compatible with permanent prosperity, i.e. permanent expanded social reproduction, destroyed for us the concept of the necessity of communism (of freedom or self-determination) upon which the original unity of revolutionary theory was premised (theoretical solution of the contradiction "freedom # necessity"). Thus we left ourselves

64

in the plane of a terrible contradiction. If communist revolution was not a singular historical event corresponding to a unitarily subjective and objective social necessity, then it must be, on the contrary, a permanent imminence possible at any atomic instant on an undifferentiated, textureless expanse of historical time, whenever collective subjective will (thus inexplicable) arose above a certain threshold, perhaps as a result of a long-enough series of our "interventions". Such a stance was bound to evoke, as a periodic reaction, its antithetical echo: the position that revolution was never possible; would never happen -- social pessimism. We wanted a revolution, but, in the absence of collective objective necessity backing up an expected eventual becoming-subjective of this necessity for an ever-widening majority of human beings, this reduced apparently to a matter of taste. Since the majority of the proletariat evidently didn't then share our "taste" for communism, our strategy was reduced to a mere hope that others could eventually be "brought around" to share it under basically unchanged living conditions, by our subjectivist propaganda, boredom, etc. Anyone adopting such a strategy opened themselves to fits of despair as the "bad infinity" character of this perspective -- an indefinite series of unconnected interventions advertizing one-sidedly the pleasures of revolution -- was experienced in practice. All our dialogues tended toward the same monotonous content: we would advocate the glories of communist life, hoping to arouse the "taste" for communist construction, while our audience would reply by simply confronting us with the prevailing class-in-itself attitudes and behaviors which presently would have made attempts at communist construction a social disaster. One (psychological) "solution" to this crisis of subjectivist ideology was a tendency to decay into a "late-Reichian" stance -- "Reich's disease"-- the historically specific disorder of social self-consciousness to which proto- and ex-revolutionaries in the post WWII period, given its twin empiricist delusions of capitalist prosperity and "Communist" totalitarianism, were uniquely susceptible -- "I wanted the revolution, but the rest of humanity was too weak and scared and held me back from my dreams, for which I can't help hating them." This paroxysm of subjectivism, of historical self-ignorance, then prepares the way for a collapse back into bourgeois "rugged" individualism (reassimilation) and, given the present context of capitalist breakdown, a likely trajectory into deeper forms of delusion and/or Fascism.

The basic theoretical error or lack cited above is the key to the subjective boom and bust cycle of morale which, in the early period of the organization, sapped the energy of our commitment to our project and its expansion. This error explains our failure to locate the proper (and properly rewarding) tasks appropriate to the various stages of development of the crisis during the time of our existence, and the consequent failure of our effort to bear the intended fruit, making them for us relatively unrewarding. In the later period of our organizational existence, the boom and bust cycle disappeared. What followed can be regarded as either one long bust (in terms of our published output as a group) or as one long boom in terms of the rate of internal theoretical development. It was in fact an interregnum between the old organization and whatever

the new activities of its members were to be, during which time the portion which had begun to realize the fundamental theoretical error that had crept in to the foundation of the organization tried to establish the necessary theoretical amendments within the framework of the old organization and its redeployment around the centralizing project of a periodical (newspaper-journal) directed toward class-for-itself self-organizing. During this period the rewards of our activity grew in a way apparently independent of our previous outputs. Our correspondence with other communist groups around the world jumped exponentially for a brief time, approximately in parallel with the concurrent rise in unemployment worldwide then beginning. The general environment of deepening crisis increased our perception of the social value of our efforts as revolutionaries in a previously unprecedented and omnipresent way.

The effort at internal amendment was a failure. This statement is a result of that failure. The effort at amendment now continues beyond the group.

Our basic problem was the drowsiness of awakening; a lack of historical self-consciousness able to comprehend our sustained subjective states and desires, and our social identities as revolutionaries, as historically specific historical products and as socially determined subjective gropings toward expression of historical necessity, on the way to becoming free (self-determined) expressions of historical subjective-and-objective necessity.

We were riding on an historical wave, part of that wave, but we knew the wave not.

It is impossible for revolutionary educational propaganda, especially given its pre-determinedly tiny resources, to prevail against the basic thrust of empirical social-reproductive experience, daily reproduced and reinforced, and against the psychology (including even the basic perceptual structure) which an upbringing in that milieu determines. The spreading decadence and approaching collapse of that experiential world will, however, promote a marked decrease in the satisfactions that world may once have sustained, and a sharp increase in subjective misery. Situationism was one attempt to articulate that burgeoning historically specific dissatisfaction and to see it as a sufficient cause for revolution. It was an expression of the accelerating devaluation of the entire "value-system" in which that experiential world had been grounded. But it is only when the "life-line" aspects of the fundamental social relations (of production), which fixes and must fix the sense of "reality" and "identity" for the prevailing psycho-structure, begin their failure that social critique enters the recognized realm of practicality.

For the general social consciousness, and that that world as a whole is called into question. The all-sided social breakdown which characterizes the onset of capitalist depression is the "nervous breakdown" and "identity-crisis" of that prevailing individual psycho-structure en masse. If capitalism were not self-negatory, it might never be negated. Capitalist crisis is the self-critique of capital, and the irrefutable revelation of its inherent fallacies.

Cyclical crises are only approximate realizations of the nature of capital, periodic warnings of its final realization; a crisis from which no capitalist recovery is possible but accelerated negative social reproduction irreversible toward extinction of humanity and the biosphere, unless a vast portion of capital is destroyed as such (refused as a claim on social wealth -- which probably requires the destruction of all capital as such, i.e., of the social relation). In that crisis, which we believe to be this crisis, communism is not an absolute necessity, hence "logically" - materially automatic. It is only a necessity relative to social continuum; to social reproduction. It is "only" a social necessity, and a subjective necessity to the extent that life is.

The subjectivist approach (partly unconscious) of FOR OURSELVES thus differs vastly from an approach that begins by locating in social evolution a historical process which determines communist revolution -- hence revolutionaries -- as a necessary value for society as a whole at a certain historical stage, such that a growing wake of conscious realization of this necessary value, in which we ourselves have a determinate location, is likewise determined to spread throughout society, exhibiting a predictable ordering in the class cross-section of this spreading, upon which revolutionary strategy, i.e. a time-differentiated plan of action, a differentiated mapping of escalating activities across the continuum of time, could be scientifically based. That historical process is the accumulation of capital -- the growth of fixed capital (of the capitalized productive forces). That process determines the singular historical fruition of a contradiction between the social-evolutionary necessity of expanded social reproduction -- human society cannot continue to exist unless the productive forces grow -- and the capitalist necessity, after a certain point in accumulation, for contracted social reproduction, self-cannibalization of human society and of the entire biosphere, if capital is to continue to exist as such. Communist theory (human self-consciousness; consciousness of the laws of social reproduction), and proletarian revolution, successful or not, is a lawful outcome of this contradiction. The success of communist revolution, the realization of the necessity of freedom (conscious self-production), entails an inherently creative and voluntary element which express the freedom of necessity, the creative aspect of universal evolution and of the evolution of universal laws ("necessity") which it includes.

FOR OURSELVES represented one failure of that creative element. We foundered on the problem of how to make our ideas an actual force in history. This would have necessitated, of course, a concrete grasp of how history was already an actual force in our ideas; locating our ideas -- and, in fact, our selves as a whole -- in history; accounting for them uniquely in terms of the history of which they and we were already "actually" a part; accounting for why people of our part of the class -- namely college students and ex-college students employed, apparently voluntarily, vastly below our levels of qualification -- were coming on virtually a world-wide scale (advanced capitalist countries) to a first

(distorted) approximation of communist theory at this time. It would have required us discovering what process, if any, linked the trends in our consciences to likely later developments in the same direction in successively deeper layers of the working-class, which links alone could locate any possibility of making "our ideas" an actual force and thus give our revolutionary activity any social use-value.

Our lack of such an analysis rendered us paralyzed with respect to the ongoing and developing public struggles of the rest of the working class, because for us they appeared merely "reformist" and "survivalist", thus making any actual organizing presence within the class for our group impossible. We only knew we "should" seek such a presence, without knowing how or, really, why. The real task confronting our blindness was to scientifically locate the probable vulnerable points at which escalating "reformist" struggles -- struggles to maintain the reproduction of labor-power -- were likely to spill over into proto-revolutionary activity precisely because of the impossibility of reform in crisis capitalism, and then to be there waiting organizationally when the time came, and to prepare ourselves until then. We failed to theoretically solve the contradiction "reform # revolution"; to locate the dialectical continuum which, in those historically singular moments

when communist revolution comes onto the historical agenda, bridges the two, otherwise apparently opposite processes. Thus we were confined to "theory" (ideology). Though many of our expositions have original value at the level of "the concept-in-general" (at a level of abstraction applicable, as it were, to any planet hosting human or humanoid social evolution) and "capital-in-general," we never crossed the threshold of historically concrete theory, let alone of strategic thought. The increasingly felt demands of the historical emergency in which our lives were located had to put an end to such a condition one way or another.

The immediate process of breakdown of FOR OURSELVES took the form of ^{the} failure of our attempts to achieve a collective statement on the economic crisis, to collectively read, evaluate, and criticize the theories of the NGLC and others on the same, and finally, our decision to reorganize our practice around a sustained intervention and eventual organizing tool in the form of a newspaper-like periodical.

In a long series of meetings stretching over many months and involving comrades beyond our original membership, pursuant to that newspaper, ^(we) were unable to collectively arrive at a basic comprehensive theoretical statement which was to have been the "hub article" of the first issue. These meetings became, actually, not a drafting process, but an extended discussion attempting to reconstitute our theoretical basis, taking account of the enormous theoretical expansions and social developments which had ensued, unassimilated in any systematic way, since our founding. In the course of this painfully slow process (in terms of any yield toward the paper), we ran into a lot of mutual resistance which we came to locate in the specific form of character developed by college-educated workers. We fell into intellectual competition based on our individual investments in our built-up "intellectual (variable) capital". But this explanation alone would fail to account for our extraordinary cohesion in the beginning.

Our characterological bickering and discord came to the fore in the wake of our frustration in the inability to reconstitute our theoretical unity in response to and congruent with the pressures of the times, and as a result of formerly embryonic differences which began to germinate in the changed social climate of the developing global conjuncture.

Our history from the "official" publication of the "Portugal leaflet" critique through the unofficial issuings of "The Murder of Reich", "Too Little, Too Late", and "Hard Times" by a minority within the group under different group names, represent the continuing attempt of that minority to resituate the theory and practice of the group as a whole around a conjunctural strategic perspective, an attempt which proved to be "too little, too late" for FOR OURSELVES as such. During this whole period, the group as a whole remained officially virtually silent. And yet hidden in that silence was the greatest theoretical ferment in the group's history.

Within the context of our historical environment, and our associated theoretical deficits, interpersonal problems played a great role in mediating the demise of FO. I have deliberately concentrated on the larger theoretical and environmental causation, in order to contribute toward a document of general usefulness within the international communist milieu of which FO was a part. The small number of individuals involved directly in FO and the historical "specific gravity" of FO's practice does not justify the level of detail involved in a personality-by-personality analysis, nor does the probable generalizeability of our experience so warrant, in a generally-circulated publication.

Perspective For Regroupement

The question of a regroupement on the part of ex-members of FO and associated milieus, cannot be separated from the question of the social value of such a new tendency -- the question of what makes an organized tendency worth having, and of what makes a revolutionary organization "revolutionary". That the membership of such an organization "wants revolution", or thinks it is working for revolution does not so qualify it, as a look at Weatherman, the Black Panthers, SLA, etc. will quickly show. The question of value with respect to a revolutionary tendency is no different from that of "social use-value" in general.

Certain definite theoretical and practical tasks confront the global communist movement as essential moments of the overall project of restarting expanded social reproduction, which communists (by definition) believe can now only be in the form of communist society, or of a rapid global transition thereto. The social value of a revolutionary tendency, its value for expanded social reproduction, is its contribution to these essential tasks. To the extent that its contribution is (momentarily) unique, that tendency is (momentarily) necessary for humanity as a whole. An organization not founded on new contributions to communist theory and strategy is, at best, superfluous, and better dissolved into previously existing organizations with which it shares a common theoretical base. At worst, it is, as shown by its refusal to merge, an egotistical sectarian clique obstructing class unification and regroupement, and revolutionary in name only. On the other hand, refusal to merge (as opposed

to ally) with other organizations and tendencies on the grounds of significant theoretical divergences, is not sectarianism but rather a duty from the point of view of the universal self-interest, in order to preserve the unique perspective for final synthesis in the formation of the global communist party and the revolution itself, or until the unique perspective is either definitively refuted, or passes successfully into general knowledge and application of the class.

Revolutionary organization is also urgently necessary to the simple reproduction, and especially to the expanded reproduction, of communist identities. For revolutionaries are pariahs with respect to the dominant life- and identity-supporting institutions of capitalist society, and idealistic traitors from the point of view of parochial interests even within the working class. Isolation is the deadliest enemy of proto-communist consciousness, which can be disasterously overwhelmed for the lone individual by the siege of psychological and material punishment meted out on all sides for the failure to adopt a pro-capitalist social identity. The solidarity of comrades in an organizational process in which one experiences one's subjective communist identity rewardingly and as an objective fact and force in others is a powerful antidote to the otherwise ubiquitous intake of capitalist ideology, in the context of a crisis wherein capital is self-revealing its own fatal flaws. However, this urgent necessity is insufficient in itself as grounds for organizing, because if it is taken as sufficient -- allowed to overwhelm the primary necessity previously identified -- very soon both necessities will be left unmet: the organization will dissolve.

The basis of expansion of the means of expansion of an organized tendency is its program, not its strategy for realizing that program. Personality charismatic and affinity considerations regarding either the publicized leadership or the general membership of the organization cannot be substituted for program as the attractive force building the organization, beyond the earliest stages, if the organization is both to continue to grow beyond a narrow milieu, and to stay on a revolutionary trajectory, though such considerations are inevitably of great secondary importance. (By program I mean, of course, actual, in practice program, not just official, on paper one.)

The purpose of the program of a communist tendency is to articulate its highest comprehension of the universal interest, the "resonance of egoisms", of humanity; to locate the present necessity for the species -- for its freedom -- and to locate the available means of realizing that necessity (strategy); to specify the possible trajectory of further positive social evolution for the human race. That perfected universal must finally become the conscious binding force and legitimizing basis of the unity of the global proletariat as class-for-itself, and of the authority of its organizations, in carrying out the communist revolution.

But certain key problems must be solved in order to arrive at such a program and strategy. The answers cannot be taken for granted as already solved by outmoded traditional "positions" of the past communist movement, nor deduced from abstract Marxian "principles". They can be determined only by new revolutionary/scientific research-work; by rolling up our sleeves and digging into concrete studies of the actual world, and then by testing our findings in practice. "Philosophy and the study of the actual world have the same relation to one another as masturbation and sexual love." (Karl Marx, GI, p. 259.) And most of existing sectarian programmatic "positions" are no more actual than philosophy, and are sub-philosophical to boot!

The process of our regroupement should be organization around locating and solving these key problems, with our provisional solutions published as the explicit content or "substance" of our tendency, including most centrally the program and strategy developed from them. The tendency need remain organizationally distinct from others only to the extent that its organizational "substance" located in such provisional solutions remains distinct.

What follows is a proposal for a systematic mode of formation of a new organized tendency out of the ferment already emerging in our milieu. All those who find themselves in general agreement with this proposal -- which merely specifies a view as to the key problems from a conjunctural strategic perspective, and a process for tackling them, without pre-judging the content of any answers to them -- is urged to contact the author pursuant to its earliest feasible implementation.

Proposal

I propose the formation of "task forces" or "research commissions" committed to the investigation and reporting, to a parent body (proto-organization) composed of all, of significant conclusions on the key problems of the communist movement in this period as identified below. The level of work and commitment of time necessary will probably restrict membership of any individual to one task force only, though all should be encouraged to submit position papers to any of the rest of the commissions wherever he or she has special knowledge to contribute, as start-up and initial orientation documents. The task forces to determine and draft the program and strategy will, however, depend on the findings of the three other commissions, so that these latter must precede the program and strategy sessions in time. Advance guidelines for the five task forces, and likewise the ratification of their final reports, rests with the parent body which, upon their adoption, would thereby constitute itself as as organized tendency.

The below-listed are global, universal problems of the communist movement. Only the whole class can solve them completely and practically. The necessarily limited extent to which we can solve them, as a particular tendency, will however determine our value to the class as a distinct tendency, and hence the justification of our existence as such from the point of view of our own (expanded) self-interest.

As I see them, the five key problems centering the five task groups fall out as follows: (i) the (so-called) "objective" aspect with respect to the conjuncture, defining the terms of reference of the "Critique of the Actual Political Economy" task group; (ii) the (so-called) "subjective" aspect of the conjuncture with regard to the (potential) revolutionary class(es), delimiting the Critique of Political Psychology (Ideology) task group; (iii) the "subjective" aspect with regard to the ruling classes, determining the "Global Crisis Strategies of Capital (Intelligence)" task group. The synthesis of the results of tasks (i) through (iii) makes possible the "absolute" or subjective-objective* perspective, to be objectified in the work of task groups (iv) communist program, and (v) communist strategy for program.

These five task categories are listed below together with a summary description of their content.

(i) Critique Of The Actual Political Economy

Knowledge of the existing global reproduction process unified in the form of a flows and stocks model of the world economy at, to begin with, a national-aggregates level of detail, using already available I/O arrays and statistical models prepared by bourgeois econometrics agencies to economize our time.

Basic conclusions on the mechanics of capitalist crisis in general and the inner dynamics and probable trajectory of the present global recession in particular. Basic conclusions on the issues of capitalist ascendance/decadence and of state capitalism, founded on a dialectical model of capital.

The strategy of capital will figure into this task as a process of the crisis and of capitalist ruling class psychology which is objective for us (the communist working class). For that reason, task (iii) will probably have preceded task (i) in time (as was pointed out to me by a reader of an earlier draft).

(ii) Critique Of Political Psychology

Communist critique of bourgeois (social) psychology ideology -- Freud, Reich, and recent movements. Critical study of the history of social revolutionary events and processes in capitalist and noncapitalist social settings with the aim of determining the laws of working-class revolutionary self-organizing,** the mass psychology of revolution, and the (psychological-level) laws of social change in general. Study to determine the laws of ideology and the causes of "Thermidor" and dictatorship, including critical historical analysis of the "Left" and the causes of its failures. False consciousness as mass psychopathology. All this with the aim toward making revolutionary praxis and organization a science (communist, or "critical", not bourgeois, science). Emphasis also on the psychological-characterological problems of internal group practice in revolutionary organizations, proposing measures to overcome them as policy for this tendency. Ideology mapping by national and class divisions; ruling class psychology/ideology (border with task (iii) below). Outline critique of basic and prevalent capitalist ideologies the world over, and their common root(s) (critique of bourgeois science, political theory, ecologism, etc.)

(iii) The Strategy Of The Capitalist Counter-Revolution

Research to determine the social nature of the various national and supranational ruling groups, their major factions, and their strategies for this crisis and for the future in general, both in the sense of the sheath of

strategy-trajectories "objectively" open to them from the standpoint of a scientific (Marxian) analysis of capital, and in the sense of those ascertainably actually selected already or so far.

based upon the above:

(iv) Communist Program. The necessary array of collective acts and social measures which as a whole locates that trajectory of further social evolution which represents a continuum for humanity. In effect, a working-draft sketch of the first plan of social production of incipient global communist society. Its purpose is to specify the actual content of the universal self-interest or species-interest of the emerging species-being; the proletariat as class-for-itself.

Includes a critique of existing organizations and tendencies, i.e. a comparison of programs, to indicate bases upon which alliance or merger is possible; establishing our uniqueness, therefore necessity, vis-a-vis these tendencies or proposing a plan for merger, as the case may be; also, minimum conditions for united fronts and transitional programs, etc. Includes thus the "self-program" of the tendency (self-reflexive moment), locating the degree of relative necessity of the tendency itself, its function or proposed contribution; the role and limits of its expanded reproduction, in the plan for expanded social reproduction in general. Includes therefore its plan for its own reproduction including membership admission and exclusion, recruitment, etc. processes, and its plan for its own internationalization toward the foundation of the new International.

(v) Communist Strategy. A specification of the foreseeable process leading to the implementation of the communist program. For example, we might decide that, in building a class-wide organization (one uniting the employed and unemployed working class in a single formation around a proto-revolutionary program) we might decide to concentrate initial efforts toward those freshly unemployed as a result of this crisis, thinking them more amenable to the communist critique of capital at first than still employed, unionized workers.

Should specify stages, objectives, and estimated time "windows" for their successful accomplishment wherever possible. Is oriented to defining the character of the tendency's essential organizing presence within the class. Must determine the present solution of "reform # revolution", and try to locate the organizational form which fits the times; i.e. the content of the communist program.

Self-strategy concerns the implementation of self-program including basic policies on internal practice. Several readers of the first draft of this statement suggested the concept of "social use-value" as the premise of a "categorical imperative" concerning individual behavior within the group: that behavior is appropriate which is for the good of all concerned (as defined in program, strategy, and so on.) This criterion of behavior subsumes the critique of the various chauvinisms (racism, sexism, classism, and egotism in general).

This leaves only the "self-start-up" problem for this proposal:

(vi) Implementation

By means of the task force process outlined above, supplemented by --
 (a) a "School" for classes, seminars, panel presentations, conferences, etc. by task groups and others pursuant to cross-fertilization, pre-reporting, and diffusion of their findings in the local milieu and locally generally, and;
 (b) a newspaper-journal for the purpose of wider diffusion, printed dialogue, and presentation of the results of the task group work and the bases of the organization, and for later development ~~into~~
 into the information and organizing tool of the organized tendency once constituted. (See Gerard's proposal for a more detailed account of this method).

F0 pseudonym: Feanor***

*(In all this talk of "subjective" and "objective" it is important to remember the dialectical unity of the two: the subjective becomes objectified; the objective becomes subjectified.)

** (This is the locus for strategic recognition that people in class society generally do not and cannot base their behavior on "rational" grounds and motivations; on the coherence of programs; on their true, human self-interest, etc., but rather on the basis of propitiation of the dominant societal authorities and institutions controlling their access to the means of psychological and economic livelihood. The problem of overcoming these mass psychological "blocks" to the formation of communist social identities -- the problem of "narrow egoism" -- thus defines the "subjective problem" for communist organizing).

*** (reached via: CAPITALIST CRISIS STUDIES

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1. Historical Context and Prospects for Supersession

F.O. embodied from the outset a curious split consciousness, almost a schizophrenia, about its aims and tendencies. It was founded out of a series of meetings in the Fall of 1974, consisting mostly of people who knew or had worked with the group NEGATION, which was probably the most intelligent and the least dogmatic of the pro-situationist groups on the West Coast. The hangers-on and spectators attracted by the "cleverness" of some of NEGATION's activities, such as the notorious "Jesus Loves You -- Kill Yourself" poster of 1972, rapidly dropped away, leaving a group of about ten people who had committed themselves to some kind of "revolutionary practice."

Yet what this practice was did not become clear. About five members of this original nucleus, myself included, became aware that the capitalist crisis-- of whose existence we had been conscious for about eighteen months-- was unfolding much faster than we had anticipated, and that therefore a serious collective study of the critique of political economy was on the order of the day. One by one, the remaining members went their various ways--some to pursue an intensive training to survive what they saw as inevitable barbarism, others to play at being "artists" or hedonists, still others for more obscure and complex reasons. At this time we were also joined by one new comrade who had been absent from the country during the original discussions.

In February 1974 we published our "Preamble" or founding statement, which reflected accurately both the strengths and weaknesses of F.O. in this period. On the one hand, we had concretely gone beyond the Situationist perspective of the '60's in realizing that there was a new capitalist crisis, and that this crisis in some sense made revolution both a necessity and a possibility in a way that it had not been either during the period 1945-1972. On the other hand, we had no clear understanding of the mechanism of the crisis or of the likely manner of its unfolding: those of us (myself included) who were influenced by the theory of the National Caucus of Labor Committees, tended to underestimate wildly the flexibility of present capitalist institutions as opposed to those of 1929, while others, influenced more strongly by the neo-Keynesian views of Sweezy et. al., tended (at first) to veer in the opposite direction. Again, we were aware in a formal sense that communism meant the abolition of the wage system and of the money economy, but remained tied to the councilist ideology of the S.I.C., positing "workers' councils" as an ideal outside of their actual historical functions, which have varied widely: we rattled off the good old list of names and dates (Kronstadt - Spain - Hungary, etc) without any further examination of the real practical content of the "councils" which appeared on these various occasions, i.e. of their concrete relationship to communism. Finally, despite our -- again formal -- recognition that revolution was becoming an "urgent need," we were still stuck in the voluntarist conception of practice which was the heritage both of the Trotskyist-Maoist Left AND of the S.I. and the anarchists: the voluntarism of the

"exemplary group" or "councilist organization" as opposed to the voluntarism of the "vanguard party" of specialists in revolutionary consciousness: hence our sub-title, "Council for Generalized Self-Management." We had little or no conception of the profound link between the "subjective" and "objective" factors in the revolutionary process. As Fearor correctly observes in his statement, the flip side of this voluntarism was nihilist despair, which overcame nearly all of us on occasion, and some of us more or less permanently. Meanwhile the Preamble "called upon" our class to organize itself, to defend itself "against the deepening misery" etc. Predictably enough, this exhortation fell largely on deaf ears, partly because of the unripeness of the crisis and partly because we were not at all clear what the basis of this self-organization would be or how it would concretely move toward a revolutionary upheaval. Despite our echoing of the S.I.'s claim that "our ideas are already in everyone's minds," what was obvious to For Ourselves was far from obvious to the larger "ourselves" of the proletariat.

Depressed by our isolation and by the lack of response from the rest of the class, we attempted to form alliances with various ultra-left and new-situationist groups around the world, particularly in England, France, and Australia. The two main tendencies which we encountered were the formalist rigidity of what has since become the "International Communist Current" and, at the other extreme, a sort of subjectivist deliquescence, varying from conceptual suppressions of the proletariat a la Invariance to a growing resentment of the critique of political economy and a variety of obsessions such as "body politics", "the abolition of labor", etc. In short, most of what passed for the world revolutionary movement seemed to be suffering either from constipation or diarrhea, the one frequently posing itself in conscious reaction to the other. In November, an attack on ultra-left and "situationist" tendencies in the hysterical pages of NCLC's New Solidarity caused us to panic: we were afraid, with some justification, of physical assault by lead-pipe-swinging goons in a repeat performance of the Labor Committees' earlier "mopping-up" of the CPUSA and the SWP. We mailed out a hastily-prepared warning, as a "Bulletin of the International Alliance," an "Alliance" to which most of its supposed members held only very tenuous adherence, if any. NCLC had grown so monstrous in the imaginations of some of us that we believed it capable of leading a "state-capitalist revolution" in the U.S.

This "Bulletin" was rightly criticized as being both paranoid and substitutionist, and wrongly criticized by people who thought that, because the Labor Committees are both hysterical and new-Stalinist in their day-to-day practice, there was nothing positive to be learned from their economic theory or from their attempts to develop a program that was more than an empty abstraction. Here, once again, the dilemma of F.O. was clearly revealed: we were aware of the fallacy of Trotskyist notions of "Transitional Program" and in general of the idea that socialism can be presented to the proletariat in bite-size chunks, as also of the opposing fallacy that revolutionary activity consists in disdaining limited struggles as "reformist" or in positing communism as a series of "positions" to be repeated over and over again regardless of context. Yet, in the absence of a generalized social movement which we could see and participate in, such

as a mass strike wave, we were confined to a theoretical elaboration of the possibility of a common self-interest of all humanity (The Right to Be Greedy) or of its necessity (the various "interventions" such as Too Little, Too Late? prepared by a minority of the group acting as Catalysis). Both possibility and necessity remained abstract, leading (in my case at least) to a veering between "objectivism"--holding the crisis over the heads of the proletariat as a threat-- and "subjectivism"--trying to "seduce" the proletariat into revolution by a positivistic enumeration of the potential wonders of communism.

This dilemma was not an "error" in the strict sense of the term: it remains real and can only be resolved by the evolution of the proletarian movement itself. In the meantime, it is more than ever necessary to elaborate an understanding of the historical relationship between capitalism and communism; to move by successive approximation toward a communist program which is not simply a set of measures to be put into effect at some future time but the expression of what proletarians (including us) will be forced to do if we are to avoid a lingering death. This begins with what proletarians have already done in past strikes and insurrections and are doing in the present (in Portugal, for example). In addition, this program must comprise an understanding of exactly how the "tradition of the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living"; a study of the subjective retardation of revolutionary praxis, beginning with a critique of psychoanalysis conducted in the same terms as those in which Marx conducted his critique of political economy, i.e. as a critique of bourgeois science. Lastly (for the moment) this approximation toward a communist program remains relatively insubstantial without a much more concrete and detailed knowledge of the present (i.e. capitalist) process of social reproduction throughout the world, as well as in our own immediate localities. We need to know much more about the mechanism of the crisis, its potential for temporary recovery or complete collapse. We need to know the limits of present productive forces such as energy technologies and modes of agriculture, the possibilities of replacing and superseding these, and to have some idea of how long this might take: we need to know the strategic potential of various regions and class sectors in the event of revolutionary civil war: we need to know more about the balance of class forces in the world, for example, the proportion of employed and semi-employed proletarians to "sub-proletarians" and peasant classes in each country.

Some of these studies have already been begun by various informal groups here and elsewhere, in two of which I am participating. In the meantime I am working on a series of "position papers", the first of which, on communist program, I will be circulating soon in typescript form. Others, on democracy and dictatorship and on the question of the party, will follow shortly. I am also hoping that a periodical of some sort will emerge from the communist milieu in the San Francisco Bay Area, although this does not seem likely in the immediate future, given the present level of discord and disorganization hereabouts. Nevertheless, the dialogue, already initiated in several general assemblies of pro-communist people from the area, will almost certainly continue and will be made public in various ways, even in the absence of a centralized publication. If all goes well, our arguments and conclusions will have the effect of rectifying the practical flimsiness and theoretical backwardness of the revolutionary movement in the U.S. up to now.

2. Notes on the Process of Dissolution

Feanor correctly points out that the long "bust" that followed the manic-depressive cycle in our activity between December '73 and the reprint critique of "In Portugal. . ." was also a long "boom" as far as theoretical development was concerned. To put it another way, what we thought we were doing was preparing the "hub article" or joint platform for a periodical. What we were actually doing was spurring ourselves into an intensive re-examination of all our previously-held theoretical conceptions. Yet this re-examination consistently posed more new questions than it answered: hence, in the short term, it tended to undermine more and more severely our old basis of accord, as also the immediate possibility of the minimum common platform we were trying to produce. This manifested itself empirically first of all, not as essential disagreement, but as arguments over what was most important to be said in the "hub article"; how we were to condense the huge vague mass of theoretical conceptions we had collectively and individually developed into a clear, concise form, a form which would neither bore the "educated" reader nor confuse the "uneducated" one. At some point during these months we realized that we had not been doing what we thought we had: but this did not resolve the question of how we could do it. Our theoretical arguments took on the aspect of people trying to box underwater: our differences could not become clear, let alone be resolved, in the context of endless debates. They could not be resolved as long as the group maintained its (increasingly fictitious) identity as a group, because they were above all practical differences, differences of practical priority and method.

Since our conflicts were not being resolved in practice, they inevitable took on the aspect of "characterological" conflicts. Not that these characterological problems were not real: in fact, they had been latent throughout the history of the group. But always they tended to re-appear during our depressive-inactive phases, when the excitement of a common project was not there to dissolve them, and at least partially and temporarily. But in the environment of the last six months of F.O., the effort of repression required in each one of us to go on pretending that we were in fact a practical association, to keep on attending meetings that became more wearisome and unpleasant each week, resulted in regression.

What Reich called "character armouring" is the self-repressive mechanism of the human organism confronted with an intolerable situation, in particular, the necessity of self-alienation. The character-armouring of any particular individual is based on his/her particular neuroses, i.e., on the particular historically-conditioned mutilations and repressions received during infancy and childhood. Character-neurosis is a social product, but each individual is produced slightly differently from all others, and the degree of sublimation of neurosis also varies from individual to individual according to circumstance, genetic constitution, etc. Hence, in the increasingly repressed and alienated situation of our meetings we tended to become precisely caricatures of ourselves. The particular neurotic patterns of each one of interlocked to form a group armouring based on the primary repression of our differences; this in turn reinforced the armouring of each individual. We found ourselves playing out roles again and again: even our attempts to modify our roles became part of the roles --the Bad Boy, the Diplomat, the Sensitive Plant, the No-Nonsense Organizer, the Detached Observer, and so forth.

As if this were not enough, our later training from the "education" process also cropped up as a tendency to the competition of intellectual capitals. As students, no matter what our original class background, all of us had been prepared by the academic environment for competition in the professional-technical labor market, which, though increasingly proletarianized, still retains many of the characteristics of the petite-bourgeoisie and the old artisan class. In

particular, the "value added" to professional-technical labor in education consists not only of skills and knowledge, but also -- and far more importantly -- of professional ideology. While obviously none of us consciously subscribed to this ideology, it remained in us as a subliminal structure, to which we tended to regress under conditions of anxiety. Since we could not achieve even the limited realization of ourselves as social individuals, associated producers, afforded by a collective praxis, each of us was forced back toward an attempt at "ivate" self-realization through the assertion and improvement of "our own" theory. In some sense our dissolution was a capitulation to this tendency: yet, at the same time, we had to dissolve in order to clarify in practice the differences that made a common project impossible. Even during the worst period of the dissolution process, when meetings were regularly becoming shouting-matches, we were often able to deal with each other quite freely and enjoyable outside the meetings. The antagonisms and competitiveness which appeared so monotonously -- and brutally -- within the group as a whole, largely disappeared between most of the individuals and in informal small-group discussions. Here, without the constant pressure of trying to pretend we were an "organization", we could discuss our differences in a more amicable way. In particular, I have managed to maintain friendly relations with all the people who participated in the last six months of meetings, although not all of them have much to say to each other at present (the particulars of this observation will, I hope, be clear after a reading of all the enclosed statements).

What then, are our differences? I must admit that they are only now becoming clear to me for the first time. Some were really only confusions and misunderstandings; but the deeper ones would seem to be concerned, as I said earlier, with priorities and therefore with tactics and strategy. First of all, this means how we want to say things and to whom we want to say them -- at least in the beginning. Secondly, it concerns priorities for theoretical development (see Part 1 of this statement). Again, the ensemble of this dissolution letter should clarify these priorities and methodological differences. Only time will tell how many of them resolve into simple differences of "style" or approach, and how many into fundamental conflicts that will frustrate any future attempt at regroupment. At present I incline to think that most of them will fall into the former and less serious category. The more that the communist movement becomes a visible social force, as it is now in Portugal, the more trivial will come to seem most of our earlier disagreements -- since the historical process will tend either to resolve them one way or the other, or else render them obsolete by showing them to be essentially false questions.

Fundamentally, however, the rock on which F.O. foundered was the impossibility of resolving these practical questions in isolation as what we were -- a small group of theorists who had comprehended something of what communism really is, but could do no more than repeat that limited comprehension in various ways and with various emphases in the hope (usually disappointed) that our effort would incite some other people to carry some of the gigantic burden of further development.

We were able together to determine some of the preconditions for a revolutionary praxis, but were unable to go more than a short distance towards it. In the process, we became each of us theoretically capable in her/his own right. In the relative obscurity of the period during which we were For Ourselves, this effort of theoretical development was an enormous, often very painful one. As the crisis of capital advances, however, concepts which were so difficult for us to form will become transparently simple for others -- indeed, they are already becoming so. Workers become dialecticians because theory becomes practical, because contradictions cease to be hairline cracks in the smooth surface of appearances and become instead yawning crevasses which must be leapt over.

". . .Proletarian revolutions. . .recoil ever and anon from the indefinite prodigiousness of their own aims, until a situation has been created which makes all turning back impossible, and the conditions themselves cry out: "Hic Rhodus, hic Salta!" (Marx, The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte)

The Latin verb saltare means both "to leap" and "to dance." As For Ourselves we tried to learn to dance when almost nobody else was standing up. That was the beginning and the end, the best and the worst of it.

Nov-Dec 1975
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"I could throw myself over the railing of this bridge
and remain suspended in the air . . ."

--Alexander Scriabin
to George Plekhanov, 1905

I will not here contrive to present a general analysis of what was For Ourselves, its accomplishments, its failures and the full implications of these for future revolutionary praxis. To do so accurately would require more hindsight than is now possible. Nonetheless I will here toy with some reflections on these matters.

In spite of all our accomplishments, and all the pleasurable moments which we sometimes shared, For Ourselves was basically an association of professional revolutionaries who came together for a (volunteer) job. Our jobs may have been "good jobs", i.e. jobs which we actually enjoyed, but jobs nonetheless.

Because it was such a good job to have, the fact that it was a job at all was rather subtle and not easily detectable. But it was manifested most conspicuously in the substantial characterological impedance we experienced whenever we'd try to do anything, and especially in the almost unbelievably systematic unconsciousness with which we dealt with this impedance.

Almost all our collective production was entered into voluntarily (and in fact enthusiastically) by all of us -- but at almost any given time we would each rather have been somewhere else. Frequently what seemed to be conflict between us was more than a mere conflict between character-armours -- it was a frenzy each of us would create when we expected impossible forms of fulfillment from the rest of the group -- impossible because of the limited and rather abstract basis of our association. One can only "talk shop" (even if talking shop includes talking "subjectivity", etc.) for so long before anxiety becomes overbearing.

Of course I wouldn't for a moment deny that there were genuine subjective desires which motivated us to our activity. The problem was that we had no way of immanently realizing these desires so that we had to latch on to the apparently closest available substitute for the immanent process we wanted. The form which this substitution took -- our "revolutionary activity" -- became something for us to live up to. Thus we always wanted to do what we were doing but we never wanted to do what we were doing.

So here we are, talking about international class-wide organization of the proletariat and meanwhile at the most recent "general assembly of pro-communist people" in our area, there was so little rapport and so little resonance of egoisms among the thirty-or-so people present that the assembly actually came to (and perhaps had to) rely on formal democracy (!) as a procedural structure just to maintain even the semblance of an organized meeting.

I'm not trying to say that global class-wide organization is impossible or that it shouldn't be pursued. But clearly something was sadly lacking between the people at this "assembly" and was also (though less dramatically) sadly lacking between the members of For Ourselves -- and similar deficiencies can also be expected to plague any larger or wider-scale organizational attempts which come together on a similar basis -- i.e. on mere "positions", "programs", "strategies", etc. -- however "coherent", "historically specific", "subjective", or whatever, they may be.

The major part of (A Modest Proposal For How) The Bad Old Days Will End was produced by myself, my lover and an old friend. Both are people I would see frequently even if neither of them were revolutionaries. After a short while it became apparent that we were actually enjoying the production, almost every bit of it -- even the "shitwork" which is normally so repelling. I felt the project to be our own -- and my own -- in a sense I didn't feel about any other revolutionary project I've ever taken part in. The relations of production were never formally defined and didn't have to be. We just did it and enjoyed it. As far as decisions went, it was generally felt that though the project belonged to all of us it was mine in a special sense that it wasn't the others' (this was largely because I wrote the text itself). Nonetheless this was never formalized. At one point --when a graphic/aesthetic decision had to be made -- one person overrode the other two, simply because it was obvious to all of us that she wanted it one way more than both of us put together wanted it the other way. She was a qualitative majority of one. There is simply no way to write such things into a democratic-councilist constitution. I am not antithetically rejecting form -- and I know in larger groups it would probably be more necessary for relations to be more specifically defined. But no form can possibly compensate in the absence of the kind of genuine intersubjectivity we experienced. Nor can such an intersubjectivity be lived up to by people just because it's in their "expanded self-interest" to do so. Collective recitations of rote-learned prattle about "passion," "eroticism", "radical subjectivity", etc. ain't gonna do it either.

In so many such ways communist society and pro-communist organization must be qualitatively different from -- so much richer than -- any previous form of social organization.

The present crisis of Capital is much more than a mere "economic" crisis. It is the culmination of pre-history, the crisis of social self-alienation in its most sophisticated form. Everything that has been implicit in pre-history -- and especially in capitalist relations -- is becoming explicit and also increasingly visible (the very attempts to make it invisible are themselves among its most visible forms). The present negative energies -- and the revolutionary form they may take -- are as subtle, new, unique, complex, and dynamically self-contradictory, as the crisis out of which they emerge. The qualitative social transformation now taking place is at least as dynamic as the social upheavals which produced Marx, the Dadaists, and the Situationist International, respectively. It will do little good to rely on old formulas. While I want to make

every attempt to understand the chaos, it would be pretentious for me to attempt or claim to not be part of the chaos. The present dialectics must be lived. Premature "syntheses" will only muddle things further. Everything must be called into question -- and the answers may be a while in coming. As for myself, I need to go mad for awhile -- to go running crazed down dark and empty streets chasing dream images...

* * *

(A Modest Proposal For How) The Bad Old Days Will End was an attempt at a minimum general statement of a modern revolutionary perspective. Any of several parts of it could, of course, be expanded into several volumes. But it is a minimum statement. I really hope to see its expansion take the form of a global dialogue over the matters mentioned.

Shortly I'll be publishing Notes On the Colonization By Value of Social Space and Time which is the beginning of a study of the full transformation from the formal to the real domination of Capital and its implications in the present crisis. I am trying to make more explicit what Debord (in Society of the Spectacle) seemed to understand largely only intuitively, and to root this firmly in Marx's theory of value -- and to synthesize all this into a theory of the present crisis (where the consumption of all social life by Capital is ceasing to be productive consumption). As for the Notes: it is in a rather esoteric form and I'm not really sure how to go about distributing it, i.e. how to get it to the people who could appreciate it.

* * *

One of the things that puzzles me the most is that I'm still quite convinced that globally coordinated workplace self-organization is absolutely necessary for a successful revolution. I'm also quite convinced of the absolute necessity (to revolutionary activity) of the kind of genuine intersubjectivity I described on page 3 and the unacceptability of anything less. But when I look at what the attempts at assembling the few dozen pro-communist people in this area have been like (or for that matter when I just look at the people around me, i.e. the proletariat) the possibility of such a synthesis seems rather unlikely. (Perhaps even the pro-communists are just "organizing around" all the wrong things??)

* * *

Some friends and I may soon be producing a rather marvelous poster/intervention. The text is already written but we're trying to derive an adequate material form for its 'pataphysique. We've also derived a strike intervention leaflet which probably would be useful in a diversity of strike situations. It will probably be ready much sooner than the poster. Though I must admit I feel a little wierd about it. Do two or three people who have a neat strike intervention leaflet and some good follow-up material (as well as conversational ability) just go to the nearest strike (or the nearest one where healthy impulses are manifest and/or an explosive situation

is objectively likely) and pass out their leaflet to "the workers"? But what else do you do if you just don't know anybody who's a worker at a striking enterprise? In any case, it's a good way to meet someone.

Some other projects I'm planning include a 'pataphysical mime and puppet theatre,* and an adventure novel describing in detail the worldly delights and marvels of life in communist society.

* * *

If I became convinced that a genuine revolution was not possible I would probably become the founder of the Last International, i.e. the Nihilist International -- dedicated to the rather ambitious task of destroying everything. (As Luis Nada said, "abstract negation is better than no negation at all.")

* * *

-- Charles Lutwidge a.k.a.
Illyanov Dadavinsky a.k.a.
Charles Heinrich (Dec. 1975)

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Postscript: I hope I am not misunderstood. I am quite aware of the seriousness and urgency implied by the present crisis. But I cannot allow this to cause a compromise against my own radicality. I am not interested in competing with Trotskyists and Nazis for the militant loyalty of the proletariat. I am, however, interested in locating and drawing to the surface -- in its most expanding and uncompromisable form -- the healthiest, greediest inclinations among the proletarians -- a class of people who fully embody the contradiction between use-value and exchange-value, and who's own subjectivity comes into conflict with the capitalist fetters evermore rapidly during the present accelerating crisis.

"Today nihilism reigns triumphant, and in its night the spark of creativity ... shines only the more brightly... Historic becoming has taken us to the crossing point where radical subjectivity is confronted with the possibility of transforming the world."

-- Raoul Vaneigem

* We are already working on a performance of Chapter One of Das Kapital, starring the Commodity. We hope to begin a synthesis of dialectical materialism with Jarry's science of 'pataphysics, exposing Marx as a most subtle Dadaist.

