



Who We Are

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To look for Utopia means providing a vision for the future—of a world worth living in, of a life beyond what people settle for as experience clouds their hopes. It means insisting that hope is real, counting on human potential and dreams.

Utopians do not accept “what is” as “what must be.” We see potential for freedom even in the hardest of apparent reality. Within our oppressive society are forces for hope, freedom, and human solidarity, possibilities pressing toward a self-managed, cooperative commonwealth. We don’t know if these forces will win out; we see them as hopes, as moral norms by which to judge society today, as challenges to all of us to act in such a way as to realize a fully human community.

We can describe some of these possibilities: worldwide opposition to the neocapitalist domination of the global economy; protests against dictatorship from Indonesia to China; movements for land and freedom in Mexico, Palestine, South Africa; cultural movements like the recovery of American Indian history, language, and economic power; a slow change in society toward acceptance of homosexuality and women's equality. The organized labor movements and the U.S. Black movement, have—we hope—new utopian phases ahead.

But beyond these specifics, we are talking about something familiar to everyone, but difficult to get a handle on. In small ways, every day, people live by cooperation, not competition. Filling in for a co-worker, caring for the old woman upstairs, helping out at AA meetings, donating for hurricane relief—people know how to live cooperatively on a small scale. What we don't know, and no one has found a blueprint for, is how to live cooperatively on a national, international scale—even on the scale of a mass political movement. Nobody has described how the society we want will look, or how to get to it, though we know what it will be—a society where people are free to be good.

One thing we are certain of is that this society is not, as Marxism claimed, inevitable. And a damned good thing, too, because if the new society is inevitable then those who are for it are free to shoot or imprison everyone who stands in the way of the bright future. That is the key to Marxism's development from

utopia to dictatorship, which everyone except Marxists is aware of. We believe, instead, that the society we want is an ideal. We believe people have to make ethical choices about whether to accept life as it is or struggle for a new society, and then about whether the society they are for will be democratic or authoritarian.

This is a good time to publish a journal dedicated to utopianism and revolutionary anarchism. The left is no longer in retreat. The mass movements of organized labor, the Black and Latino communities, organized feminism, and environmentalism are coming off the defensive, and are less disunited against conservative attacks. Within the narrower world of the organized left, anarchist and antiauthoritarians have greatly increased.

Utopians still face formidable obstacles. The parties of reform—the Democrats in the U.S., the Social Democrats in Europe, Christian Democrats in Latin America, the old nationalist parties in Africa and Asia where they still exist—have abandoned the ideals of social reform and freedom from international capital. The collapse of the Soviet Union and China's evolution toward a capitalist economic system under a Communist political dictatorship have helped discredit Marxism's idealist image. Unfortunately, these developments have also discredited, for many, the very idea of changing society fundamentally. As never



since the early nineteenth century, many believe that market capitalism is the only path to human progress.

Moreover, with a few exceptions, revolutionary anarchist organizations remain small and their influence limited. Various kinds of reformism and Marxism still attract radical-minded people, even anarchists. Despite its failures, Marxism's seemingly impressive theory and even its political record—now that the memory of Soviet atrocities is fading—offer a way to be revolutionary while still accepting the state, capital-labor relations, conventional technology, and political authoritarianism.

But these are reasons why it is important to continue to work for freedom and speak of utopia. This racist, authoritarian society has not developed any new charms. It remains exploitive and unstable, threatening collapse. It wages wars around the globe, while nuclear weapons still exist and even spread. It is deepening the world ecological crisis. Even at its best—most stable and peaceful—it provides a way of life that should be intolerable: a life of meaningless work and overwork; hatred and oppression within the family; violence from the authorities; the continuing risk of sudden violent death for gays, women, Blacks. For this society, from its inception, to call itself “democracy” is a slap in the face of the English language.

This paradoxical situation—a society in obvious decay without a mass movement to challenge it fundamentally—is, we hope, coming to an end. As new mass movements develop, liberal-reform and Marxist ideas will show new life, but so have utopian and anarchist ideas. We work with this in mind. We have to do what was not done during the last period of really radical social struggle in the 1960s and 1970s. Among other things, revolutionary anarchist theory very much needs further development, including its critique of Marxism and its ideas about

how to relate to mass struggles, democratic and socialist theory, and popular culture. And we need to reinvigorate the ideal of anarchism and the threads in today's world that may, if we can find them and follow them, lead to a future worth dying for and living in.

That is who we are.