

Letters to the Fifth Estate

Various Authors

1977

Note to Writers

Due to space considerations, we ask that letter writers make their remarks as concise as possible and when typing please double-space. It's not our desire to trim ideas to fit the space available, but practical limitations do confront us and we would appreciate this being taken into account. In general, two pages is ideal—anything longer would better be considered as an article.

Consider Magnetism

To the Fifth Estate:

One primary weakness among libertarian thinkers, which has been inherited from the Left, from Newtonian mechanics, from played-out rituals used in secret Abyssinian caverns by sandal-eating priests, is the inability to conceptualize a social order based directly on the pulsation of electromagnetic waves.

Since it is known by all modern physicists worth their beakers that at some level gravity and electricity are interchangeable, the failure of radicals to use the fantastic leverage of inter-polar loci seems an oversight few can afford to continue.

Not only is it that Science is merely the contemptible house servant of oafish barons, it is also a pygmy ritual used by functionalists to circumvent the inevitability of utopia.

Imagine three riders coming into the Rand Institute at sunset; Wild Bill Hickock, Ghengis Khan, Rasputin, Chief Pontiac and Conan the Barbarian. They come upon a computer...after that...they wreck the employee's lounge...then (sigh), they dynamite the upper floor containing files and replaceable documents overlooking a conference upstairs where the powers of Earth gather for a cocktail.

Mama Mummery

Wants U.S. Contacts

Dear Fifth Estate:

I enclose a copy of our latest *Motor Bulletin* on Ford. We are very anxious to increase our circle of contacts in the industry in the U.S., as we hope to put workers for the same employers on different sides of the Atlantic in direct touch with each other.

We often receive inquiries from Ford/GM/Chrysler plants in Europe who want to exchange information with workers in the U.S. Can you help us in any way? Would it be possible for you to put an appeal in the FE for motor workers to get in touch with us?

Ken Weller

Solidarity (London)
123 Lathom Rd.
London E.6
England

On Black Rose

To the Fifth Estate:

I saw in your last issue you are advertising *Durruti: The People Armed* by Abel Paz, translated by Nancy McDonald and published by Black Rose Books in Montreal. Since two of my comrades had read the French edition and told me about it, I was eagerly awaiting its appearance in English.

However, my enthusiasm was greatly diminished by several factors, the most important being the omission of Part IV of the original which deals with the different theories regarding Durruti's death (was it a CP assassination, one of his own men? etc.) and of the Stalinist treachery in Spain. It is nowhere mentioned that we are reading an abridged version nor is the printing history anywhere given so the reader could check the original. The reader is led to believe that they are reading an original Black Rose publication.

Other problems are the price (\$5.95 for a 315-page book is ridiculous and may be the reason for the deletion of the final section); there are more typographical errors in this one book than I have ever seen in my entire lifetime of reading, even to the point where I suspect that the proofreading function may have never occurred.

The book proudly announces who the paid wage workers were on this particular enterprise, but it's hard to believe that this book was professionally typeset. Almost every hyphenation is done in such a way as to distract the reader (ha-ve, we-re, therefore and on endlessly).

One other curious feature of Black Rose books that is notable: many of their titles are from libertarian publishers which have only had a Black Rose cover put on in place of the original and had the price raised. Examples are *Lucy Parsons* by Carolyn Ashbaugh, first published by Kerr at \$3.95, which now appears as a Black Rose title with a dollar added to the price; and *History of the Makhnovist Movement* by Arshinov, published by Black & Red at \$2, is now a Black Rose book and is sold for \$4.50.

Although Black Rose Books is a great respecter of private property (their copy right exceeds anything I've seen from a regular, commercial publisher), we, as self-appointed price-cutters, intend to re-produce the Black Rose text of the Paz book (with at least some of the errors corrected, like the one that Durruti was 7 years old in 1803), restore the deleted section, which has been translated, and offer it for around \$2.

Durruti would have shot those fuckers!

Joe Doaks
Boston

SLA Response I

Dear FE:

Greetings! Received the copy of the April-May, 1977 *Fifth Estate* and your letter of support. I have no serious disagreements with the material as printed, although I must admit reading anything on the subject of the rich girl, even my own "alleged" words causes simultaneous laughter and retching. New lows on the tedium scale.

I'm glad that some of the self-criticisms were printed since most people assume we were/are incapable of it.

You probably got our addresses from the Open Road article, and there's been a change or two since that was printed.

Emily and I were evicted from the County dungeon in Oakland in early January and have since then been in separate state prisons. I'm in the adjustment Center at San Quentin and Emily is at the California Institute for Women near L.A.

We're still waiting on a ruling from the California Supreme Court on whether we get our lawyers or two of the judge's buddies in the Hearst kidnap trial. It'll be several months or more before the circus begins.

In the meantime, we're both doing fine under the circumstances—spirit wise—in other words, we're surviving the enemy's best shots, still. But it ain't easy. So it goes.

Bill Harris
Frontera, CA

SLA Response II

Friends:

It's difficult for me to put my non-feelings concerning your SLA piece into words ("The Last SLA Statement," FE April-May 1977). If you folks feel that it served some end—constructive or destructive—it's all that really matters. The tragedy is that after all this time there isn't anything more interesting for people to get hot and cold about.

My personal views change so radically from day to day, book to book, urge to urge, that nothing I did or wrote yesterday is very representative of who I am, today. The only things that will really bother me are the letters of moralization you'll be receiving from the religiously pure and dull who think I give a shit about being "accepted" or "cleansed of my sins."

It also turns my stomach thinking about the sympathetic souls who will say "Gee, I never realized..." Not being an athlete, I don't have any use for supporters.

Quite honestly, the absurdity of the SLA and the controversy around it bores the hell out of me because where I live it's 1977, but of course I can only speak for myself.

Love n' Stuff
Joe Remiro
Repressa, CA

SLA Response III

Fifth Estate:

Thanks for printing "The Last SLA Statement" (FE April/May 1977). I found it enlightening. I was surprised to learn of Marcus Foster's involvement in the computerization of school children's files for the LEAA. Radicals in Lansing incorrectly saw this as the brain-child of misdirected MSU liberals when this program surfaced in Lansing as a prototype for Michigan.

A person who worked with us and was fanatical about LEAA programs being the financial base for fascism, is now in the employ of the United States Labor Party. Boys and girls, strange things are happening in these united states.

The SLA helped prevent radicals from around the country exchanging information on this computer program for public school children. Their violence not only "subverted the spontaneous opposition of students, parents and teachers to the program," as Joe Remiro admits, they focused public attention on the murder and off what might be a national program. I'm curious now to know what has become of this LEAA program.

The statements by the living members of the SLA, all of them recruits after Cinque orchestrated the first murder, are revealing:

"Both Nancy and Mizmoon had cyanide bullets in their guns, and as soon as Foster and Blackburn walked by, they fired at them," said Bill Harris. Cyanide bullets? They didn't get them from Mel's Sporting Goods Store.

"Cin stationed himself off to the side in some bushes as backup in case they (Nancy and Mizmoon) needed help," said Bill Harris. An unusual position for a heroic revolutionary! Perhaps Foster would have recognized Cinque as a fellow LEAA agent?

“Cin was actually more sensitive than anyone else about what she (Patty Hearst) was going through. He talked to her about this and then mentioned to the rest of the folks that they should consider the possibility that Patricia might want to remain with the SLA. At first everyone laughed...” again Bill Harris. Too bad they stopped laughing.

“Cin could have even walked away from the whole thing (the LA shoot-out)—police interviews of witnesses in the neighborhood show that he had drifted unnoticed through the crowds that afternoon when the police started surrounding the house,” said Emily Harris. What makes you think he drifted back? Or that the charred body of a Black man in the house was not placed there by the police?

The dirty tricks of the FBI and CIA are just now coming to light. We now know that the FBI provided both the Radical-Right—the Minutemen and the Radical Left—SDS, with agent provocateurs. The Minutemen even received their arsenals from the FBI. Why not the SLA also?

Cinque, who so miraculously escaped from prison to begin the whole SLA caper, is very probably as much alive and free as Patty Hearst.

Anarchism is an excellent philosophy which is being rapidly adopted by many people in the United States today. But small cells of terrorists, like the SLA, are doing everything possible to prevent its rapid growth.

The glorification of these isolated assassination teams by papers such as yourselves is forcing many Anarchists into calling themselves by names other than Anarchists. Which is a real pity! Nothing can be more vanguardish, elitist and absurd than a group of ten people deciding in secret that another human being needs to be put to death. Nothing is so contrary to every ideal of Anarchy. Think about it!

For Anarchy,
Bruce Brown
Lansing

Staff Reply: You should have trouble calling yourself an anarchist, since in your last letter to this paper (FE February 1977), you announced that you were an election campaign manager for the Human Rights Party and were urging our readers to vote! If anything is more contrary to anarchist principles and traditions, we cannot imagine it.

Terrorism and assassinations have, in fact, long been a part of anarchist history. A notable list of attempts and successes have been made on the lives of presidents, kings, dictators (including Hitler, Mussolini, and Franco), as well as an assorted range of lower level despots including police chiefs, army officers, bosses, etc. Still, it is a tactic that has always been much debated.

While your dredging up of U.S. Labor Party-type smears on dead victims of State violence is unworthy of consideration, in our estimation, your last statement about the nature of acts of violence committed by small groups of individuals does bring up important questions.

What about the anarchists who tried to kill Hitler or Mussolini? What about the anarchists who blew up the Bolshevik headquarters in Moscow in 1920? Are those to be supported or not? If so, to what level of the State repressive mechanism is it legitimate to go—cops? teachers? social workers? Some further discussion would be good.

Defending Marx

Dear Gang:

Your reply to Ted Lopez' letter (FE March 1977) was dogmatic, downright mean and nasty and considering your love affair with such pro-situs as Camatte and Collu, idiotic. It was the kettle calling the pot, so to speak.

That's neither here nor there. Slashing generalizations mixed well with cynicism seem to be the way to reply to individuals who bring up concepts of revolutionary organization of production. If they disagree with your conceptions—that all production is alien to human beingness—bingo, you call them capitalists. And you run to your bible (The Wandering of Humanity) for quick reference.

This is also done by the author of the critique of Marx (“Marx—Good-bye to All That,” March 1977 FE). What a load of shit. Besides twisting and turning like a worm on a stick, the author has claimed that Marx was a “Productivist,” hence we can sweep him aside since we all know that Camatte has the correct line. The author has not looked at Marx, but looked at Marx through the ideology of Camatte. Whom we will remember would still be a nobody if he hadn’t been published by Black & Red, and a bigger nobody if he hadn’t read Marx.

Your author makes erroneous mistakes about human consciousness to prove his/her point about revolutionary struggle being anti-capital, hence, anti-production. Somehow Capitalism is an entity at this point in time that is separate and living. An entity that controls all of society and each aspect of production and creation personifying each worker into an aspect not of human society, but of capitalism. If this is the case, and other writers to your paper have made this same point, why bother struggling?

To destroy car factories and large scale industry? And replace them with utopian villages of decentralized home-craft industries. Why any industry no matter what its size or productive capacity would still be a personification of capital. Hence, unless we destroy all production, Capital will rear its ugly mask and eat us all. Munch, munch crunch, munch, burp.

This is not Marx’s view, nor is his view that of unlimited production spreading everywhere. His view is that once production is controlled by the producers, it loses its ability to capitalize anything, because the law of value has been destroyed. The exchange value of the produced item no longer exists, only the real value exists.

Whether the workers smash their machines, refuse to run them or dismantle them and run them for production of other commodities doesn’t matter. It is the act of expropriation that is the revolutionary action of the workers. What Marx attacked the Luddites for was that they saw the machines politically as their enemy, and did not see the fact that the machines were personifications of the capital, their capital.

I would suggest that, yes, Marx does offer anarchists and libertarians a scientific analysis, and taken to its conclusions, it leads not to leninism, but a society of freely associated producers. What the author is suggesting is a society of associated consumers. May I suggest that the author read Marx’s *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* as a start, and his little essay on “A Ruthless Criticism of Everything Existing.” And that she/he should try again sometime with a critique of Marx based on Marx and not on such stilted intellectuals as Camatte and Baudrillard.

Yours for the Creation of the Impossible,

Eugene W. Plawiuk

Lethbridge, Alberta

StaffReply: Well, it’s nice for you that all we have are “bibles” authored by “stilted intellectuals,” while you have the good fortune to possess a “scientific analysis,” but besides repeating back Marxist formulas and suggesting reading lists, you really haven’t answered any of the points raised in the two pieces you criticized.

Marxism may have something to offer libertarians, but you must admit it has a pretty dim track record. In fact, it has always been on the side of authoritarian politicians against workers and peasants in any revolutionary situation that comes readily to mind (the Ukraine or Spain for instance.)

You miss the point about the fetish of production since your Marxism is an ideology deeply rooted in a bourgeois view of human existence. Of course, there has to be organized physical exertion to sustain life, but when the concept of production rules a society, this activity moves from being one among many human endeavors and becomes a central category of domination. Similarly, a society (that of Capital) which places a specific value on all human enterprise (whether exchange or use), maintains, in tact, the domination of the law of value.

Finally, Marxist abstractions about what the Luddites saw or didn’t see aside, they, in their words, wanted to destroy the factory system because it was ruining their lives as humans. Marx supported the development of industrialism (and hence the development of capitalism) as part of a grand plan for revolution that may have made a lot of sense to him writing in the British Museum, but the practical result has been that the lives of generations of workers have been chewed up and sacrificed for the glorious goal of a “post-scarcity society.”

Sorry, but it just doesn't wash. Gigantic enterprises maintained through futuristic technology and administered through centralized political control will only bring about the worst enslavement the human race has ever experienced and Marxism is its chief exponent today.

Sit. Down

Dear "Friends of Abbie Hoffman Bureau"

The 1977 "pro-situ" Ted Lopez is living proof of the failure of situationist theory. Like other pro-situs, he finds himself exposed in emulating sit. theory and must defend this emulation by locker room/philosophy student put-downs he's read, somewhere: His next step is total isolation from everyone because, since they won't emulate sit. theory, they must be counter-revolutionary.

Lopez's collection of photocopied sit. writings has a magical attraction because they represent to him a small, exclusive collective of super-heroes who transcended capitalism; and since he finds himself confused and powerless to change his life, emulation of the huge theoretical production by the Situationist International provides an alternative to being creative.

I think a cure for this ideological sickness is to start relating to more people (hitch-hiking around the country or the world tends to force one to meet people) or learning a skill or trade (not to make money, but to deal with technology), in short, some form of activity that brings a person into contact with more people.

So many who call themselves revolutionaries come off as Exclusive Twits who have *the answer*. To discuss with them you have to enter their playfield, accept their rules and compete with them. I saw this in Berkeley in 1973 when I saw the situationists there. It was really a weird and alienating experience. Lopez's letter is really a flash from the past and I continue to be amazed that Situationism still exists (or the Moonies or the IWW!).

For the Almighty Alligator,
Led Nudd
Chicago

fifth Estate

Various Authors
Letters to the Fifth Estate
1977

<https://www.fifthestate.org/archive/283-june-1977/letters-to-the-fifth-estate>
Fifth Estate #283, June, 1977

fifthestate.anarchistlibraries.net