

# Letters to the *Fifth Estate*

Various Authors

1979

Note: Last issue's article on "State-Fetishism" has again given rise to the much debated question of revolutionary violence. We invite further reader response in this matter.

## Not Futile

Dear *Fifth Estate*,

This is an answer to the article "State Fetishism" [FE #296, January 19, 1979].

The article points out many mistakes in the conception and carrying out of revolutionary violence in recent years.

It's probably right in many of these criticisms. But it is wrong in its main contention that all such violence is "futile." Just because it probably can't "touch off the revolution" and because it isn't part of a "proletarian movement." The writer points out the error of making "a theoretical division between masses and revolutionaries," yet the entire article is designed to convince us that ONLY these two categories of human beings are conceivable. Either you are a proletarian contributing "to keeping the workers in their place" through participating in trade unionism, etc.; or you are a "revolutionary" and "proceed with an isolated offensive," and *inevitably* (according to the writer) are killed for your trouble.

So first of all I would like to report that I have participated directly in revolutionary violence many times over this past decade, and am not dead. Not only that, but I know personally several other people who have done the same and also have not been struck dead. And I know indirectly of dozens more, still happily walking to and fro about the earth in spite of their numerous physical attacks on the corporate state.

Either the writer doesn't know what s/he is talking about in this respect; or the dire warnings are an attempt to make violence resistance seem impossible.

According to the article the only thing that's possible is to either become a collaborator with the capitalist labor movement, or go out and get killed by "placing yourself outside of the proletariat." (Or, apparently the only exception allowed: you can spend your time writing articles trying to convince people of the above.)

What about working in a factory, or office or mine or wherever for a living, and bombing/burning government/corporate buildings and installations for recreation?

What about robbing banks for a living and bombing/burning factories, offices and mines for recreation?

The "proletariat" will move when it will move; but meanwhile the possibilities for resisting (destroying, disrupting, exposing, harassing, etc.) the corporate state are virtually unlimited! They are limited only by one's own imagination, daring, and real desire to strike back.

It's my belief that most people who promote the idea that capital and government are invulnerable, do so for reasons far different than what they state: usually a fear of anything outside of "the law"—in spite of their claim

that they want to abolish all laws. This is probably not only a (very understandable) fear of injury, prison or death, but also the internalized repugnance at becoming a “criminal.”

The horrible consequences of “resisting the state” are extremely overdrawn. The writer is correct that failures of such attempts are “by far the most visible.” Successful attacks are usually ignored, and the acts that are concentrated on by the media (both establishment and “alternative”) are the ones where someone gets caught. Revolutionary media should pay more attention to successful everyday acts of resistance. And the perpetrators of such acts should take warning from the kinds of actions that get bolstered; for instance—hi-profile “guerrilla units” are much more vulnerable than anonymous attacks, and not necessarily any more effective physically or psychologically:

The possible dangers and hardships that can result from “illegal” acts against the rulers shouldn’t be minimized, but they shouldn’t be exaggerated either. At the very least, they will make you (and a lot of other people) feel good, and they are good experience for the day when they may become essential. As to their effectiveness in any other ways, who can say for sure?

Strong Arm Prisoners Collective,  
L.K.  
Terre Haute, Ind.

*Note:* The preceding opinion will appear in the next issue of *Antikrat*, an anarchist prison paper that will be published with the cooperation of No Limits, Box 2605 Madison WI 53701, sometime in May.

As is our general practice, unless requested differently by the writer, all letters from prisoners will appear with only initials in place of the signature.

## Some Action

Dear Friends:

Received the Jan 29 FE and enjoyed it. I’d like to make a few comments on the article “State-Fetishism.” As you stated, it leaves a big question unanswered. There are thousands of us who oppose the present system wholeheartedly and don’t subscribe to any particular political dogmas. Most take the attitude that due to the futility of struggling against the enormity of this oppressive, fascist cartel, it’s best to do nothing.

So they sit around collecting massive tomes about revolutions of the past, oblique political theories, and the confusing ramblings of the “intelligentsia” about revolutions of the future and don’t do a god-damn thing about the revolution of the present.

I’ve heard drivel about unity of the working class for years. Let’s examine that theory closely. Labor only serves capital and as long as capital exists, that’s all it will ever do. When labor in one industry wins a pay increase, capital immediately puts the cost back on the workers. The Marxist-Leninists and their various factions (Stalinists, Trotskyites, Maoists, etc.) are the first to scream about the repression and brutality of the police but let those same cops go on strike and zip, the commies are behind ‘em 100%. The strike gets settled, the cops get a raise and go back to busting heads and shooting kids. So much for working class unity.

The fact remains, the system exists and if you don’t oppose it, you support it. So I say if someone wants to be an urban guerrilla, or just write graffiti on walls, assassinate bosses, blow up condominiums or just piss in the court house fountain. They are at least taking some action. Of course, some actions have severe penalties including death. But one has to weigh the penalty against his/her hatred of the system. If it balances, let them do their own thing. It sure beats the hell out of the politics of inaction which most so-called revolutionaries are practicing now. Nuff said. My best to all at FE and keep up the good work.

For total revolution,  
JW,  
Fort Pillow State Farm  
Fort Pillow, Tenn.

## State Responsible

To The Fifth Estate:

Are guerrilla actions futile? The pessimistic view expressed in the introduction to the "State-Fetishism" article [FE #296, January 19, 1979] regarding such activity is not fully justified when one notes how a pro-system writer, David Wiley evaluates guerrilla warfare in the *Christian Science Monitor* of April 19, 1978: "The communique from the Red Brigade terrorists announcing the execution of former Prime Minister Aldo Moro threw the Italian government into temporary disarray...The political significance is clear: This has been a symbolic attack by the Red Brigades on the whole Christian Democratic political structure of the past 30 years...It has been particularly embarrassing for the Communists to be under attack by the Red Brigades..."

The original title of the article, "The Baader-Meinhof Gang," should have remained intact, instead of being changed to "State-Fetishism," as it showed a prejudicial approach towards the issues involved. The author begins his criticism by stating that: "The Red Army Faction...considered itself an advanced detachment of the 'proletariat,' who they thought would shortly take up arms every where, before launching a general assault." Factually, it was the W. German government's direct participation in support of the United State's bloody, imperialist intervention against the Vietnamese people that aroused students to stage peaceful protests, only to be met by brutal force and jailings. The students' response was just a return in kind. Wherever protests against injustice arise, it is always the state which initiates violence, a fact that critics of guerrilla warfare need to be reminded of.

The writer proceeds then to make an historical review of social events from the 'sixties down to the present: the rise of feminism, psychiatry, sexuality, etc. "This is referred to as a "kind of reformist vision of daily life," while overlooking the rise of communal life communities in various parts of Germany. Thus, the Red Army Faction showed not only what it was against, but what it is for.

"In their own way," states the critic, "the RAF brought up the question of the state...But by haphazardly quoting Bakunin, Pannekoek and Mao, their theory became a crazy-quilt in which they lost themselves." In many instances, radical students are first awakened by marxism, but upon noting what kind of a system marxian-ruled countries have established, begin to be disillusioned and hope to find something better in Maoism. Finally, they discover the ideas of anarchism. Calling this evolution "a crazy-quilt" only shows the critic's bias.

Reforms, political action and trade unions do contribute towards the continuation of the present system, but when the critic asserts that: "To progressively eat away the enemy's strength, meant, therefore to kill police officers and scare the bourgeoisie. A good example of fetishism of the State!"—he is making a most slanderous libel that one would expect of the ordinary vicious mouthpieces of the present system. Proceeding in the same vein, he asserts, "Capital's strength does not lie (primarily) in the cops or its army, but in the social dynamic which makes wage earners, especially in countries like West Germany, participate in the perpetuation of the system."

The deliberate distortion here lies in the critic's leaving out the "social dynamic" forces that makes this situation possible: the poisoning of children's minds in schools, churches, as they grow up, and the distortions of truth by the press, radio, and television as to the manifold crimes the system carries out. Regarding the slanderous assertion "to kill police officers," it is sufficient to point out that in any workers' strike or other protest against the system's acts of injustice, carried out in a peaceful manner, it is promptly reacted to by the system's henchmen with clubbing, jailing and murder. The protesters have no other choice but to retaliate in kind. To follow the course of pacifism, implied by the critic, is to assure the undisturbed continuance of the system's injustices.

Underground activities against the system do bring on more repressive laws, but at the same time it exposes statism in more ways than one. The technological horse upon which capitalist and marxist rulerships have been riding high, stands now exposed as guilty of poisoning the air we breathe, the water we drink and the food we eat. Their final diabolical strength lies in the deadly designed machines and chemicals which threaten to destroy most of mankind. And to those who still believe that there is any difference between capitalist governments and marxian ones, the Chinese marxists unleashing war upon the Vietnamese marxists must now realize the futility of such trust.

It is against every form of Statism that there always will arise the people most sensitive to injustice who will carry on underground activities until such time when the great masses too begin to realize why Statism and all

its institutions must be brought to a long overdue end. Then the building of safe and humane societies can be inaugurated.

Marcus Graham

## Wrench Thrown

5<sup>th</sup> Estate:

One of my crime partners just sent me a copy of the article “State-Fetishism” which appeared in your publication. As an imprisoned member of the people’s forces, convicted of “revolutionary violence,” a la bombings of corporate state institutions, I disagree with the main thrust of the article. Armed struggle is not futile; I believe that it is one of the most effective ways in combating government terrorism.

For the past 39 months, I’ve heard this type of bullshit that our actions caused too much repression, that it was only “useful to the would-be state.” When they got us in the concentration camps, you’ll be talking about not resisting, because it’ll only make it worse!

Sure, they’re a whole lot of us dead, who had rather died on their feet, than to live a life of submission on their knees. I refuse to believe that their deaths were futile, and as long as the corporate state is in power, and for as long as I live, you can expect my wrench to be thrown into their machinery!

For the Duration,

JR

Lompoc, Calif.

## No Joy In FE

Dear *Fifth Estate*:

I call myself an anarchist. As to your decision not to use such a label, fine with me. You are what you do—not what you say you are. This especially goes for anarchists (self-labeled).

I like the style of your paper. Except for one thing. So negative. I know there is much anger but still, you know I can’t remember a positive life-affirming article in the *Fifth Estate* (like on gardening, lovemaking, eating, birthing, building houses, smoking dope, etc.).

I know “the urge to destroy is a creative urge” but I also feel that one should “distrust sad people—the revolution is joy.”

Solidarity,

C.G.,

Palo Alto, Cal

## Finest Hour

Dear FE Collective:

You are best, as is most of humanity, when least serious. As a shut-in and semi-invalid, I eagerly await the mailman’s drop of your paper. However, I would hope that you will tone down this anti-art campaign lest you incite more lunatics of the ilk that hammered away at the *Pietà* and slashed *Nightwatch*. This is nothing less than the most atrocious vandalism.

Indeed, humanity’s finest hour may be found in its art—the only criterion being whether ‘tis good or bad. These days my life has been brightened by *A Rockwell Portrait: An Intimate Biography*, a book I heartily recommend to your readership.

God Bless You All,

Rev. Noble J Nassar

## Lunchtime

Dear FE:  
Refusing mutual aid?... That S.F. diners club is really out to lunch!  
V.T. Lee  
Rosendale NY

## Aaahoo!

Dear Hearts:

As Editor-in-Chief of *SRAFBullshit* and Mandated-and-Revocable-Delegate (Responsible-to-the-Base) of North Amerika's only all-inclusive Anarchist organization, in response to the apparent "veritable split" in the schismatic Anarchist-Communist Federation, paraphrasing my anarcho-Christian comrades I can only say—a plague on both their houses! We in SRAF avoid such sectarianism (without, of course, taking a stand against sectarianism, or anything else). Instead, we agree to disagree, or, as my anarcho-capitalist comrades say, "laissez-faire!"

I once read in a book that Anarchists tolerate anything, since they tolerate each other. (It was a real hard book.)

For us liberalartarians, diversity is natural, coherence and lucidity are abhorrent—as Bakunin (or somebody) once said, let a hundred flowers bloom. We anarchists revere nothing—except of course, our own martyrology. As Alexander Berkman once observed, the only dead Anarchist is a good Anarchist. Let it all hang, as Louis Lingg once remarked. If your star is red, this is your last issue...

Salud! Gesundheit!  
Jim Bumpkin  
Mons Veneris, CA

## Book Trashers I

Dear Fifth Estate,

Something's up with the *Fifth Estate*, but you're not talking about it. Small changes—in your staff (what happened to the Zerkans?), your department headings (thank you for no longer pretending books are bullets), and your line (the 14<sup>th</sup> anniversary announcement makes you sound like an institution, let alone an "organization")—do they portend some deeper inner struggle?

But the piece on the Wooden Shoe Trashing in particular [FE # 296, January 29, 1979] strikes me as dishonest—a real break with the past, but an attempt to appear consistent. The Wooden Shoe Bookstore Trashers are only some of your own little chickens coming (a little too close to) home to roost. These folks acted consistently with the principles you declared during the controversy with Black Rose Books, namely, anyone who sells a commodity (co-operatively produced, for "movement" purposes, or whatever) is no better than any other capitalist, and may be dealt with accordingly ("all's fair in war").

This is precisely the argument the trashers put forward in their pamphlet, which was shown to me by one of their accomplices recently. The disclaimer that you, Black & Red, (and perhaps Wooden Shoe) stand behind—that your publications aren't really commodities because you don't sell them for pay or profit—may be morally inspiring, but doesn't stop the book from being a commodity "confronting" me when I buy it. This is almost as ridiculous as your claim that the FE is not really an "organization".

The ultra-violence of your rhetoric on the Black Rose issue, and many other times when you have strong disagreement with someone might lead a literal minded or impressionable reader to believe you think execution is only too good for such scum—though of course that's not for you to carry out, but as a Spart once said in reference to me—"The armed workers will deal with them!" So what's with preaching to these trashers that "an appropriate response...would be separation and denunciation, not the totalitarian act committed...?"

Propaganda of the Deed finds its reasons in Terrorism of the Word, and it's no great distance from wishing someone a speedy death to a mere act of vandalism. And why do you refuse to reveal the identities of the trashers and assume "power over who should be publicly ostracized and scorned—a power you have never refused before, indeed, one that is part of publishing a newspaper? And then you give us an address so that we can write and learn the names of the nasty trashers anyway! You're obviously trying to straddle the fence on an issue that exposes your own contradictions.

Like I told the trasher-accomplice who visited me recently, if you keep on with this left trip, someday you're going to settle down with your own little personal non-commodity-whatever-group and find that someone is on your left, denouncing you as a pig. When they do, you have no right to demand they treat you any better than you treated Wooden Shoe. That someday has almost come for the FE, as it must to us all; sorry, but you haven't dropped "off the scale" of the left yet, there's always room left. But no one keeps running left forever, sooner or later you get forced into taking a stand. You try to realize some of your ideas into life. We can't avoid conflict, but we can stop pretending that everyone with positions different than our own must be a hypocrite.

Although I think the trashing was a sneaky chicken-shit way to deal with political differences, I have to agree with the trasher who demanded your paper show more emotional honesty. Understand, I think you're right to denounce the trashing and right not to print the names, but you're not being open about your reasons. Pat the Rat isn't the only one nowadays who's backing off from the consequences of nihilist rhetoric.

Jim Stodder  
New Orleans

## Book Trashers II

Dear Friends,

I'm a bit confused by your stand with Wooden Shoe over the trashing. It seems to be somewhat of a reversal of your criticisms of so-called libertarian business brought forward in the Black Rose Affair. After reading the "vandals" communique, I initially supported the trashing but my knowledge of W.S.'s activity was through the vandals and now I'm waiting to hear from W.S. before I draw any conclusions.

Also, your comments pertaining to the accused person at the end of the W.S. article seemed a bit spectacular. Her critique is sometimes irrational/i.e. personalized papers (she also harangued us about personalizing leaflets!) but using phrases like she called in a "frenzy" was a bit spectacular. I feel that part could have been approached differently.

Best,  
Greg Jamrock  
Madison, Wis.

## Be Positive

Dear Friends:

I receive your paper from a friend in Boulder, Colorado. We both enjoy your salty approach to the problems of hierarchical society. After all, if we can't win with humor, we can't win. Unlike some anarchist publications, you do not rest upon the laurels of the "heroes" of the past (Bakunin, Goldman, the Haymarket martyrs, etc.). Some of the idolatry of these figures (great though they may have been) reminds me of the father-figure worship of Maoism, Trotskyism, Stalinism, and so on.

As a hopefully constructive criticism, I would like to see you develop more of a vision of the future, e.g., how do anarchist principles concretely apply to social change in Detroit? Also, pay less attention to the doings of the left splinter sects (they aren't going anywhere anyway) and the Pope. Of course, the Pope is no friend of liberation; no question there, but I feel we'll get further along if we accentuate the positive: people will look more at our achievements than at our negations.

Your cultural critiques are insightful. Your exposure of the decadence of the art world, support for punk, for alternative comics and graphics, are all very good. Keep this up and link it to developments toward a New Society constantly.

In Solidarity,  
Jay D. Jurie  
Prairie Point, Miss.

## Anarcho-tripe

Dear FE:

I just got done checking through a few back issues and felt like I should comment on a point or two. So here goes a little left-wing Anarchist tripe.

A lot of flack seems to be coming down on Amelia Jones because of some of her ideas. The idea of a “home base,” for instance. After some of the incidents in this country, like the L.A. Massacre (note: of the SLA), it should be apparent that we do need such a base. Not only would it serve the obvious purpose of a base for planning our actions, but it would also be a necessary area for R & R, a safe place to raise the next generation of Free People, and a great experiment in left-wing structure.

Amelia, if you’re still looking for help, drop me a line and we’ll see what we can do about it.

As for anonymous communiques... Why tell the Forces of Evil anything? A communique, even when properly constructed to confuse the issue, is still a lead that, combined with other bits of information, eventually leads to the identification of the party issuing it. Sometimes it is best just to let them wonder who, why and what next.

There seems to be a bit of factionalism rooted in the Anarchist movement today. Anarchists are, by definition, Feminists because they believe in individual sovereignty. Anything that usurps this is anti-people.

Many of the people writing in seem to be taking a stand against the free expression of emotion. Many of the criticisms seem to be drawn up along emotional lines—name calling, the “more radical than thou” writer. We are emotional. Anyone trying to deny this in themselves is either deceiving themselves or attempting to turn themselves into a Mr Spock, computer freak.

It is my opinion that we need to develop a wide variety of activities. A base, education, research, weapons technology, etc. Not one base, but several. Not one-subject education, but a well-rounded program. Not guns only or bombs only, but as complete a program of weapons as we can put together.

I hope to be getting out of this prison this summer, but I have learned a few interesting things here. One, prison ain’t no big thing. Sure, it’s boring and some idiot might do you in for petty reasons, but what’s the big thing? A person gets used to anything after a while. Two, I must have done something right against the State, so prison is the highest compliment the System has given me in the entire 30 years I’ve been around it. Thanks, guys.

In prison you can learn all sorts of tactics and “business procedures.” You learn first-hand the extent of the System’s games. You learn to identify the pig and snake quickly. You discover what a tight bro really is. You also find out how the LAW works and how to use it against the State. You learn to survive and thrive on what few things you are allowed to have.

And to all those would-be revolutionaries out there...The only way we can win is to be a complete person. You have to be Heaven and Hell. Treat a friend like they are the only one there is. Build a world of all good things around and with them. Give the enemy Hell. Be the worst plague that ever descended on them. Maybe we can’t go for the main vein right now, but we sure can hamstring the monster.

Gods and masters die, but “I” remain forever.

In love and rage,

JB,

Anarchist Black Dragon Collective

Walla Walla, WA.

# fifth Estate

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