Anarchism: The Feminist Connection

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When I was growing up in a small town in Illinois in the 1960s, I had never heard of the word *anarchism* at all. As for socialism and communism, my history classes conveyed the message that there was no difference between them and fascism, a word that brought to mind Hitler, concentration camps, and all kinds of horrible things that could never happen in a "free" country like ours. It took me years to recognize the bias and distortion that had shaped my entire education. The "his-story" of mankind (white) had meant just that; as a woman, I was relegated to a vicarious existence. Anarchists had no existence at all. A whole chunk of the past (and thus possibilities for the future) had been kept from me. Only recently did I discover that many of my disconnected political impulses and inclinations shared a common framework: the anarchist tradition of thought.

Emma Goldman furnished me with my first definition of anarchism: *Anarchism, then really stands for the liberation of the human mind from the dominion of religion; the liberation of the human body from the dominion of property; liberation from the shackles and restraint of government. Anarchism stands for a social order based on the free grouping of individuals for the purpose of producing real social wealth, an order that will guarantee to every human being free access to the earth and full enjoyment of the necessities of life, according to individual desires, tastes, and inclinations*.[1]

Soon, I started to notice similarities between anarchism and radical feminism. I began to write about it as a way of communicating to others the excitement I felt about anarcha-feminism. It seems crucial that we in the women's movement share our thoughts with one another to break down some of the barriers that splinterism can raise between us. I don't see my life as separate from those of other women. In fact, one of my strongest convictions is that we *do* share an incredible commonality of vision. My own participation in this vision is not to offer definitive answers but rather possibilities and connections, which I hope will bounce around among us and contribute to a continual process of individual and collective growth and evolution.

What Does Anarchism Really Mean?

Anarchism has been maligned and misinterpreted for so long that perhaps the most important thing to begin with is an explanation of what it is and isn't. The most prevalent stereotype of the anarchist is a malevolent-looking man hiding a lighted bomb beneath a black cape, ready to destroy or assassinate everything and everybody. This image engenders fear and revulsion in most people, regardless of their politics. Consequently, anarchism is dismissed as ugly, violent, and extreme. Another misconception is the anarchist as impractical idealist, dealing in useless, utopian abstractions and out of touch with concrete reality. The result: anarchism is once again dismissed—this time as an impossible dream.

Neither of these images is accurate. The anarchists I know are nonviolent and very committed to creating a concrete and real "utopia." Not all anarchists are identical, of course, so I'll define anarchism here using three major principles (each of which can be related to a radical feminist analysis of society):

1. *Elimination of authority and hierarchy.* Anarchists call for the dissolution (rather than the seizure) of power—of human over human, of state over community. Whereas many socialists call for a working class government and an eventual "withering away of the state," anarchists believe that the means create the ends, that a strong state becomes self-perpetuating. The only way to achieve anarchism (according to anarchist theory) is through the creation of co-operative, anti-authoritarian forms. To separate the process from the goals of revolutionary change is to insure the perpetuation of oppressive structure and style.

2. *Balance between individuality and collectivity.* Individuality is not incompatible with collectivity. A distinction should be made, though, between "rugged individualism," which fosters competition and a disregard for the needs of others, and true individuality, which is freedom without infringement on others' freedom. This means balancing individual initiative with collective action through the creation of structures that enable decision-making to rest in the hands of all those in a group, community, or workplace, not in the hands of representatives or leaders. It also means coordination and action via a non-hierarchical network (overlapping circles rather than a pyramid) of small groups or communities. Finally, it means that successful revolutionary change involves autonomous individuals and groups working together to take "direct, unmediated control of society and of their own lives."[2]

3. *Balance between spontaneity and organization.* Anarchists have long been accused of advocating chaos. Most people in fact believe that anarchism is a synonym for disorder and violence. This is a total misrepresentation of what anarchism stands for. Anarchists don't deny the necessity of organization; they only say that it should emerge organically from the process of the group or collective itself. Externally imposed structure or rigid rules that foster manipulation and passivity are the most dangerous forms revolutionary change can take. No one can dictate the exact shape of the future. Spontaneous action within the context of a specific situation is necessary if we are going to create a society that responds to the changing needs of individuals and groups. Anarchists believe in fluid forms: small-scale participatory democracy in conjunction with large-scale collective cooperation and coordination (without loss of individual initiative).

So anarchism sounds great, but how could it possibly work? That kind of utopian romanticism couldn't have any relation to the real world, right? Wrong. Anarchists have been successful (if only temporarily) in a number of instances (none of which is very well known). Spain and France, in particular, have long histories of anarchist activity, and it was in these two countries that I found actual concretizations of theoretical anarchism.

Beyond Theory: Spain 1936–39, France 1968

The Spanish Civil War is popularly believed to have been a simple battle between Franco's fascist forces and those committed to liberal democracy. What has

been overlooked, or ignored, is that much more was happening in Spain than civil war. A broadly based social revolution adhering to anarchist principles was taking concrete form in many areas of the country. The gradual curtailment and eventual destruction of this movement is less important to discuss here than what was actually achieved by the women and men who were part of it. Against tremendous odds, they made anarchism work.

The realization of anarchist collectivization and workers' self-management during the Spanish Revolution provides a classic example of organization-plus-spontaneity. In both rural and industrial Spain, anarchism had been a part of the popular consciousness for many years. In the countryside, the people had a long tradition of communalism; many villages still shared common property or gave plots of land to those without any. Decades of rural collectivism and cooperation laid the foundation for theoretical anarchism, which came to Spain in the 1870s (via the Italian revolutionary Fanelli) and eventually gave rise to anarcho-syndicalism, the application of anarchist principles to industrial trade unionism.

The *Confederacion National del Trebajo*, founded in 1910, was the anarcho-syndicalist union that provided instruction and preparation for workers' self-management and collectivization. Tens of thousands of books, newspapers, and pamphlets reaching almost every part of Spain contributed to an even greater general knowledge of anarchist thought. The anarchist principles of non-hierarchical cooperation and individual initiative combined with anarcho-syndicalist tactics of boycott, general strike, and training in production and economics gave the workers background in both theory and practice. This led to a successful spontaneous appropriation of both factories and land after July 1936.

When the Spanish right responded to the electoral victory of the Popular Front with an attempted military takeover on July 19, 1936, the people fought back with a fury that checked the coup within 24 hours. At this point, ballot box success became incidental; total social revolution had begun. While the industrial workers either went on strike or actually began to run the factories themselves, the agricultural workers ignored landlords and started to cultivate the land on their own. Within a short time, over 60% of the land in Spain was worked collectively—without landlords, bosses, or competitive incentive. Industrial collectivization took place mainly in the province of Catalonia, where anarcho-syndicalist influence was strongest. Since 75% of Spain's industry was located in Catalonia, this was no small achievement. After years of preparation and struggle, collectivization was achieved, through the spontaneous collective action of individuals dedicated to libertarian principles.

What, though, did collectivization actually mean, and how did it work? In general, the anarchist collectives functioned on two levels: (1) small-scale participatory democracy and (2) large-scale coordination with control at the base. At each level, the main concern was decentralization and individual initiative. In the factories and villages, representatives were chosen to councils that operated as administrative or coordinating bodies. Decisions always came from more general membership meetings, which all workers attended. To guard against the dangers of representation, representatives were workers themselves, and at all times subject to immediate, as well as periodic, replacement.

These councils were the basic units of self-management. From there, they could be expanded by further coordination into loose federations that would link together workers and operations over an entire industry or geographical area. In this way, distribution and sharing of goods could be performed, as well as implementation of programs such as irrigation, transportation, and communication. This very tricky balance between individuality and collectivism was most successfully accomplished by the Peasant Federation of Levant, which included 900 collectives, and the Aragon Federation of Collectives, composed of 500 collectives.

Probably the most important aspect of self-management was the equalization of wages. This took many forms, but frequently the family-wage system was used, wages being paid to each worker in money or coupons according to her/his needs and those of dependents. Goods in abundance were distributed freely, while others were obtainable with "money." The benefits that came from wage equalization were tremendous. After huge profits in the hands of a few men were eliminated, the excess money was used both to modernize industry (purchase of new equipment, better working conditions) and to improve the land (irrigation, dams, purchase of tractors). Not only were better products turned out more efficiently, but consumer prices were lowered as well. This was true in such varied industries as textiles, metals, gas, water, electricity, baking, fishing, municipal transportation, railroads, telephone services, optical products, and health services.

The workers themselves benefited from a shortened work week, better working conditions, free health care, unemployment pay, and a new pride in their work. Creativity was fostered by self-management and the spirit of mutual aid. Workers wanted to turn out products that were better than those turned out under conditions of labor exploitation to demonstrate that competition and greed motives are unnecessary. Within months, the standard of living had been raised by anywhere from 50–100% in many areas of Spain.

The achievements of the Spanish anarchists go beyond a higher standard of living and economic equality; they involve the realization of basic human ideals: freedom, individual creativity, and collective cooperation. The Spanish anarchist collectives did not fail; they were destroyed from without. Those (of the right and left) who believed in a strong state worked to wipe them out—of Spain and history. The successful anarchism of roughly eight million Spanish people is only now beginning to be uncovered.[3]

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Anarchism has played an important part in French history, but rather than delve into the distant past, I want to focus on a more recent event: May–June 1968. The 1968 events have particular significance because they proved that a general strike and takeover of the factories by the workers, and the universities by the students, could happen in a modern, capitalist, consumption-oriented country. In addition, the issues raised by the students and workers in France (e.g., self-determination, the quality of life) cut across class lines and have tremendous implications for the possibility of revolutionary change in contemporary society.[4]

On March 22, 1968, students at the University of Nanterre occupied administrative buildings at their school, calling for an end to both the Vietnam War and their own oppression as students. (Their demands were similar to those of

students from Berkeley to Berlin protesting *in loco parentis*.) The University was closed down, and the demonstrations spread to the Sorbonne. The SNESUP (the union of secondary school and university teachers) called for a strike, and the students' union, the UNEF, organized a demonstration for May 6. That day, students and police clashed in the Latin Quarter in Paris; the demonstrators built barricades in the streets, and many were brutally beaten by the riot police.

By May 7, the number of protesters had grown to between 20,000 and 50,000 people, marching together and singing the Internationale. During the next few days, skirmishes between demonstrators and police in the Latin Quarter became increasingly violent, and the public was generally outraged at the police repression. Talks between labor unions and teachers' and students' unions began, and the UNEF and the FEN (a teachers' union) called for an unlimited strike and demonstration. On May 13, around 600,000 people—students, teachers, and workers—marched through Paris in protest.

On that same day, the workers at the Sud-Aviation plant in Nantes (a city with the strongest anarcho-syndicalist tendencies in France) went out on strike.[5] It was this action that touched off the general strike, the largest in history, including ten million workers—"professionals and laborers, intellectuals and football players."[6] Banks, post offices, gas stations, and department stores closed; the subway and buses stopped running; and trash piled up as the garbage collectors joined the strike. The Sorbonne was occupied by students, teachers, and anyone who wanted to come and participate in discussions there. Political dialogues that questioned the vary basis of French capitalist society went on for days.

All over Paris, posters and graffiti appeared: *It is forbidden to forbid. Life without dead times. All power to the Imagination. The more you consume, the less you live.* May–June became both an "assault on the established order" and a "festival of the streets."[7] Old lines between the middle and working classes became meaningless as the younger workers and the students found themselves making similar demands: liberation from an oppressive authoritarian system (university or factory) and the right to make decisions about their own lives.

The people of France stood on the brink of total revolution. A general strike had paralyzed the country. The students occupied the universities, and the workers occupied the factories. What remained to be done was for the workers to actually *work* the factories, to take direct unmediated action and settle for nothing less than total self-management. Unfortunately, this did not occur. Authoritarian politics and bureaucratic methods die hard, and most of the major French workers' unions were saddled with both. As in Spain, the Communist Party worked against the direct, spontaneous actions of the people in the streets: it believed the Revolution must be dictated from above. Leaders of the CGT (the Communist workers' union) tried to prevent contacts between the students and workers, and a united coalition soon became impossible.

As President de Gaulle and the police mobilized their forces and even greater violence broke out, many strikers accepted limited demands (better pay, shorter hours) and returned to work. Students continued their increasingly bloody confrontations with police, but the moment had passed. By the end of June, France had returned to "normal" under the same old Gaullist regime.

What happened in France in 1968 has many similarities to the Spanish Revolution of 1936. In both cases, anarchist principles were not only discussed but implemented. The fact that the French workers never achieved working self-management may be because anarcho-syndicalism was not as prevalent in France in the years prior to 1968 as it was in Spain before 1936. Of course, this is an over-simplification. What is crucial here, however, is the fact that it happened at all. May–June 1968 disproved the common belief that a revolutionary movement is impossible in an advanced capitalist country.

The children of the French middle and working classes, conditioned to passivity, mindless consumerism, and/or alienated labor, were rejecting much more than capitalism. They were questioning authority itself, demanding the right to a free and *meaningful* existence. The reasons for revolutionary change in modern society are thus no longer limited to hunger and material scarcity; they include the desire for human liberation from all forms of domination, in essence a radical change in the very "quality of everyday life."[8] They assume the necessity of a free non-hierarchical society. Anarchism can no longer be considered an anachronism.

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There are two main reasons why revolution was aborted in France: (1) inadequate preparation in the theory and practice of anarchism and (2) the vast power of the state coupled with authoritarianism and bureaucracy in potentially sympathetic left-wing groups. In Spain, the revolution was more widespread and tenacious because of the extensive preparation. Yet it was still eventually crushed by a fascist state and authoritarian leftists. It is important to consider these two factors in relation to the situation in the United States today.

We are not only facing a powerful state whose armed forces, police, and nuclear weapons could instantly destroy the entire human race, but we also find ourselves confronting a pervasive reverence for authority and hierarchical forms whose continuance is bolstered within the family, school, church, and media. In addition, the U.S. is a huge country, with only a small, sporadic history of anarchist activity. It would seem that not only are we unprepared, we are literally dwarfed by a state more powerful than those of France and Spain combined. To say we are up against tremendous odds is an understatement.

But where does defining the opposition as a ruthless, unconquerable giant lead us? If we don't allow ourselves to be paralyzed by fatalism and futility, it could force us to redefine revolutionary change in a way that would focus on anarcha-feminism as the framework in which to view the process of human liberation. It is women who now hold the key, women who realize that "revolution" can no longer mean the seizure of power or the domination of one group by another—under *any* circumstances, for *any* length of time. *It is domination itself that must be abolished.* The very survival of the planet depends on it.

Patriarchal structures and institutions can no longer be allowed to wantonly manipulate the environment for selfish interests, just as they can no longer be allowed to systematically destroy whole races of human beings. The presence of hierarchy and authoritarian mind-set threaten our human and planetary existence. Global liberation and anarchist politics have become *necessary*, not just utopian pipe dreams. We must "acquire the conditions of life in order to survive."[9]

To focus on anarcha-feminism as the framework for these changes is not to deny the immensity of the task before us. We see the root causes of our oppression and the tremendous power of those who block change. But we also see that the way out of the historical cycle of incomplete social revolutions requires new definitions and new tactics—ones that point to a kind of "hollowing out" process from within the belly of the beast.[10] As women, we are particularly well-suited for this. Underground for ages, we have learned to be covert, subtle, tenacious, acutely sensitive, and expert at communication skills. For our own survival, we learned to weave webs of rebellion that were invisible to the "masterful" eye.

Anarchistic preparation is not nonexistent in this country. It exists in the minds and actions of women readying themselves (often unknowingly) for the kind of revolutionary change that will shatter historical inevitability and the very process of history itself.

Anarchism and the Women's Movement

The development of sisterhood is a unique threat, for it is directed against the basic social and psychic model of hierarchy and domination.—Mary Daly[11]

I have not touched on women's role in Spain and France, as it can be summed up in one word—unchanged. Anarchist men have not effectively addressed the subjection of women.[12] Thus the absolute necessity of feminist-anarchist revolutionary change. Otherwise, the very principles on which anarchism is based become utter hypocrisy.

The current women's movement and a radical feminist analysis of society have contributed much to anarchist thought, In fact, I believe that feminists have been unconscious anarchists in both theory and practice for years. We now need to become *consciously* aware of the connection between anarchism and feminism and use that framework for our thoughts and actions. We have to be able to see very clearly where we want to go and how to get there. In order to be more effective, in order to create the future we sense is possible, we must realize that what we want is total *transformation*.

The radical feminist perspective is almost pure anarchism. The basic theory postulates the nuclear family as the basis for all authoritarian systems. The lesson the child learns, from parent to teacher to boss to God, is to obey the great anonymous voice of Authority. To graduate from childhood to adulthood is to become a full-fledged automaton, incapable of really questioning or even thinking clearly. We pass into middle America, believing everything we are told and numbly accepting the destruction of life all around us.

The patriarchal domineering attitude toward the external world allows only subject/object relationships. Traditional politics reduces humans to object status and then dominates and manipulates them for abstract goals. Women, on the other hand, are trying to develop a consciousness of others in all areas. We see subject-to-subject relationships as not only desirable but necessary. Together we are working to expand our empathy for and understanding of other living beings, rather than objectifying and manipulating them. At this point, a respect for all life is a prerequisite for our very survival.

Radical feminist theory also criticizes hierarchical thought patterns in which rationality dominates sensuality, logic dominates intuition, and persistent splits and polarities (active/passive, child/adult, work/play, spontaneity/organization) alienate us from the mind-body experience as a *whole* and from the *continuum* of human experience. Women are attempting to dissolve these splits, to live in harmony with the universe as whole, integrated humans dedicated to the collective healing of our individual wounds and schisms.

In actual practice within the women's movement, feminists have had both success and failure in abolishing hierarchy and domination. Women frequently speak and act as intuitive anarchists—we *approach*, or *verge on*, a complete reversal of all patriarchal thought and organization. That approach, however, is blocked by the powerful and insidious forms that hierarchy takes—in our minds and in our relationships with one another. Living within and being conditioned by an authoritarian society often prevents us from making that all-important connection between feminism and anarchism.

When we say we want to overturn the patriarchy, it isn't always clear that that means *all* hierarchy, *all* leadership, and the very idea of authority itself. Our impulses toward collective work and small leaderless groups have been anarchistic, but in most cases we haven't *called* them by that name. And that is important, because an understanding of feminism as anarchism could springboard women out of reformism and stopgap measures into confrontation with the basic nature of authoritarian politics.

If we want the end of patriarchy, we need to talk about anarchism, to know exactly what it means, and to use that framework to transform ourselves and the structure of our daily lives. Often feminism gets diluted to mean female corporate power or a woman President. Anarcha-feminism calls for *no* corporate power and *no* Presidents. An Equal Rights Amendment will not transform society; it only gives women the "right" to plug into a hierarchical economy. Challenging sexism means challenging *all* hierarchy—economic, political, and personal.

Specifically, when have feminists been anarchistic, and when have we stopped short? As the second wave of feminism spread across the country in the early 1970s, the forms that women's groups took frequently reflected an unspoken anarchist consciousness. In rebellion against the competitive power games, impersonal hierarchy, and mass organization tactics of male politics, women broke off into small, leaderless, consciousness-raising (CR) groups that dealt with personal issues in our daily lives.

Face-to-face, we attempted to get at the root cause of our oppression by sharing our hitherto unvalued perceptions and experiences. We learned from each other that politics is not "out there" but in our minds and bodies and between individuals. Personal relationships could and did oppress us as a political class. Our misery and self-hatred were often a direct result of male domination—at home, in the street, on the job, and within political organizations.

So, in many unconnected areas of the United States, C-R groups developed as a spontaneous, direct (re)action to patriarchal forms. The emphasis on the small group as a basic organizational unit, the personal as political, anti-authoritarianism,

and spontaneous direct action was essentially anarchistic. But, where were the years of preparation that sparked the Spanish revolutionary activities?

The structure of women's groups bore a striking resemblance to that of anarchist affinity groups within anarcho-syndicalist unions in Spain, France, and many other countries. Yet, we had not called ourselves anarchists and consciously organized around anarchist principles. At the time, we did not even have an underground network of communication and idea-and-skill sharing. Before the women's movement was more than a handful of isolated groups groping in the dark toward answers, anarchism as an unspecified ideal existed in our minds.

I believe that this puts women in the unique position of being the bearers of a subsurface anarchist consciousness that if articulated and concretized can take us further than any previous group toward the achievement of total revolutionary transformation. Women's intuitive anarchism, if sharpened and clarified, is an incredible leap forward (or beyond) in the movement toward human liberation. Radical feminist theory calls feminism the ultimate revolution. This is true if, and only if, we recognize and claim our anarchist roots. It is time to stop groping in the dark and see what we have done and are doing in the context of where we want to ultimately be.

C-R groups were a good beginning, but they often got so bogged down in talking about personal problems that they failed to make the jump to direct action and political activism. Groups that did organize around a specific issue or project sometimes found that the "tyranny of structurelessness" could be as destructive as the "tyranny of tyranny."[13] The failure to blend organization with spontaneity frequently caused the emergence of those with more skills or personal charisma as leaders. The resentment and frustration felt by those who found themselves "following" sparked in-fighting, guilt-tripping, and power struggles. Too often this ended in either total ineffectiveness or a backlash adherence to "what we need is more structure" (in the old up/down sense of the word).

Once again, I think that what was missing was a verbalized anarchist analysis. Organization does not have to stifle spontaneity or follow hierarchical patterns. The women's groups or projects that have been the most successful are those that experimented with various fluid structures: the rotation of tasks and chairpersons, sharing of all skills, equal access to information and resources, non-monopolized decision-making, and time slots for discussion of group dynamics. This latter structural element is important because it involves a continued effort on the part of group members to watch for "creeping power politics."

If women are verbally committing themselves to collective work, this requires a real effort to unlearn passivity (to eliminate "followers") and to share special skins or knowledge (to avoid "leaders"). This doesn't mean that we cannot be inspired by one another's words and lives; strong actions by strong individuals can be contagious and thus important. But we must be careful not to slip into old behavior patterns.

On the positive side, the emerging structure of the women's movement in the last few years has generally followed an anarchistic pattern of small project-oriented groups continually weaving an underground network of communication and collective action around specific issues. Partial success at leader/"star"

avoidance and the diffusion of small action projects (rape crisis centers, women's health collectives) across the country have made it extremely difficult for the women's movement to be pinned down to one person or group. Feminism is a many-headed hydra that cannot be destroyed by singular decapitation. We spread and grow in ways that are incomprehensible to a hierarchical mentality.

This is not, however, to underestimate the immense power of the opposition. The most treacherous form this power can take is cooptation, which feeds on any shortsighted view of feminism as mere "social change." To think of sexism as an evil that can be eradicated by female participation in "the way things are" is to insure the continuation of domination and oppression. "Feminist" capitalism is a contradiction in terms. When we establish women's credit unions, restaurants, bookstores, etc., we must be clear that we are doing so for our own survival, for the purpose of creating a counter-system with processes that contradict and challenge all forms of economic oppression.

What we want is nothing less than total revolutionary transformation, the invention of a future untainted by inequity, domination, or disrespect for individual variation—in short, feminist anarchism. I believe that women have known all along how to move in the direction of human liberation; we only need to shake off lingering patriarchal political forms and dictums and focus on our own anarcha-feminist analysis.

Where Do We Go From Here? Making Utopia Real

Instead of getting discouraged and isolated now, we should be in our small groups—discussing, planning, creating... we should always be actively engaging in and creating feminist activity, because we all thrive on it.—Cathy Levine[14]

Those who lived through the excitement of sit-ins, marches, student strikes, demonstrations, and Revolution Now in the late 1960s may find themselves disillusioned and downright cynical about anything happening in the 1970s. Giving up or in seems easier than facing the prospect of decades of struggle and maybe even ultimate failure. At this point, we lack an overall framework to see the process of revolutionary change in. Without it, we are doomed to dead-ended, isolated struggle. The kind of framework, or coming-together-point, that anarcha-feminism provides appears to be a prerequisite for any sustained effort to reach utopian goals.

By looking at Spain and France, we can see that true revolution is "neither an accidental happening nor a coup d'état artificially engineered from above."[15] It takes years of preparation: sharing of ideas and information, changes in consciousness and behavior, and the creation of political and economic alternatives to hierarchical structures. It takes spontaneous direct action on the part of autonomous individuals through collective political activism. It is important to "free your mind" and your personal life, but it is not sufficient. Liberation is not an insular experience; it occurs in conjunction with other human beings. There are no individual "liberated women."

What I'm talking about is a *long-term process*, a series of actions in which we unlearn passivity and learn to take control over our own lives. A hollowing out of the present system through the creation of mental and physical alternatives to the way things are. The image of a small band of armed guerrillas overthrowing the U.S. government is obsolete and basically irrelevant to this conception of revolutionary

change. We would be squashed if we tried it. Besides, as the poster says, "What we want is not the overthrow of the government, but a situation in which it gets lost in the shuffle." This is what happened (temporarily) in Spain, and almost happened in France. What I'm emphasizing here is the preparation needed to transform society, a preparation that includes an anarcha-feminist framework, long-range patience, and continual activism that challenges entrenched patriarchal attitudes.

The actual tactics of preparation are things that we have been involved with for a long time. We need to continue and develop them further. I see them as functioning on three possible levels: (1) educational (sharing of ideas, experiences), (2) economic/political, and (3) personal/political.

"Education" has a rather condescending ring to it, but I don't mean "bringing the word to the masses" or guilt-tripping individuals into prescribed ways of being. I'm talking about the many ways we have developed for sharing our lives with one another—from writing (our network of feminist publications), study groups, and women's radio and TV shows to demonstrations, marches, and street theatre. The mass media would seem to be a particularly important area for transformative communication and influence—think of how our own lives were *mis*-shaped by radio and TV. Seen in isolation, these things might seem ineffectual, but people *do* change from writing, reading, talking, and listening to each other, as well as from active participation in political movements.

Going out into the streets to march or demonstrate together shatters passivity and creates a spirit of communal effort and life energy that can help sustain and transform us. In many, many places, people are slowly beginning to question the way they were conditioned to acceptance and passivity. Hierarchical governments and religions are not the ultimate authorities they once were. This is not to minimize the extent of their power and influence, but rather to emphasize that seemingly inconsequential changes in thought and behavior, when solidified in collective action, constitute a real challenge to the patriarchy.

Economic/political tactics fall into the realm of direct action, such as strikes and boycotts. The strike can be the workers' most important tool. Any individual strike has the potential of paralyzing the system if it spreads to other industries and becomes a general strike. Total social revolution is then only a step away. Of course, the general strike must have as its ultimate goal worker's self-management (as well as a clear sense of how to achieve and hold on to it), or else the process will be stillborn (as in France, 1968). The boycott can be a powerful strike or union strategy (e.g., the boycott of non-union grapes, lettuce, and wines). In addition, it can be used to force economic and social changes.

Refusal to pay war taxes or participate in capitalist competition and over-consumption are both important actions when coupled with support of alternative structures (food co-ops, health and law collectives, recycled clothing and book stores, free schools). Consumerism is one of the main strongholds of capitalism. To boycott buying itself (especially products geared to obsolescence and those offensively advertised) is a tactic that has the power to change the "quality of everyday life."

This takes us to the third area—personal/political. Affinity groups have historically been important organizational structures. This can mean temporary

groupings of individuals for a specific short-term goal, more permanent work collectives (as an alternative to professional and career elitism), or living collectives where individuals learn how to live together in balanced equal relationships. Potentially, anarchist affinity groups could be the base on which we build a new non-hierarchical society. The way we live and work changes the way we think and perceive (and vice versa), and when changes in consciousness become changes in action and behavior, revolutionary change has begun.

Making utopia real occurs on many levels. In addition to specific tactics that can be constantly developed and changed, we need political tenacity: the strength and ability to see beyond the present to a joyous, transformative future. To get from here to there requires more than a leap of faith. It demands of each of us a day-to-day, long-range commitment to possibility, direct action, and involvement in our community.

The Transformation of the Future

The creation of female culture is as pervasive a process as we can imagine, for it is participation in a vision which is continually unfolding…. In the last ten years our having come faster and closer than ever before in the history of the patriarchy to overturning its power... is cause for exhilarant hope—wild, contagious, unconquerable, crazy HOPE.—Laurel[16]

I used to think that if revolutionary change didn't happen immediately, we would all be doomed to a catastrophic (or catatonic) fate. I don't believe anymore in that kind of before-and-after revolution, and I think we set ourselves up for failure and despair by thinking of it in those terms. I do believe that what we all need in order to continue is *hope*: a vision of the future so beautiful and so powerful that it pulls us steadily forward in the creation of an inner and outer world both habitable and self-fulfilling for *all*. I believe that hope exists—that it is in Laurel's "woman vision," in Mary Daly's "existential courage," and in anarcha-feminism. Our different voices describe the same dream. As we speak, we change, and as we change, we transform ourselves and the future simultaneously.

It is true that there is no real solution in our society the way it now exists. But if we remain consciously aware of the radical metamorphoses we have already experienced in our lives, then we can have the courage to continue to create what we dream is possible. Obviously, it is not easy to face daily oppression and still continue to hope. But *it is our only chance*. If we abandon the ability to see connections and to dream the present into the future, then we have already lost.

Hope is women's most powerful revolutionary tool; it is what we give each other every time we share our lives, our work, and our love. It pulls us forward out of self-hatred, self-blame, and the fatalism that keeps us prisoners in separate cells. If we surrender to depression and despair now, we are accepting the inevitability of authoritarian politics and patriarchal domination. We must not let our pain and anger become hopelessness or short-sighted semi-solutions.

The small changes we make in our minds and in our lives are not futile. It takes time and dedication to create effective revolutionary change: it is something that one both prepares for and lives now. The transformation of the future will not be instantaneous, but it can be *total*—a continuum of thought and action,

individuality and collectivity, spontaneity and organization, stretching from what is to what can be.

Anarchism provides a framework for this transformation. It is a possibility that becomes real as we live it. Feminism is the connection that links anarchism to the future. When we finally see that connection clearly, when we refuse to be stripped of that hope, we will be stepping over the edge of nothingness into a way of being just barely imaginable now. The vision that is anarcha-feminism has been carried inside our women's bodies for centuries. The time to give birth has arrived.

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[1]Emma Goldman, "Anarchism: What It Really Stands For." *Red Emma Speaks* (Vintage Books, 1972), p. 59.
[2]Murray Bookchin, "On Spontaneity and Organization," *Liberation*, March, 1972, p. 6.
[3]Sam Doigoff, *The Anarchist Collectives* (Free Life Editions, 1974), p. 27.
[4]See Murray Bookchin's *Post Scarcity Anarchism* (Ramparts Press, 1974) for both an insightful analysis of the May-June events and a discussion of revolutionary potential in a technological society.
[5]Ibid, p. 262.
[6]lbid, p. 250.
[7]Bookchin, *On Spontaneity and Organization*, pp. 11–12.
[8]Bookchin, *Post Scarcity Anarchism*, p. 249.
[9]Ibid, p. 40.
[10]Bookchin, *On Spontaneity and Organization*, p. 10.
[11]Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father* (Beacon Press, 1973), p. 133.
[12]Historian Temma Kaplan has done considerable research on women's anarchist groups (esp. "Mujeres Liberes") in the Spanish Revolution.
[13]See Joreen's "The Tyranny of Structurelessness," *Second Wave*, Vol. 2, No. 1, and Cathy Levine's "The Tyranny of Tyranny," *Black Rose* 1.
[14]Levine, p. 50.
[15]Dolgoff, p. 19.
[16]Laurel, "Towards a Woman Vision," *Amazon Quarterly*, Vol. 1, Issue 2, p. 40.