Against Sleep and Nightmare
The Spectator of Democracy
Early-Mid 90's

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and show how little formal democracy has to do with them. In those conditions, an anti-democratic minority is in a good position to fight the mystifications that have served as breaks on the earlier movements.

over the total process of living. Proletarians, those who have nothing to lose from the destruction of this society and know it, must become anti-democratic to achieve their ends.

Workers must seize control of their workplace or their neighborhood. Not to manage them in the same way as before but to have as much power as possible. Even if at a certain point a group of proletarians use votes to decide the path taken, they cannot allow democratic blessings to justify their actions any more than they can allow reformism, unionism, or pacifism to mystify their actions. The number in favor of a decision will be only one factor among many influencing those who refuse the democratic fetish.

Minorities Confronting Democracy

The passive of today accept democracy more than ever. This weakness may be partially offset by the tremendous willingness of the system's propagandists to rely on raw democracy to accomplish its goals. Freedom of choice is no longer only given as a concession but is pushed constantly as a weapon.

At the point when revolutionaries realize that they have nothing to lose from the destruction of this society, they may realize the mirage of it's democracy. The LA riots were the most undemocratic action imaginable - absolutely no permission was ever asked by those who looted, either from authorities or from unions or from workers councils. Still there was no conscious critique of democracy in that short time in LA.

So we can imagine many more insurrections, like Paris 68, where masses with many democratic and other bourgeois illusions act in a practically communist manner. Here, if the word "democracy" is used by people to describe reconquering their own lives, self-conscious communists wouldn't mindlessly attack it. Rather, an anti-democratic minority would spell-out the practical actions that are necessary to achieve a new society

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isfy their desires by looting a supermarket, they have acted directly on their collective wills. But it is ridiculous to say this action was fairer than them collectively voting for a congresswoman/man or voting to raise their taxes to pay for more police. They violated "process" by not polling everyone beforehand. It's not a matter of whether looters could ever have the right number of people together to "have permission" to act. Proletarians should always act as actively allied creators of a new order, not as passively equal citizens.

Virtually all of the past two hundred years' lurches towards the potlatch, towards communism, have begun undemocratically. The rioters of LA did not require the formal permission of a decision-making body before creating their explosion. The insurrection that started the Spanish Civil War in 1936 began with a spontaneous reaction of workers to Francisco Franco's military coup. The wildcat general strike in May of 68 in Paris began with a spontaneous rejection of the entire society that was fueled by street fighting.

These same insurrections have tended to end when the fetish of democracy reasserted itself. May 68 reached its limits with union officials still controlling the gates of the striking factories.

These elected representatives of the workers separated the movement until everything cooled down. (Again there was certainly a lot of cheating in the French CGT's "union democracy" but this wouldn't have changed the final result. See "How To 'Go Beyond The SI' In Ten Simple Steps," this issue) In Spain 36, democratically elected anarchist union leaders controlled the tendency to communalize all society. They were able to convince the most militant workers that it would be undemocratic to impose socialism without the approval of the passive majority.

The dispossessed should not be fair but be alive and strong. To be anti-democratic is to reject the fetish of democracy, to not give any voting process an inherently superior position

not be reduced to a set way of making decisions or a fixed plan of action.

Not believing in democracy means not automatically knowing how to proceed if people have a profound disagreements. So be it.

Anti-democratic Communism

Communists do not say that without capitalism we can guarantee that humans will create a human community. It says that with capitalism, humans cannot create a human community. It sees that any movement for a true community will oppose capitalist social order and social relationships all along the way. The motivating force will not come with a communist blueprint. It will come from living of proletarians creating a new social relation.

The spirit of collective power, of a community of masters, is exactly the opposite of the democratic spirit. Democracy drowns the individual in the choices of the majority. It presumes that the individual choice is always hostile to the power of the masses. Thus democratic ideology creates the paranoia that everything contrary to its current formalism of process is the same as Stalinist dictatorship.

The spirit of proletarian struggle can be seen when a group of partisans fan-out to defend a city. Each wing has the power to act alone in attacking capitalist forces. Each wing is just as willing to give in to the authority of the other proletarians when they indicate they know the terrain better.

The formal decision making process will depend on the situation. Unanimity, a majority vote, or minority action will be used depending on the terrain of the battle. It is not a matter of fixed rights but of people supporting each other.

Those who are taking back their lives must be strong and alive, not fair and democratic. When a mass of comrades sat-

...And Democracy Continues Its March

> "Fetters and headsmen were the coarse instruments which tyranny formerly employed; but the civilization of our age has perfected despotism itself, though it seemed to have nothing to learn." - de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (pg.97)

America really is entering a period of greater democracy. Bill Clinton's election campaign has never stopped. Polls are still being taken about his latest struggles. From the New Hampshire primary to the health care reform campaign, TV has tried to draw us into his endless fights with other mighty bureaucrats - from George Bush to Robert Dole to Saddam Hussein. Even more, we are expected to cheer Clinton in fights against us. "How well do you think that Clinton succeeded in communicating the need for sacrifice to the American people."

The 1992 elections had the biggest turnout of a presidential election in twenty years. From elections to polls to talk-radio to the "internet," never has the average citizen had so many chances for a voice in their government. But this hasn't helped the hapless citizen. The average, passive voter probably is poorer and has less control over his or her life than ever before.

To understand how people lose this game, we have to look at how the game is really played.

In pro basketball, fouling is part of the game. Some teams play with a little more finesse, other use a little more brute strength. The honest fan doesn't look down on the player who fouls, only the player who gets caught. So the player is allowed to do anything - except to question the real rules of the game. If Kurt Rambus (a "physical player" from a few years back) said at a press conference "Yes, I intend to foul people, that's my job," he could be expelled from the league.

American Democracy works the same way. If we play the game, we can question everything except the real rules of the game. But here the game is something that dominates our lives.

The game today is exchange. It dominates our daily lives when we must exchange our time at work for our survival. It dominates the world system when the electronic world market allocates all resources by exchange.

Poll takers constantly ask about OJ Simpson's murder trial, the best way to make America more productive or how to keep children off drugs. But answering these sorts of questions only makes people think more in terms of life continuing exactly as it is now. The pollsters' slave questions talk only about how this society should best be run. They assume that everyone will live in nuclear family, go to work, work really hard for low pay, come home and look at a TV star on the moving screen.

The Illusion

We attack democracy as such, we don't want "real democracy" instead of "fake democracy." Today's system of vacuum-packed choices is the flip-side of the market perfecting itself. The progress of exchange, of capital, is also the creation of capital's own model of thinking.

All forms of democratic ideology appeal to a model of human behavior that implies each person is wholly separate social agent who only affects others in fixed, definable ways. Perfect democracy - constant polling, an almost permanent election campaign - merely weighs each impulse in the market place of ideas.

Democracy is the language of "common sense" in a world where capitalism controls people's senses. It defends the right, for example, for a man to shout cat-calls at a woman because that man's actions are simply "free speech" not connected to any social action.

acts of government, cost accounting demands that redundant local tyrants be removed. Even in backward areas like Haiti or Somalia, capital moves to replace local butchery with the "accidental" mass murders of democracy.

Decisions?

Revolutionaries oppose every version of democratic ideology. On one hand, after a revolution there won't be a need to fixate on the process of reaching each decision. For example, one person could decide a day's delivery schedule in a communal warehouse without oppressing the other workers. Other workers might prefer to spend their time walking on the beach than double checking each decision. The dispatcher would have no coercive power over the other participants in the warehouse. Deciding the schedule would not give her entrenched privilege that she could accumulate and exchanged for other things. For their own enjoyment, the worker might want to collectively decide the menu of a communal kitchen even it was a less efficient use of time.

A scheme for managing society will by itself create a new society. Highly democratic, highly authoritarian and mixed schemes are now used to administer capitalism. The basic quality of capitalism is that the average person has little or no control over their daily life. Wage labor dominates society. You must exchange your life to buy back your survival. Whether people under capitalism make the decisions about which records they buy, which inmates serve long sentences, what color the street lights are, etc., is irrelevant.

The community that escapes capitalism will involve people directly controlling the way they live. This is the individual and collective refusal of work, commodity production, and exploitation. This will involve much collective decision making and much individual decision making. The transformation can-

military "psy-war" propaganda are the methods of the modern democratic political campaign are the methods of modern government are the methods of leftists discussing ways to improve the system. The enemy is isolated, personalized and attacked using claims that are most likely to get automatic reactions from the isolated spectator.

Every apparent rebellion that failed, every useless exercise of freedom, reappears in the accounting of capital. The system of the Soviet Union was identical to the system of war-time production in our "free-market" system. Thus the final end of the Soviet Union has given the extended insurance system a quantitative measure of state-capitalism versus private enterprise.

The more people relate on the level of "pure democracy," the more they relate on the level of abstract, formal equality. And the more they have an incentive to solve the system's problems. Everyone becomes a bureaucrat versus everyone else. Everyone is equal as long as they each play the same role. We are all equal as consumers, voters, TV watchers, or citizens. That is, we can all be exchanged in our functions.

To write a letter to a congressman is to enter into a huge system of data-creation that ultimately makes people less powerful. The ultimate passivity of a permitted, experimentally controlled role makes it predictable.

The stock market, the media consultants, the political think-tanks, the pollsters, the market researchers, and the big charities constitute an immense electronic memory bank and simulation of all the permitted choices that "consumers," "the public," the spectators, the passive make. The election industry speculates about each way that each given choice is framed and then creates strategies for extracting maximum profits from each citizen's choice.

With this automation of control, democratic regimes are now the most cost effective. This is part of today's intensification of democracy. Once ideology sees formal democracy in all

Today's democracy never has to attack its true enemies but only phantasms within itself. It is only the exchange of one sort of rhetoric for another. So all rhetoric of this sort is empty because is only used to shout at another. Most voters vote for the candidate they think will win instead of the candidate they agree with. This is logical. Why should they care? Everyone knows that things will remain about the same no matter what they do. So why not support a winner instead of a loser? No one cares that politicians lie. They care if the politician gets caught lying. This proves the politician is weak and so a loser.

If you make a choice passively, someone could just as well act on your choice without you having to do anything. Of course presidential elections are only held every four years but if Clinton responds to each month's polls, the government truly hears the passive "voice of the people."

"Would you like me to shoot you now or wait till I get home?" Elmer Fudd to Daffy Duck. "Should the federal government cut services or raise taxes?" Bill Clinton to the working class.

Of course all the choices the media serves up to us have hidden clauses that change their apparent meaning. The federal government reduces its entire budget. Then the local puppets frame the choice of cuts for local voters. These voters then get to support one austerity measure or another.

But this is because the marketplace of ideas works against us. But is this because this market is unfair? No! Even a fair marketplace of ideas simply decides the best direction for capital. Our disadvantage in talk-show dialogues is the same as our disadvantage compared to employers or banks.

Why Democracy Now?

> "We must learn to make the process of governing as entertaining as we have learned to make [elec-

toral] politics entertaining." - Max Frankel, Editor, The New York Times.

The game of letting the ruled participate in their own exploitation not new. The present subtle switch from George Bush's upper-class style to Bill Clinton's democratic style is a counter-part to the rise of the mega-capitalists. The eighties ended with stock market crashes that heralded the end of junk bonds as a strategy for total capital to expand. The economy could no longer be artificially expanded by the easy-money financial manipulations of Michael Milken, George Bush, Paul Volker and Company.

Instead of artificially expanding, it is now sucking all resources into it's empty center. The faction of capitalists at the very top are the billionaires - financiers like Adnan Khoshaggi, entrepreneurs like Bill Gates and a host of invisible characters. This small group had their wealth and power tremendously increased by the expansion of financial manipulations and electronic world markets. Currency and "derivative" speculation had expanded until today they involve trillions of dollars changing hands on a weekly basis. This game uses and expands the power of this ultra-rich class.

As today's crisis system moves to marshal every possible force in its defense, uses our choices about how best to be exploited against us. This system is the dictatorship of the commodity, the world market and of the billionaires. But simultaneously it is the rule of democracy. Once all action and every person can be translated into empty choices, those choices can be exchanged with each other like dollars or spectacular images.

If people are given a free choice about how to sell themselves to the world market, then the system in total will run much more smoothly. When commentator say "let the public decide the best health plan" they mean let people find a plan that gives the insurance companies the highest premiums that workers

can pay and still survive on. Managers will give people free-reign to decide which way to sell themselves to the market.

Democracy became the dominant ideology right after "tight-money"/slow growth became the main economic policy. Tight money reigned in financial speculation and began the present system of reorganization-terror. It goaded lower-level capitalists to produce more without spending more. This caused corporations to attack both workers and the previously ignored level of middle-management.

The financial capitalists' power depends on the expansion of an abstract chunk of money. So democracy is an ideal strategy. The financial capitalist don't care whether they invest in defense contracting, prisons, computers to track drug-offenders, or for-profit hospitals.

Thus the ruling party switched from the party of corruption - the republicans under Bush, to the party of participation - the Democrats under Clinton. But naturally democracy implies many more switches after this.

Historical Democracy

As capitalism has developed, democracy was held back by local authoritarians and by the capitalist's fear that the idea of democracy would make people ungovernable.

Now that capital has perfected democratic participation, all previous forms of capitalism can be seen as instances of democracy. It is thus not surprising that democratic think-tanks are able to give good advice to dictatorships like Pinochet's Chile. It is not surprising that Hitler came to power through the democratic operations of the Wiemar republic. (There was some cheating but we already know cheating is part of any game.)

Democracy is now the ideal dialogue of capital. Participation in this process is speaking the language of the market whether it is participatory, authoritarian or technical. The methods of