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# Alive In The Land Of The Dead

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September 11, 2000

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Alive in the land of the dead. They eat dead food with false teeth. Their buildings have false fronts, their radio and television stations broadcast dead air. They kill time as spectators of false images. Their corporations are guilty of false advertising, and their employment 'opportunities' offer only murderous mistreatment, lethal boredom, and fatal submission; they demand that you meet deadlines, that you pitch tent in the death camps. Does the dead end justify the means? They inhabit dead cities and make false moves, really going nowhere at all, treading day after day the same path of despair. Even their air is conditioned. They ask you to give your lives for their countries, for their religions, for their economies, leaving you with only... Their system is organized by artificial intelligence and provides only virtual reality. Their culture will pin you down and bore you to death, their lifestyle is lifeless, their existench is a permanent deadlock. Everything about them is dead and false. The only thing that is unbearable is that nothing is unbearable. When will we demand more?

The struggle is for life, for real life. Fight foul, life is real!

## Footnote

The word "revolution" may be amusing or off-putting to the modern reader, convinced as he is that effective resistance to the status quo is impossible and therefore not even worth considering. Gentle reader, we ask that you suspend your disbelief long enough to at least contemplate whether or not such a thing might be worthwhile if it were possible; and then that you suspend it further, long enough to recognize this disbelief for what it is — despair!

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Accordingly, our revolution must be an immediate revolution in our daily lives; anything else is not a revolution but a demand that once again people do what they do not want to do and hope that this time, somehow, the compensation will be enough. Those who assume, often unconsciously, that it is impossible to achieve their own desires — and thus, that it is futile to fight for themselves — often end up fighting for an ideal or cause instead. But it is still possible to fight for ourselves, or at least the experiment must be worth a try; so it is crucial that we seek change not in the name of some doctrine or grand cause, but on behalf of ourselves, so that we will be able to live more meaningful lives. Similarly we must seek first and foremost to alter the contents of our own lives in a revolutionary manner, rather than direct our struggle towards world-historical changes which we will not live to witness. In this way we will avoid the feelings of worthlessness and alienation that result from believing that it is necessary to “sacrifice oneself for the cause,” and instead live to experience the fruits of our labors... in our labors themselves.

To put it another way, our revolution must be above all a revolution in the ways we live and think. It must be a recognition and rejection of the thought patterns and patterns of social interaction that have led us to today’s unsatisfying existence, in favor of patterns of thought and interaction that will be satisfying in themselves. It must be a revolution in our motivations, replacing reward-motivated behavior with behavior that is intrinsically meaningful. It must be a revolution in our everyday lives. Rejecting boredom, exhaustion, and despair for excitement, danger, love, passion and compassion — that is a revolution worth fighting for! And certainly there are large scale, long term goals that we must fight for, to make this revolution possible for all of us in the years to come; but we should fight for these goals not out of servitude to a doctrine or cause, but because it is exciting and invigorating today to strive for difficult and worthy objectives.

selves, rather than in passively awaiting rewards for unsatisfying activities. Therefore it is not surprising that many devout Christians are bitter, spiteful individuals who jealously resent healthy activity and excitement in others — for they believe that they will find true happiness only in their “heavenly reward” for behavior that is not at all exciting for them, and thus must watch enviously as others freely do what they can only dream of doing in their most “sinful” fantasies. Conversely, many Christians who are happy are happy despite their Christianity, because they are able to take pleasure in their lives and deeds in this world.

Traditional Marxism takes the Christian mistake one step further by asking its adherents to work towards a revolution they will probably never live to see — that is, in the Marxist “faith,” gratification is delayed beyond the reach of human experience. It should be no surprise that today, beyond a little anachronistic romanticism about the “nobility” of self-sacrifice, the Marxist offer serves as little incentive for people to seriously fight for the “communist revolution.” In contrast, today’s capitalistic consumer market at least promises prompt gratification in the form of material goods (and the myths and images it associates with them) in return for the generally unsatisfying labor it requires. But — does it deliver true gratification to its participants?

Again, happiness is an active experience, not a passive sensation. Thus, a woman who cooks a recipe of her own invention for her friends may find a great deal of pleasure and meaning in this undertaking, while a man who slaves all day to cook exotic food in an expensive restaurant will find that the purchases he makes with his paycheck cannot compensate him for the days of his life he has given up. You can purchase a twenty acre estate, the latest in status-symbol automobiles, and an entire wardrobe of unique and exquisite fashions, but the pleasure that these possessions afford cannot compare to the exhilaration of spending a day freely pursuing your desires.

The 20<sup>th</sup> Century has marked the end of the millennium that saw the world become colonized by and organized under Western civilization, that saw the industrial revolution and overpopulation restructure both humanity and the very surface of the earth itself. This century began with fifty years of alternating slaughter, starvation, and rabid nationalism such as the human race had never seen before. It is concluding with an ominous silence among young people in the United States and much of Europe, for with the end of the “Cold War” the idea that there really is any alternative at all to our modern living conditions and society is becoming hard to conceive of; and in the meantime, we are becoming more and more organized and arranged by the technological systems that we set up with the supposed intentions of making our lives more free and meaningful.

As this century is ending with sentimental retrospectives and the like, what we really must do is not look back but look ahead. Now more than ever we must consider whether our modern lives as we have come to live them over the last thousand years really satisfy all our needs and desires as human beings, and prepare for the new millennium to be a new chapter in the human experiment. We must use the lessons we have learned from the 20<sup>th</sup> Century to plan for a new era in which human life can be meaningful and fulfilling, even thrilling, heroic. Or have we learned any lessons?

Don’t wait for permission, for some far-off “world revolution,” for later “when you have more time.” Demand joy, danger, passion in your life today!

## About the Problem

The poverty against which man has been struggling throughout history is not merely the poverty of material goods; the ennui and disorientation experienced by the members of the

middle and upper classes in today's wealthy industrial nations have revealed the poverty of Western existence itself.

The problems that we face today cannot be traced to class conflict alone. It is not merely a question of the ruling class profiting at the expense of the proletariat, for we have seen that the profit that those with capital do make does not make their lives any more fulfilling. It does not matter whether a woman is buried alive in a prison, in a reform school, in a sweatshop, in a ghetto, in a prestigious university, in a condominium bought on credit, or in a mansion with a private swimming pool and tennis courts, so long as she is buried alive. Everyone suffers from today's status quo, albeit differently; but whether a man is starving on his minimum wage salary, exhausted by his repetitive responsibilities at the office, or befuddled by the curious feeling of emptiness that accompanies the undirected acquisition of material wealth, he has a stake in fighting for change. So we all, rich and poor, must band together to consider our situation and struggle to alter it.

This also means that there is no mythical "They." Innumerable radical movements and social critics have relied upon this concept to motivate people by stirring up hatred for the "evil orchestrators" of human suffering, the enemies who conspire against us. But this kind of thinking only serves to divide us against each other, and whether we are divided on class lines, on color lines, or according to any other categories, we are distracted from the important issues and impeded in our progress. Our true "enemy" is the social forces and patterns at work between ourselves, and it is these forces which we must come to understand and to struggle against.

This is not to say that there are not individuals whose behavior is particularly dangerous to their fellow human beings, insofar as it perpetuates or intensifies our present state of emergency. But even if these individuals do have negative intentions towards others, it is still unlikely that they possess

a clear understanding of the extremely complicated conditions to which they are contributing.

## About the Process

We individuals who are unsatisfied with their lives, who do feel the "poverty" of the existence that modern Western civilization has to offer, must seek out others who are experiencing similar symptoms. Together, we must construct and publicize an analysis of our situation: a theory of why human beings act and interact in the ways that they do today, and how this leads to our sensations of alienation, disorientation, and exhaustion.

This analysis must have effective action of some kind as its necessary and immediate consequence, or else (as have the theories of a long tradition of "radical" discussion groups) it will come to nothing.

And this struggle presupposes participants who are fighting for themselves, to see and feel change and improvement in the course of their own lives — as we shall see ...

## About the Solution

Whatever solution, whatever revolution, we propose, must be present-oriented rather than future-oriented if it is to be genuinely revolutionary.

The past and the present are both full of examples which indicate this. To consider one: Christianity demands of its followers that they delay gratification until they enter the next world, when they will supposedly be rewarded for their proper conduct; in doing so it assumes that this proper conduct is not fulfilling enough in itself to be worthwhile unless it is rewarded. This kind of thinking reflects a dire misunderstanding of the nature of human happiness; for happiness is to be found in activity, in activities that are exciting and satisfying in and of them-