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Major Ashlend Fein, US Army prosecutor in Chelsea Manning's court martial, caught my attention when he referred to Manning as an "anarchist" in closing arguments. As an anarchist, I'd be proud to share that label with Manning. But I've never heard from any reliable source that she considers herself one.

Manning — if indeed guilty of supplying thousands of military and state department documents to Wikileaks — has certainly helped to promote anarchism. Exposing the corrupt reality of the state — its lies, torture, atrocities and collusion with authoritarian governments against their own people — behind all the talk of "peace" and "freedom" is the method of promoting anarchism. But equally deserving of credit, in helping us further the cause of anarchy, are Major Fein himself and everyone else involved in the Manning show trial.

The charges leveled against Manning, and the lengths to which they have gone to have their vengeance against her, have

done more than a thousand anarchist tracts could do to show the fraudulent nature of so-called "representative democracy."

The most serious charge against Manning was "aiding the enemy." Although this was the sole charge of which military judge Denise Lind acquitted her, the fact that the entire executive branch brought its full force to bear in pushing such charges in the first place is significant. According to the Obama administration, Manning "indirectly" provided the enemy with classified information, by releasing it to be published in venues where she knew it would be accessible to the enemy.

Now, let's stop to think about who this "enemy" might be. What kind of information did the leaked documents reveal? They revealed

- war crimes by U.S. military forces, murdering civilians and journalists in cold blood;
- torture by U.S. military personnel;
- the corrupt dealings of U.S. State Department and other functionaries with the local authoritarian governments of the Middle East, including secret authorizations by local governments for the use of American drones to carry out extrajudicial killings on their own territory — facts that would have resulted in rioting in the streets.

I doubt any of this was surprising to al Qaeda. They almost certainly assumed it to be true. If exposing this stuff "aided" al Qaeda in any way, it did so only by giving them hard evidence of the truth to share with those who weren't already aware of it — namely the publics of the Middle East, the U.S. and its allies, and the world. And this would be harmful to the interests of the U.S. government only to the extent that it was true — i.e., to the extent that it revealed to the allegedly sovereign people of the allegedly democratic United States the real nature of "their" government's policy, or revealed to the people of the Middle

East what kind of sham democracy the U.S. was promoting in their region.

The U.S. government fears an informed American people, and an informed world public opinion, far more than it ever feared al Qaeda. What we've called "representative democracy," since the rise of universal suffrage in the West a century or so ago, has been an elaborate exercise in securing the outcome desired by ruling elites — preserving an intersecting alliance of corporate and state oligarchies — while maintaining the fiction of popular rule.

This ruling class has maintained its power mainly through what Edward Bernays called "manufacturing consent" — carefully restricting the range of alternatives on the table and shaping public consciousness to see that restricted range as exhaustive. The range is bounded, basically, by the preferences of the left and right wings of the corporate elite. It encompasses only measures consistent with, and which can largely be carried out by the people running, the present structure of power. Anything else is deemed "extremist" or "silly," beyond the range of thought of Serious People.

The basic structural presuppositions of this system are justified in terms of inevitability and necessity — because it's the only conceivable way of efficiently organizing things. For the American people, a decentralized and horizontally organized society without centralized state power, Fortune 500 corporations, giant banks and millionaire CEOs must be as unthinkable as an Animal Farm without a class of pigs (well fed on apples and milk, of course) to manage problems beyond the competence of mere lower animals. It requires distracting the public from any awareness that "another world is possible," or that the present system exists to serve not the public, but rather the interests of those running things.

Manning committed the one unforgivable sin in a sham representative democracy: She let the "sovereign" people in on what "their" government is really doing, and whose interests

it's really serving. For that, the political class will never forgive her.