

FOR OURSELVES

Preamble

We have woken up to discover that our lives are becoming unliveable. From boring, meaningless jobs to the humiliation of waiting endlessly in lines, at desks and counters to receive our share of survival, from prison-like schools to repetitious, mindless "entertainment," from desolate and crime-ridden streets to the stifling isolation of home, our days are a treadmill on which we run faster and faster just to keep in the same place.

Like the immense majority of the population, we have no control over the use to which our lives are put: we are people who have nothing to sell but our capacity to work. We have come together because we can no longer tolerate the way we are forced to exist, we can no longer tolerate being squeezed dry of our energies, being used up and thrown away, only to create a world that grows more alien and ugly every day.

The system of Capital, whether in its "Western" private-corporate or "Eastern" state-bureaucratic form, was brutal and exploitative even during its ascent: now, where it is in decay, it poisons air and water, produces goods and services of deteriorating quality, and is less and less able to employ us even to its own advantage. Its logic of accumulation and competition leads inexorably toward its own collapse. Even as it links all the people of the world together in one vast network of production and consumption, it isolates us from each other; even as it stimulates greater and greater advances in technology and productive power, it finds itself incapable of putting them to use: even as it multiplies the possibilities for human self-realization, we find ourselves strangled in layers of guilt, fear and self-contempt.

But it is *we ourselves* - our strength, our intelligence, our creativity, our passions-that are the greatest productive power of all. It is we who produce and reproduce the world as it is, in the image of Capital; it is we who reinforce in each other the conditioning of family, school, church and media, the conditioning that keeps us slaves. When we decide together to end our

misery, to take our lives into our own hands, we can recreate the world the way we want it. The technical resources and worldwide productive network developed under the old system give us the means: the crisis and continuing collapse of that system give us the chance and the urgent need.

The ruling ideologies of the world superpowers, with their interlocking sets of lies, offer us only the false choice of "Communism" versus "Capitalism." But in the history of revolution during this century (Russia, 1905; Germany, 1919-20; Spain, 1936-37; Hungary, 1956) we have discovered the general form through which we can take back power over our own lives: workers' councils. At their highest moments these councils were popular assemblies in workplaces and communities, joined together by means of strictly mandated delegates who carried out decisions already made by their assemblies and who could be recalled by them at any time. The councils organized their own defense and restarted production under their own management. By now, through a system of councils at the local, regional, and global level, using modern telecommunications and data processing, we can coordinate and plan world production as well as be free to shape our own immediate environment. Any compromise with bureaucracy and official hierarchy, anything short of the total power of workers' councils, can only reproduce misery and alienation in a new form, as a good look at the so-called "Communist" countries will show. For this reason, no political party can represent the revolutionary movement or seize power "on its behalf," since this would be simply a change of ruling classes, not their abolition. The plan of the freely associated producers is in absolute opposition to the dictatorial Plan of state and corporate production. Only all of us together can decide what is best for us.

For these reasons, we call upon you and upon all the hundreds of millions like you and us, to join us in the revolutionary transformation of every aspect of life. We want to abolish the system of wage and salaried labor, of commodity exchange-value and of profit, of corporate and bureaucratic power. We want to decide the nature and conditions of everything we do, to manage all social life collectively and democratically. We want to end the division of mental from manual work and of "free" time from work time, by bringing into play all our abilities for enjoyable creative activity. We want the whole world to be our conscious self-creation, so that our days are full of wonder, learning, and pleasure. Nothing less.

In setting down this minimum program, we are not trying to impose an ideal on reality, nor are we alone in wanting what we want. Our ideas are already in everyone's minds, consciously or unconsciously, because they are nothing but an expression of the real movement that exists all over the

planet. But in order to win, this movement must know itself, its aims, and its enemies, as never before.

We do not speak for this movement, but for ourselves as of it. We recognize no Cause over and above ourselves. But our selves are already social., the whole human race produces the life of each one of its members, now more than ever before. Our aim is simply to make this process conscious for the first time, to give to the production of human life the imaginative intensity of a work at art.

It is in this spirit that we call upon you to organize, as we are doing, where you work and where you live, to begin planning the way we can run society together, to defend yourselves against the deepening misery that is being imposed on all of us. We call upon you to assault actively the lies, the self-deceptions born of fear, that keep everyone frozen in place while the world is falling apart around us. We call upon you to link up with us and with others who are doing the same thing. Above all, we call upon you to take yourselves and your desires seriously, to realize your own power to master your own lives.

It's now or never. If we are to have a future, we ourselves must be that future.

Written in 1974 by
FOR OURSELVES
Council for Generalized Self-Management

(r)epublished December 2002 by
LUST for LIFE
<rasputin@teleport.com>
