Interview With Samuel Edward Konkin III

Konkin, author of the *New Libertarian Manifesto* coined the term "agorism" to describe his ideology. Although very similar to anarcho-capitalism, unlike anarcho-capitalism it opposes intellectual property. It is also explicitly against voting and parliamentary strategies and shares a desire with most individualist anarchists to have an economy in which workers are also owners of the business they work in.

I would would dispute, however, Konkin's definition of "libertarianism" as "free-market anarchism." I think all anarchists, and even some conservatives, are believers in liberty as a fundamental value, and therefore libertarian.

Daniel Burton a.k.a. Melchizedek, Lord of the Brambles

Smashing the State for Fun and Profit Since 1969

An Interview With the Libertarian Icon Samuel Edward Konkin III (a.k.a. SEK3)

Conducted by _wlo:dek & michal

You don't know SEK3 and call yourself a Libertarian? Well, actually and unfortunately Sam needs an introduction. While he's well known among all those Libertarians form Class of '69 who were there back in the day, he is virtually unknown among those who were to young to participate in early Movement. To a degree he is to blame for this. During the early 90s when most of young activist were introduced to Libertarianism Sam took a short break from the libertarian Movement. But now he's back and kicking.

So who the hell is Samuel E. Konkin III? What is John Guilt? It took a whole book to answer that question... As for Sam - Original Libertarian, who earned his Capital L in the streets of the Battle of St. Louis. Editor of "The Agorist Quarterly", "New Isolationist", "Frefanzine" and many, many other Libertarian, Agorist, Anarchist, and anti-interventionist publications, the best known of which is "New Libertarian" published since 1970 and acclaimed by Mr. Libertarian (aka Murray N. Rothbard) as the leading "in-reach" magazine in This Movement of Ours. In 1980 he made big splash with his *New Libertarian Manifesto*, applauded by Robert LeFevre for its "position respecting consistency, objective and method" (you can read it on-line... http://flag.blackened.net/daver/anarchism/nlm/nlm.html). To promote Libertarianism he co-funded Movement of the Libertarian Left, The Agorist Institute and Karl Hess Club. He organized academic conferences, classes, seminars and meetings... No wonder, he become a role model for fictional libertarian heroes created by L. Neil Smith ("The American Zone"), Victor Koman ("Kings of the High Frontier") and J. Neil Schulman ("Alongside Night").

O.K. so now you've seen the tip of the iceberg, don't let me stop you any longer. Go for it.

Necessary background

Q: Before we start the interview I would like to ask you to define a term that will pop up many times during this discussion and as many people think is synonymous. What is Libertarianism for you?

SEK3 - Libertarian is another term for Free-Market Anarchist, though it often includes softer-core fellow travelers such as minarchists. The word originally was used by free-thinkers in relation to religion to mean those who believed in free-will over determinism (which is not all that bad an association for us) and then became a euphemism for anarchist in Europe in the 19th Century. It was revived by Leonard Read in the 1940s to mean those Classical Liberals who refused to join the rest of the Liberal Movement into becoming soft-Left statists, and who had largely joined the U.S. Old Right coalition against that kind of Liberal, bordering on fascist, New Deal. With the election of Eisenhower and death of Robert Taft, the Old Right coalition disintegrated. Buckley pulled the pro-State conservatives into his New Right while Murray Rothbard rallied the Isolationist (non-interventionist in foreign policy) Libertarians into alliance with the New Left. New York-based Rothbard became an anarchist in 1950 and defined the hard-core position accordingly. Robert LeFevre accomplished the same in the Western U.S.

Q: Unfortunately many people associate Libertarianism with Libertarian Party. Some people even believe that it was the first organization that defined libertarianism. Could you straight that out?

SEK3 - In 1969, both the SDS and the Young Americans for Freedom split at their respective conventions. The "right" Libertarians from YAF joined the free-market anarchists from SDS at a historic conference in New York over Columbus Day weekend, called by Murray Rothbard and Karl Hess. In February of 1970, several activists working for Robert LeFevre organized an even bigger conference in Los Angeles at USC, which included Hess, SDS ex-president Carl Oglesby, and just about every big name in the Movement up to that point. I attended both, as well as the YAF Convention in St. Louis before.

After L.A.'s conference, campus Libertarian Alliances sprung up around the country. I personally organized five in Wisconsin during 1970 and a dozen in downstate New York (New York City and environs) from 1971-73. The Libertarian Party's first "real" campaign was Fran Youngstein for Mayor (of New York City) in 1973, and was the only campaign in which anti-political (what Europeans would call anti-parliamentarian) Libertarians worked with anarchist who embraced political office-seekin (whom I named partyarchs).

By that time, the Libertarian Movement had grown from "Murray's living room" (and LeFevre's Freedom School, later Rampart College) into thousands in 1970, tens of thousands in 1971, and hundreds of thousands (some abroad, as in Britain and Australia) in 1972. The steep rate of Movement growth leveled off with the rise in visibility of the Party.

Q: Is it true that few activists started the first chapter of LP as a joke?

SEK3 - Ed Butler, editor of the 1960s Westwood Village Square, became a Libertarian in 1970. Along with anti-political Libertarians Gabriel Aguilar (a Galambosian) and Chris Shaefer (LeFevrian), they registered the name "Libertarian Party" in California to use for making fun of the electoral process a full year before David Nolan had his Christmas 1971 party where he announced the creation of the LP, seriously.

By the way, Murray Rothbard and many others refused to take Nolan's party seriously during the Hospers-Nathan campaign. It would have vanished without a trace had not Nixon Presidential Elector Roger MacBride not jumped the fence and voted for Hospers instead of Nixon in the Electoral College (which actually decides the president in the United States). Walter Block, who was a rare LP candidate for lower office in New York in 1972, ran his campaign humorously for the State Assembly by putting out bumper stickers calling for "Block for Disassembly."

Q: When France was under occupation there was a custom of shaving the heads of women that collaborated with Germans. Which 'libertarians', except LP, do you think should have the same treatment?

SEK3 - Seriously, I do like your metaphor of Libertarians as maquis, or Resistance. Nonetheless, there are two big differences, and I don't mean how we treat our enemies. First, we are not parasitically living off the enemy's economy but building a better one "underground"; second, we are allowed by the State (occupation force) to discuss and recruit publicly (at least for now). I suspect the latter case will cease to exist the moment they take us as a serious threat.

Q: Some people become Libertarians after reading Ayn Rand novels; a book by Hainlein or Rothbard converts some. How did you discover that you were a Libertarian?

SEK3 - Heinlein in Moon is a Harsh Mistress first gave me the concept ("Rational Anarchist"). When I found out that Bernardo de la Paz was based on a real person (Robert LeFevre), I took it seriously. I progressed through the Canadian and then U.S. Right via Frank Meyer (who, until his death in 1970, attempted a synthesis of conservative and Libertarian, called "Fusionism") and Ludwig von Mises (who called himself a Liberal right up to his death in 1973 at the age of 92; I knew him for his last three years). Both led in different ways to Rothbard but he was being smeared as pro-communist in those Viet Nam War days for his militant isolationism. The final step was provided by an anti-communist free-market anarchist named Dana Rohrabacher at the St. Louis YAF Convention. He was a charismatic campus activist, radicalized by Robert LeFevre who provided him with small funding to travel the country with his instrument and folk songs from campus to campus, converting YAF chapters into Libertarian Alliances and SIL chapters. Alas, later he fell into politics, but not the LP. The Libertarian billionaire Charles Koch supported him in two failed Republicans primary campaigns, and after Rohrabacher put in time as Ronald Reagan's speechwriter, he got his reward of a safe seat in the U.S. House of Representatives from Orange County. He is still in office today, with growing seniority. There are few issues on which he is still Libertarian, certainly fewer than, say, Ron Paul holds.

But in 1969-71, Dana Rohrabacher was the most successful and most beloved Libertarian activist, and, in my opinion, there would not have been a Movement without him. And he was a close friend of mine until he crossed the line with his campaign for Congress.

Q: By the way, what do you think about Ron Paul? Many partyarchs confronted with voluntaryist arguments against electoral politics point at him and ask: "Look at Ron, do you really think that he 's destroying the Libertarian movement?" How would you answer that question?

SEK3 - Ron Paul in many ways belongs to another era. His closest ideological ancestor was the Iowa Congressman H.R. Gross in the 1960s and 1970s, and Rothbard's favorite, Congressman Howard Buffett of Nebraska in the 1950s. One can go all the way back to the Original who split with Thomas Jefferson's Republicans in the early 1800s, John Randolph of Roanoke, Virginia. The 435-member U.S. House of Representatives seems to be able to tolerate about one at any time, perhaps as a court jester, or maybe a lone example of what the House was supposed to do in theory. Note that there are never two at the same time. Note also that they have to operate within the two-party oligopoly. And, finally, note that Paul did NOT have the guts to join African-American Left-Reform Democrat Barbara Lee in voting against the enabling resolution of the U.S. House allowing George III (Bush II) to circumvent a Declaration of War (against whom? what enemy State?), although he has been a more consistent defender of both civil and economic liberties after that vote than Lee has.

Finally, Paul is too independent to even travel in a pack with the "Republican Liberty Caucus," the latest of four attempts to build a soft-core, conservative voting bloc in the Republican Party as an alternative to third-party futility.

From history to theory...

Q: Many Libertarians seek the birth of the Libertarian movement during the Young Americans for Freedom convention in St. Louis. You were one of the participants, could you tell me what happened there?

SEK3 - The major issues of the 1960s for American youth were the Viet Nam War and conscription for it, drugs legalization, and freedom to protest. Libertarians agreed with the New Left (SDS, etc.) on all these issues and the traditional conservatives ("trads") who controlled YAF were opposed. YAF's first chairman, Bob Schuchman, was a Libertarian, which is why it was called the Young Americans for Freedom and not, say, "Young Conservatives" even though most members identified with William F. Buckley and National Review. Thus, many young libertarians were attracted to YAF. In early 1969, the Trads initiated purges against other Rightists, not just Libertarians; Objectivist, racists, closet Nazis, Wallacites, and Roman Catholic radical traditionalists, "Rad Trads" were all ousted wherever they had control. On the East Coast and California, these were mainly Libertarian chapters and they showed up in St. Louis at the National Convention to fight for their credentials. The Trads dropped their "Conservatism with a Libertarian Face" approach and allowed only about 200 Libertarian delegates (out of nearly 1000 before the purges, maybe 500 would have been Libertarian or other opponents of the National Office). Some, like me, had been selected by the National Chairman-to-be David Keene as a loyal supporter, but then switched sides when approached by Rohrabacher and Don Ernsberger of Pennsylvania YAF (later founder of SIL) with the stories of what was going on.

Jared Lobdell (still a close friend of mine) tried to forge a compromise on the key draft (conscription) issue. However, during the proceedings after his committee reported, a Rothbardian anarchist delegate (one of a very few, less than 20) lit what appeared to be to be a Xerox copy of his draft card.

The National Office (David A. Keene and Jim Farley leading the vote) won easily and Libertarians were purged from YAF. But there were variations from state to state. For example in Wisconsin (where I was then based), I was somewhat protected from the purge by my closeness to Keene and Lobdell. And Dana Rohrabacher came to Wisconsin to campaign for David for State Senate (Keene lost), but actually subverted the Madison UW chapter. Three of us left on our own and joined with three YIPpies in late 1969 to form the University of Wisconsin Libertarian Alliance. But there were dozens, if not hundreds, of stories like this on campuses across North America. Every college had a Libertarian Alliance (or SIL chapter) by the Fall of 1970; for the next four years, there were two or more major Libertarian Conferences a year on the East Coast (New York or Philadelphia) or West Coast (Los Angeles), all preceding the "libertarian" Party.

Q: In one of the first issues of New Libertarian Notes you had a discussion with David Nolan about the morals behind running for the office accusing him of betraying the Libertarian ideals, but a few months later you joined the Free Libertarian Party of New York. Was it a sudden change of views or did you just try do destroy the party from the inside?

SEK3 - Actually, it wasn't THAT early in our publication. It was in issue 17, in 1972, and it got NLN kicked out of Laissez Faire Books because I "dared" to compare our exchange to that of Lysander Spooner and Senator Thomas Bayard in the 1870s.

Ed Clark, the founding chair of the New York LP (before he moved to California) turned over the Free Libertarian Party (it was called because the New York Liberal Party threatened to sue the LP for confusing the ballot) to Jerry Klasman. Jerry invited me to join the FLP Executive Board. When I told him I didn't believe in the Party and would work for its demise, he said "That's O.K." In 1973 I was re-elected with the highest vote of any candidate, but was unable to bring any of the rest of the slate of the Radical Caucus into office. (The closest second was my then-girlfriend and later briefly my first fiancee, Nona Aguilar.) By 1974 we were, in alliance with Upstate Reformers against the "Anarchocentrist" Manhattan machine, poised to win control of the FLP. The last thing we wanted (in the RC) was to take political power, so I and a few of the hardest core (I admit, some of my comrades were tempted to stay in and try for power) refused to enter the convention hall and vote. We sat outside and sold NLNs.

Basically, I had expressed the internal contradictions of partyarchy. I simply demanded that the LP apply the same tactics of decentralization and weakening of authority to its own structure as it wish to do to the State. Rothbard and Gary Greenberg led the Centralists who argued that the LP had to have disciplined cadre and a

minimum of internal bickering (i.e. debate and dissent). Strangely enough, my approach seemed to appeal more to libertarians than their Leninoid tactic.

Murray Rothbard, viewing the chaos he could no longer control with frustration, pointed to me through the open door of the convention hall and said, "Is he the only other person who understands what's going on here?"

Before we left the FLP we had won ourselves Delegate Status to the Dallas National Convention so we decided to try out tactics there. I allied our Radical Caucus delegates with challenger Eric Scott Royce's delegates (whom we called the Reform caucus), against the Nolan Machine. But Nolan had already lost control to Ed Crane, who won easily. At that point, the Radical Caucus (minus two turncoats) walked out of the LP forever, and we took quite a few of the Reformers with us, including Royce who has written for my publications to this day.

Q: In 1971 you co-hosted "Freedom Conspiracy's Columbia Libertarian Conference" during which you had an argument with Milton Friedman. What was the reason for the argument?

SEK3 - Uncle Miltie took questions, but only written ones. So I wrote on a card 1. Did you have anything to do with the passage of withholding of income tax? 2. If so, do you regret it? 3. If so, would you do it again?

To my astonishment (and I give him credit here), he read the card and answered it straightforwardly. To the astonishment of his audience (he apparently thought they were conservative, not growingly radical libertarians), Friedman answered . . .

1. Yes, it was during World War II when he came up with the idea, in order to raise money for the State faster on behalf of the war effort. 2. No, he didn't regret it, since the war was justified. 3. Yes, for the same reason, he would do it again.

Friedman lost nearly everyone in the audience after that, and Friedmanism was smashed for good in the Libertarian Movement of 1971. Ludwig von Mises and his student Murray Rothbard, and the Austrian School reign unchallenged until this day.

Q: Since that conference many Libertarians often reject the Chicago school and neoclassical economics as impossible to reconcile with libertarian ideas. Some people affiliated with it are still anarchists (i.e. D. Friedman or B. Caplan). Don't you think that they are being a little too harsh?

SEK3 - No. Rothbard proved that the Chicago School economists are simply efficiency experts for the State. The worst cases were the Chilean "Chicago Boys" who served Augusto Pinochet and the Israeli ones who worked for Revisionist Zionist (i.e., fascist) Menachem Begin.

Q: When you lived in New York in the 70s did you have an occasion to participate in the discussion evenings in Ms and Mr Rothbard's house?

SEK3 - Indeed, and enjoyed them immensely. Though the Movement had already expanded out of "Murray Rothbard's Living Room," it was still the most "in" place to be in the early Movement.

Q: As we know Rothbard's nature was a bit rowdy and he said many things that caused a split in the Libertarian movement. How was your collaboration with him?

SEK3 - Actually, Rothbard was seldom responsible for personal splits; he was quite affable. His speaking manner was, I described it in NLN, like Woody Allen but with a grasp of economics. (Allen, by the way, is an Anarchist, though not free-market.) Originally, he refused to take the LP seriously, so when I did, I largely

drew on LeFevre's principled attacks on politics. Rothbard had written anti-political essays before, so I was surprised that he embraced the LP during the Fran Youngstein campaign. Perhaps he thought it was a new method to bring in young professionals, especially attractive female ones like Fran and her friends. (Youngstein worked for IBM.) At that point, we split ideologically, though it never got as personal as, say, Rand and Branden, LeFevre and Sy Leon, or Galambos and Jay Snelson. Rothbard actively opposed a personality cult developing. He continued to write for me when I requested, and we got together in an anti-Kochtopus alliance in 1980 after the disastrous Clark campaign. I supported him when Crane pulled Murray's share in the Cato Institute, effectively purging him, by my offering him shares of stock in New Libertarian magazine. And, as I mentioned before, became a Founding Advisor to the Agorist Institute in 1985.

We corresponded right up through the 1990 election (he had broken permanently with the LP in 1988, pursuing a new Paleoconservative alliance) and then again, after my divorce in 1992 up until his death in 1995.

Q: There are some who claim that late Rothbard abandoned not only the Libertarian movement but the Libertarian theory itself. Could you straight that out?

SEK3 - Murray Newton Rothbard, Ph.D., always left himself maximum latitude in both strategy and tactics, while hewing to what he called "The Plumb Line" of orthodox libertarianism. It's true he ended his life trying to reconstruct the Old Right alliance of his youth from Paleoconservative and "paleolibertarians," but he insisted he gave no ground on libertarian principles. From his accepting of anarchy in 1950 until his purge from National Review in 1957 he was part of the Right. But he was purged for joining the anti-nuclear popular fronts largely run by the Left, and he accused the "New Right" of abandoning anti-imperialism and accepting Big Government as necessary to fighting Communism (evil because it was . . . Big Government). He was purged from the Objectivists, though he himself was an atheist, for refusing to pressure his wife into giving up her Protestant Christianity.

He worked enthusiastically for the New Left through the 1960s, leaving only when it became obvious the anarchists had been ousted from the SDS and all important organizations, leaving variants of Maoism and Stalinism battling over control of ever-smaller grouplets. He considered supporting a Liberal Republican (usually anathema to both Libertarians and Conservatives), Mark Hatfield, for President in 1972, until Hatfield pulled out. Though he had worked with anti-war Democrats preferentially until then, he ended up supporting Nixon over McGovern.

He opposed the Libertarian Party from its founding but mainly on strategic grounds: he considered the LP "premature" at this stage of Movement history. When he embraced it after seeing a superficial popularity for it among many of his activist friends, he attempted to mold it into his concept of a Libertarian Party: highly disciplined cadre on the Leninist model. That model was unattractive to 90% of LP members (and an even higher percentage of those outside the Party, of course) and when his candidate was rejected in 1988 (after losing), he noticed Tom Fleming organizing the Paleoconservatives and threw in his lot with them, going so far as to become the economics advisor of their candidate, Pat Buchanan, in 1992. He died before the 1996 election, and without Rothbard, Buchanan abandoned the market for rampant protectionism and almost selected a socialist (black, female) running mate.

Q: In 1975 you decided to move from New York to California, preceding that was a three-week journey. There are legends going around about that trip. Can you tell me something about it?

SEK3 - It was right out of Jack Kerouac, and anything but in a straight line. Four of us and what belongings we could take were stuffed in a Toyota. Although I don't like to drive, by the time we hit Oregon (I told you it was not in a straight line), the rest were so tired they all agreed I should take a turn. So I crossed the entire length of Oregon in about three hours and they never asked me to drive again.

We stopped in Louisville, Kentucky, for the first Rivercon (a science fiction convention) and visited the best-known libertarian science-fiction fan back then, Richard E. Geis, in Portland, Oregon. We got lost in Marin County during its most flaky period (captured in the novel and film, Serial, perfectly) and drove the entire West Coast down to L.A. where Dana Rohrabacher found us apartments.

None of us would ever go through that again, but we all remember it as a Rite of Passage and, at least for me, the defining moment of leaving the '60s mentality and finally entering that long amorphous period from 1975 until the Fall of the Berlin Wall in 1990.

Q: After you arrived on the west coast you moved with a group of people into the so called Anarchovillage. Can you explain what's hiding under that name?

SEK3 - Different people had different aims. Primarily, it was a "labour resource" for putting New Libertarian out weekly (yes, you heard it right, every damned week except two for 101 issues) from December 1975 through January 1978. There were 10 apartments and a house, and at our peak we had 8 of them and the house occupied by Libertarians. Two conservative sf writers also lived there, one moving in deliberately to be with us. An old Quaker SDS activist who had holed up there to write SF discovered we had moved in and joined us.

No women had their own apartments, but some visited a lot and a few moved in with different men, sometimes sequentially. One in particular worked her way through 90% of us before moving on.

And we even had a token gay guy, though we didn't find out about it for several years (the most promiscuous female, mentioned above, outed him); he was the apartment manager and friend of Dana Rohrabacher's who originally got us the apartment.

Q: Contemporary Libertarianism seems to be very loosely attached to the counter-culture. Something tells me that it wasn't always like that...

SEK3 - Hmm. I'm not sure how to answer that. As far as I can tell, what remains of the Counter-Culture is almost entirely libertarian. The latest "alternative culture" of cyberspace geeks is not just libertarian but outright agorist. The hippie counter-culture had unacknowledged libertarian principles (see Jeff Riggenbach's In Praise of Decadence) and Libertarian activists from Kerry Thornley, perhaps the first conscious "Left Libertarian" (editor of the Liberal Innovator) to always-Right Dana Rohrabacher embraced it gladly. Science-fiction fandom, another large alternative culture, has moved from unacknowledged Libertarianism (Heinlein, Anderson) to accepting or criticising it explicitly as too dominant.

Maybe you are implying the current Libertarian Movement is not entirely counter-cultural and that it used to be more so? Actually, it's about the same split between those who largely embrace the existing culture (such as Rothbard, as straight as you can imagine) and those who embrace alternatives, though the alternative offerings have expanded considerably. If anything, I would say that rejection of the predominant culture is greater than it was in the 1960s but less overt. Guys (and now gals) in suits who work in a corporate office, then come home to smoke dope, chat on-line with subversives, attend their "alternative lifestyle" conventions on weekends, and flip over those suit lapels to show a black flag button pinned there, are common. This "swing both ways" attitude is certainly post-60s and quite common among our younger people.

...and from theory to practice

Q: During the 60s and 70s many Libertarians cooperated with groups from radical left, Karl Hess was a member of the Black Panthers and the Students for Democratic Society, Rothbard cooperated with M. Bookchin in New York's Left-Right anarchist supper club. Contacts between these people broke pretty fast, why?

SEK3 - Very different cases. Rothbard and Bookchin fell out over rivalry for young new recruits, but emphasized ideological differences. The Black Panthers and SDS basically fell apart leaving Hess behind, but Karl continued to work with the Left long after the 1969 conventions and was affiliated with the Institute for Policy Studies (IPS) until his demise. But in the late 1980s he reactivated his Libertarian connections, and we invited him in 1985 to join the Founding Board of Directors of The Agorist Institute (along with Rothbard, LeFevre, Doug Casey, John Pugsley and Robert Kephart). Later, he became conservative enough (alas) to do a stint as editor of the Libertarian Party's national newspaper, which ended only as he became too ill to continue.

Q: People who describe themselves, as Libertarians often don't want to be associated with left-wing. Leftists look at Libertarians with unwillingness. Where did you get the idea to call your organization the Movement of Libertarian Left?

SEK3 - Rothbard decided that we (the original LP radical caucus, who left the LP as the New Libertarian Alliance, and then promptly went Underground to build the Counter-Economy) were, using Marxist terminology, the Ultra-Left Adventurists and Left Sectarians. Some who remained close to him called me the Trotsky of the Movement. So it became natural to refer to us as the Libertarian Left in that context.

Secondly, we interested in continuing Rothbard's 1960-69 alliance with the anti-nuke, then anti-war New Left, so when we decided to project a presence aboveground again, it made sense to use a label that would appeal to those remnants.

Thirdly, we didn't want NLA members who were building successful counter-economic enterprises to feel compelled to return to anti-political activism so we made it clear it was a different group who were willing to soil themselves working with non-agorists.

Finally, I had been reading for years the politics of Europe, Australia and Asia, and in 1978 I was fascinated with a group in France.

Recall that in France then there were two large parliamentary alliances, and, unlike American political coalitions, these were highly ideological. But in the Union of the Left AND the Center-Right alliance, there were members of the once-dominant party of France known as the Radicals. They had a largely free-market position on economics, though in neither coalition was even an old laissez-faire liberal position dominant. The Radical Partie proper remained allied with the Gaullists and Independent Republicans of Giscard d'Estaing, but there "left wing" had split off and joined the Union de Gauche as "The Movement of the Radicals of the Left" (literal translation of Mouvement des radicaux de gauche, or MRG). I liked the sound and implication of that so, with a slight bow to English grammar, our new aboveground activist group, to join forces with the "old" New Left to fight the imminent War in Central America, became the Movement of the Libertarian Left, or MLL.

Q: What are the main differences between left-libertarianism/agorism and anarcho-capitalism?

SEK3 - There are several ways of looking at this, from a theoretical view, from a strategic view, with left jargon, with right terminology, etc., but it's a fair question.

In theory, those calling themselves anarcho-capitalists (I believe Jarrett Wollstein, in his defection from Objectivism, coined the term back in early 1968) do not differ drastically from agorists; both claim to want anarchy (statelessness, and we pretty much agree on the definition of the State as a monopoly of legitimized coercion, borrowed from Rand and reinforced by Rothbard). But the moment we apply the ideology to the real world (as the Marxoids say, "Actually Existing Capitalism") we diverge on several points immediately.

First and foremost, agorists stress the Entrepreneur, see non-statist Capitalists (in the sense of holders of capital, not necessary ideologically aware) as relatively neutral drone-like non-innovators, and pro-statist

Capitalists as the main Evil in the political realm. Hence our favorable outlook toward "conspiracy theory" fans, even when we think they're misled or confused. As for the Workers and Peasants, we find them an embarrassing relic from a previous Age at best and look forward to the day that they will die out from lack of market demand (hence my phrase, deliberately tweaking the Marxoids, "liquidation of the Proletariat"). One can sum that up in the vulgar phrase, "If the State had been abolished a century ago, we'd all have robots and summer homes in the Asteroid belt."

The "Anarcho-capitalists" tend to conflate the Innovator (Entrepreneur) and Capitalist, much as the Marxoids and cruder collectivists do. (It's interesting that the gradual victory of Austrian Economics, particularly in Europe, has led to some New Leftists at least to take our claim seriously that the Capitalist and Entrepreneur are very different classes requiring different analyses, and attempt to grapple with the problem [from their point of view] that creates for them.)

Agorists are strict Rothbardians, and, I would argue in this case, even more Rothbardian than Rothbard, who still had some of the older confusion in his thinking. But he was Misesian, and Mises made the original distinction between Innovators/Arbitrageurs and Capital-holders (i.e., mortgage-holders, coupon-clippers, financiers, worthless heirs, landlords, etc.). With the Market largely moving to the 'net, it is becoming ever-more pure entrepreneurial, leaving the brick 'n' mortar "capitalist" behind.

But it is dealing with current politics and current defence where Agorists most strongly differ from "anarcho-capitalists." A-caps generally (and they have lots of individual variation) believe in involvement with existing political parties (libertarian, Republican, even Democrat and Socialist, such as the Canadian NDP), and, in the extreme case, even support the Pentagon and U.S. Defense complex to fight communism (I wonder what their excuse is now?) until we somehow get to abolishing the State. Agorists, as you have undoubtedly picked up, are revolutionary; we don't see the market triumphing without the collapse of the State and its ruling caste, and, as I point out in New Libertarian Manifesto, historically, they just don't go without unleashing senseless violence on the usually peaceful revolutionaries who then defend themseelves.

Q: The manifesto of MLL was a pamphlet, *New Libertarian Manifesto*. What kind of reaction did it receive?

SEK3 - Strictly speaking, NLM was a manifesto of the New Libertarian Alliance, not just MLL. It was supposed to have been published in 1975. But by the time the first edition came out, MLL had been organized so we included mention of it and ads for it as well.

NLM had an amazing reaction. The initial press run of 1,000 ran out, and Victor Koman undertook to print a "deluxe" version, slick black cover with gold leaf lettering. The second 1,500 are now sold out except for about 10 copies in my possession and Victor's. So a hard-core, purist booklet, densely typeset to save money (it's really a small book but we used small tightly-leaded type to save printing costs), addressed only to those Libertarian activists at the time who were highly immersed ideologically and thus a very limited market, became an Underground Best-Seller. It was never registered with the Library of Congress or even mentioned aboveground. Laissez-Faire Books refused to carry it. Only foreign Libertarian bookstores like the one in Toronto and, of course, Chris Tame's Alternative Bookshop in London would carry it. Eventually Laissez Faire and San Francisco's Freedom Forum Books would sell it under the table.

Murray Rothbard immediately agreed to write a critical response to it, and Robert LeFevre wrote a largely laudatory one. I found the now-obscure Erwin "Filthy Pierre" Strauss to criticize it as not radical enough and put them together, with my rebuttals, in a new journal, Strategy of the New Libertarian Alliance #1 (SNLA1 for short). It sold out, too. We still have a few copies of SNLA#2 left, but SNLA was absorbed into the Agorist Quarterly in 1995.

Q: In that text you suggest that counter-economics is the only way to be conformable with Libertarianism and in the same way an efficient way to fight with the government. Can you say a little more about it?

SEK3 - Counter-Economics in the sense of actively building and expediting what was later called "infrastructure" of the Counter-Economy is the only strategy guaranteed to bring about a Libertarian Society. As the market passes from under the control of the State, the free society grows accordingly. At a certain point, so much of the market is free of the State, and I mean completely free, no subjugation to any form of State control including its judicial and enforcement arms, history's most successful parasitical social entity will finally perish from malnutrition. Of course, it will lash out with unfocused violence to save itself in the final stages, as all collapsing States do, and the Agorists successful self-defense will be the Final Revolution.

Q: 20 years passed since the publishing of "NLM" do you think that since then we're closer or further to accomplishing its goals?

SEK3 - The Counter-Economy grows, the statist White Market shrinks and chokes on its own dysfunctional regulation and creativity-draining tax plunder, throughout the West. In the East, the nalevo brought down the Soviet state, no matter what absurd claims for credit the Reagan neoconservatives make. That is, with limited understanding, the people themselves brought down the worst tyranny known to man through almost unconscious agorism. But conscious awareness of the process is growing. The one weapon the State has still going for it is that most people who participate in Counter-Economics feel guilty about it, as if they were doing something wrong, and the institutional bandit gangs are morally superior. This is what Ayn Rand brilliantly understood and called the Sanction of the Victim. The task of Libertarian activists, while it is still possible to speak freely aboveground, is to prove convincingly to the masses, especially the young enterprising masses in the global economy linked by the free-market anarchist haven known as the Internet, that resistance and disobedience in economic activity is the MOST moral human action possible. Not just on website, but in the arts, science-fiction novels and now films, stage, and the new forms emerging from home computer technology with easily comprehended interfaces.

Q: Lately many Libertarians follow a new strategy promoted by Free Nation Foundation. They want to build a Libertarian nation from the base. Cypherpunks have their hope in the Internet and cryptography. What do you think about these methods of achieving freedom?

SEK3 - The Cypherpunks provide a useful tool/weapon for the Counter-Economy, but there is a lot more to an Economy than that. No one single advance for freedom will achieve the Anarchist Agora, but none should be discarded or belittled, either. Kent Hastings has pointed out the value of nanotechnology, spread-spectrum radio, and small, unmanned, flying vehicles (I forget the term for them) combined with Net privacy to expand the counter-economic infrastructure spectacularly.

I have nothing against "free country" activists, but I think they are just setting up an easy target for the State to use its traditional mass-destruction weaponry to destroy. They rely on the State having a certain level of moral restraint in all of their plans to defend themselves, and I think they are wrong. It has none. It would gladly sacrifice a few million of its subjects to crush a visible beacon of a functional free society, let alone a bit of bad press. I call these attempts to build free countries in today's statist environment, Anarcho-Zionism, "The Search for the Promised Gulch."

Q: As a long-time activist I'm sure you follow action of the younger generation of radicals. Do you think that there is a chance that Libertarian thought will get to the demonstrators in Seattle or Prague?

I listened rather than preached to the anti-globalist anarchists in Los Angeles (after Seattle, Washington, Prague, etc.) in 2000 but they, including the Black Bloc, had their hearts in the right place. They were being used by the Old Left apparatchiki through hyperfeminization and other guilt trips. When former anarchist Jello Biafra (of the great old punk group, The Dead Kennedys) called for support of Ralph Nader for president, I started a call for Nobody for President and was immediately and eagerly joined by the Black Bloc kids. They had less trouble grasping the contradiction of an anarchist supporting a presidential candidate than the "libertarian" partyarchs.