

# Lennon: The Working-class Hero Turns Red

“I felt an obligation . . . to write a song that people would sing in the pub or on a demonstration. That is why I would like to compose songs for the revolution now. . . .”

*T.A.:* Your latest record and your recent public statements, especially the interviews in *Rolling Stone* magazine, suggest that your views are becoming increasingly radical and political. When did this start to happen?

John: I've always been politically minded, you know, and against the status quo. It's pretty basic when you're brought up, like I was, to hate and fear the police as a natural enemy and to despise the army as something that takes everybody away and leaves them dead somewhere. I mean, it's just a basic working-class thing, though it begins to wear off when you get older, get a family and get swallowed up in the system. In my case I've never not been political, though religion tended to overshadow it in my acid days; that would be around '65 or '66. And that religion was directly the result of all that superstar shit—religion was an outlet for my repression. I thought, “Well, there's something else to life, isn't there? This isn't it, surely?”

But I was always political in a way, you know. In the two books I wrote, even though they were written in a sort of Joycean gobbledegook, there's



many knocks at religion and there is a play about a worker and a capitalist. I've been satirizing the system since my childhood. I used to write magazines in school and hand them around. I was very conscious of class, they would say, with a chip on my shoulder, because I knew what happened to me and I knew about the class repression coming down on us—it was a fucking fact but in the hurricane Beatle world it got left out—I got farther away from reality for a time.

*T.A.:* What did you think was the reason for the success of your sort of music?

John: Well, at the time it was thought that the workers had broken through,

but I realize in retrospect that it's the same phony deal they gave the blacks, it was just like they allowed blacks to be runners or boxers or entertainers. That's the choice they allow you—now the outlet is being a pop star, which is really what I'm saying on the album in *Working Class Hero*. As I told *Rolling Stone*, it's the same people who have the power, the class system didn't change one little bit. Of course there are a lot of people walking around with long hair now and some trendy middle-class kids in pretty clothes. But nothing changed except that we all dressed up a bit, leaving the same bastards running everything.

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*T.A.:* When did you start breaking out of the role imposed on you as a Beatle?

John: Even during the Beatle heyday I tried to go against it; so did George. We went to America a few times and Epstein always tried to waffle on at us about saying nothing about Vietnam. So there came a time when George and I said, “Listen, when they ask next time, we're going to say we don't like

Photographs by Dan Richter

by Robin Blackburn and Tariq Ali

that war and we think they should get right out." That's what we did. At that time this was a pretty radical thing to do, especially for the "Fab Four."

It was the first opportunity I personally took to wave the flag a bit. But you've got to remember that I'd always felt repressed. We were all so pressurized that there was hardly any chance of expressing ourselves, especially working at that rate, touring continually and always kept in a cocoon of myths and dreams. It's pretty hard when you are Caesar and everyone is saying how wonderful you are and they are giving you all the goodies and the girls, it's pretty hard to break out of that, to say, "Well, I don't want to be king, I want to be real."

So in its way the second political thing I did was to say, "The Beatles are bigger than Jesus." That really broke the scene, I nearly got shot in America for that. It was a big trauma for all the kids that were following us. Up to then there was this unspoken policy of not answering delicate questions, though I always read the papers, you know, the political bits. The continual awareness of what was going on made me feel ashamed I wasn't saying anything. I burst out because I could no longer play that game any more, it was just too much for me. Of course, going to America increased the build-up on me, especially as the war was going on there. In a way we'd turned out to be a Trojan Horse. The Fab Four moved to the top and sang about drugs and sex and then I got into more and more heavy stuff and that's when they started dropping us.

*R.B.: Wasn't there a double charge to what you were doing right from the beginning?*

Yoko: You were always very direct. . . .

John: Yes, well, the first thing we did was to proclaim our Liverpoolness to the world, and say, "It's all right to come from Liverpool and talk like this." Before, anybody from Liverpool who made it, like Ted Ray, Tommy Handley, Arthur Askey, had to lose their accent to get on the BBC. They were only comedians but that's what came out of Liverpool before us. We refused to play that game. After the Beatles came on the scene everyone started putting on a Liverpudlian accent.



*T.A.: In a way you were even thinking about politics when you seemed to be knocking revolution?*

John: Ah, sure, "Revolution." There were two versions of that song but the underground left only picked up on the one that said "Count me out." The original version which ends up the LP said "Count me in," too; I put in both because I wasn't sure. There was a third version that was just abstract, *musique concrète*, kind of loops and that, people screaming. I thought I was painting in sound a picture of revolution—but I made a mistake, you know. The mistake was that it was anti-revolution. On the version released as a single I said, "When you talk about destruction you can count me out." I didn't want to get killed. I didn't really know that much about the Maoists, but I just knew that they seemed to be so few and yet they painted themselves green and stood in front of the police waiting to get picked off. I just thought it was unsubtle, you know. I thought the original Communist revolutionaries coordinated themselves a bit better and didn't go around shouting about it. That was how I felt—I was really asking a question. As someone from the working class I was always interested in Russia and China and everything that related to the working class, even though I was playing the capitalist game. At one time I was

so much involved in the religious bullshit that I used to go around calling myself a Christian Communist, but as Janov says, religion is legalized madness. Therapy stripped away all that and made me feel my own pain.

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*R.B.: This analyst you went to. . . .*  
John: Janov. . . .

*R.B.: His ideas seem to have something in common with Laing in that he doesn't want to reconcile people to their misery, to adjust them to the world, but rather to make them face up to its causes?*

John: Well, his thing is to feel the pain that's accumulated inside you ever since your childhood. I had to do it to really kill off all the religious myths. In the therapy you really feel every painful moment of your life—it's excruciating, you are forced to realize that your pain, the kind that makes you wake up afraid, with your heart pounding, is really yours and not the result of somebody up in the sky. It's the result of your parents and your environment. As I realized this it all started to fall into place. This therapy forced me to have done with all the God shit. All of us growing up have come to terms with too much pain. Although we repress it, it's still there. The worst pain is that of not being wanted, of realizing your parents do not need you in the way you need them. When I was a child I experienced moments of not wanting to see the ugliness, not wanting to see not being wanted. This lack of love went into my eyes and into my mind. Janov doesn't just talk to you about this but makes you feel it—once you've allowed yourself to feel again, you do most of the work yourself. When you wake up and your heart is going like clappers or your back feels strained, or you develop some other hang-up, you should let your mind go to the pain and the pain itself will regurgitate the memory which originally caused you to suppress it in your body. In this way the pain goes to the right channel instead of being repressed again, as it is if you take a pill or a bath, saying, "Well, I'll get over it."

Most people channel their pain into God or masturbation or some dream of making it. The therapy is like a very

slow acid trip which happens naturally in your body. It is hard to talk about, you know, because you feel "I am pain" and it sounds sort of arbitrary, but pain to me now has a different meaning because of having physically felt all these extraordinary repressions. It was like taking gloves off, and feeling your own skin for the first time. It's a bit of a drag to say so, but I don't think you can understand this unless you've gone through it—though I try to put some of it over on the album. But for me at any rate it was all part of dissolving the God trip or father-figure trip. Facing up to reality instead of always looking for some kind of heaven.

*R.B.: Do you see the family in general as the source of these repressions?*

John: Mine is an extreme case, you know. My father and mother split and I never saw my father until I was 20, nor did I see much more of my mother. But Yoko had her parents there and it was the same.

Yoko: Perhaps one feels more pain when parents are there. It's like when you're hungry, you know it's worse to get a symbol of a cheeseburger than no cheeseburger at all. It doesn't do you any good, you know. I often wish my mother had died so that at least I could get some people's sympathy. But there she was, a perfectly beautiful mother.

John: And Yoko's family were middle-class Japanese but it's all the same repression. Though I think middle-class people have the biggest trauma if they have nice imagey parents, all smiling and dolled up. They are the ones who have the biggest struggle to say, "Goodbye mummy, goodbye daddy."

*T.A.: What relation to your music has all this got?*

John: Art is only a way of expressing pain. I mean the reason Yoko does such far-out stuff is that it's a far-out kind of pain she went through.

*R.B.: A lot of Beatle songs used to be about childhood. . . .*

John: Yeah, that would mostly be me.

*R.B.: Though they were very good there was always a missing element. . . .*

John: That would be reality, that would be the missing element. Because

I was never really wanted. The only reason I am a star is because of my repression. Nothing else would have driven me through all that if I was "normal" . . .

Yoko: . . . and happy. . . .

John: The only reason I went for that goal is that I wanted to say: "Now, mummy-daddy, will you love me?"

*T.A.: But then you had success beyond most people's wildest dreams.*

John: Oh, Jesus Christ, it was a complete oppression. I mean, we had to go through humiliation upon humiliation with the middle classes and showbiz and Lord Mayors and all that. They were so condescending and stupid. Everybody trying to use us. It was a special humiliation for me because I could never keep my mouth shut and I'd always have to be drunk or pilled to counteract pressure. It was hell. . . .

Yoko: It was depriving him of any real experience, you know . . .

John: It was very miserable. I mean, apart from the first flush of making it—the thrill of the first No. 1 record, the first trip to America. At first we had sort of an objective like being as big as Elvis—moving forward was the great thing, but actually attaining it was the big letdown. I found I was having continually to please the sort of people I'd always hated when I was a child. This began to bring me back to reality. I began to realize that we are all oppressed, which is why I would like to do something about it, though I'm not sure where my place is.

*R.B.: Well, in any case, politics and culture are linked, aren't they? I mean, workers are repressed by culture, not guns, at the moment. . . .*

John: . . . They're doped.

*R.B.: And the culture doping them the artist can make or break. . . .*

John: That's what I'm trying to do on my albums and in these interviews. What I'm trying to do is influence all the people I can influence. All those who are still under the dream and just put a big question mark in their mind. The acid dream is over, that is what I'm trying to tell them.

\* \* \*

*R.B.: Even in the past, you know, people would use Beatle songs and give*

*them new words. "Yellow Submarine," for instance, had a number of versions. One that strikers used to sing began "We all live on bread and margarine"; at LSE we had a version that began "We all live in a Red LSE."*

John: I like that. And I enjoyed it when football crowds in the early days would sing "All Together Now"—that was another one. I was also pleased when the movement in America took up "Give Peace a Chance," because I had written it with that in mind really. I hoped that instead of singing "We Shall Overcome" from 1800 or something, they would have something contemporary. I felt an obligation even then to write a song that people would sing in the pub or on a demonstration. That is why I would like to compose songs for the revolution now. . . .

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*R.B.: Your album, Yoko, seems to fuse avant garde modern music with rock. I'd like to put an idea to you I got from listening to it. You integrate everyday sounds, like that of a train, into a musical pattern. This seems to demand an aesthetic measure of everyday life, to insist that art should not be imprisoned in the museums and galleries, doesn't it?*

Yoko: Exactly. I want to incite people to loosen their oppression by giving them something to work with, to build on. They shouldn't be frightened of creating themselves—that's why I make things very open, with things for people to do, like in my book [*Grapefruit*]. Because basically there are two types of people in the world: people who are confident, because they know they have the ability to create; and then people who have been demoralized, who have no confidence in themselves, because they have been told they have no creative ability, but must just take orders. The Establishment likes people who take no responsibility and cannot respect themselves.

*R.B.: I suppose workers' control is about that.*

John: Haven't they tried out something like that in Yugoslavia? They are free of the Russians. I'd like to go there and see how it works.

*T.A.: Well, they have, they did try to break with the Stalinist pattern. But*

*instead of allowing uninhibited workers' control, they added a strong dose of political bureaucracy. It tended to smother the initiative of the workers and they also regulated the whole system by a market mechanism which bred new inequalities between one region and another.*

John: It seems that all revolutions end up with a personality cult—even the Chinese seem to need a father figure. I expect this happens in Cuba too with Che and Fidel. . . . In Western-style communism we would have to create an almost imaginary workers' image of themselves as the father figure.

*R.B.: That's a pretty cool idea—the Working Class becomes its own Hero. As long as it was not a new, comforting illusion, as long as there was a real workers' power. If a capitalist or bureaucrat is running your life then you need to compensate with illusions. . . .*  
Yoko: The people have to trust in themselves.

*T.A.: That's the vital point. The working class must be instilled with a feeling of confidence in itself. This can't be done just by propaganda—the workers must move, take over their own factories and tell the capitalists to bugger off. This is what began to happen in May 1968 in France . . . the workers began to feel their own strength.*

John: But the Communist Party wasn't up to that, was it?

*R.B.: No, they weren't. With ten million workers on strike they could have led one of those huge demonstrations that occurred in the center of Paris into a massive occupation of all government buildings and installations, replacing De Gaulle with a new institution of popular power like the Commune or the original soviets—that would have begun a real revolution, but the French CP was scared of it. They preferred to deal at the top instead of encouraging the workers to take the initiative themselves.*

John: Great . . . but there's a problem about that, you know. All the revolutions have happened when a Fidel or a Marx or a Lenin or whatever, who were intellectuals, were able to get through to the workers. They got a good pocket of people together and the workers seemed to understand that

they were in a repressed state. They haven't woken up yet here, they still believe that cars and tellies are the answer. . . . You should get these left-wing students out to talk with the workers, you should get the school kids involved with The Red Mole.

*T.A.: You're quite right, we have been trying to do that and we should do more. This new Industrial Relations Bill the government is trying to introduce is making more and more workers realize what is happening. . . .*

John: I don't think that bill can work, I don't think they can enforce it, I don't think the workers will cooperate with it. I thought the Wilson Government was a big let-down but this Heath lot are worse. The underground is being harassed, the black militants can't even live in their own homes now, and they're selling more arms to the South Africans. Like Richard Neville said, there may be only an inch of difference between Wilson and Heath but it's in that inch that we live. . . .

*T.A.: I don't know about that; Labour brought in racist immigration policies, supported the Vietnam war and were hoping to bring in new legislation against the unions.*

*R.B.: It may be true that we live in the inch of difference between Labour and Conservative but so long as we do we'll be impotent and unable to change anything. If Heath is forcing us out of that inch maybe he's doing us a good turn without meaning to. . . .*

John: Yes, I've thought about that, too. This putting us in a corner so we have to find out what is coming down on other people. I keep on reading the *Morning Star* [the Communist newspaper] to see if there's any hope, but it seems to be in the 19th century; it seems to be written for dropped-out, middle-aged liberals. We should be trying to reach the young workers because that's when you're most idealistic and have least fear. Somehow the revolutionaries must approach the workers because the workers won't approach them. But it's difficult to know where to start, we've all got a finger in the dam. The problem for me is that as I have become more real I've grown away from most working-class people—you know, what they like is Engelbert Humperdinck. It's the stu-

dents who are buying us now, and that's the problem. Now the Beatles are four separate people, we don't have the impact we had when we were together. . . .

\* \* \*

*R.B.: Now you're trying to swim against the stream of bourgeois society, which is much more difficult. . . .*

John: Yes, they own all the newspapers and they control all distribution and promotion. When we came along there was only Decca, Phillips and EMI who could really produce a record for you. You had to go through the whole bureaucracy to get into the recording studio. You were in such a humble position, you didn't have more than 12 hours to make a whole album, which is what we did in the early days. Even now it's the same—if you're an unknown artist you're lucky to get an hour in a studio; it's a hierarchy, and if you don't have hits, you don't get recorded again. And they control distribution. We tried to change that with Apple but in the end we were defeated. They still control everything. EMI killed our album, *Two Virgins*, because they didn't like it. With the last record they've censored the words of the songs printed on the record sleeve. Fucking ridiculous and hypocritical—they have to let me sing it but they don't dare let you read it. Insanity.

*R.B.: Though you reach fewer people now, perhaps the effect can be more concentrated.*

John: Yes, I think that could be true. To begin with, working-class people reacted against our openness about sex. They are frightened of nudity, they're repressed in that way as well as others. Perhaps they thought, "Paul is a good lad, he doesn't make trouble." Also, when Yoko and I got married, we got terrible racist letters—you know, warning me that she would slit my throat. Those mainly came from Army people living in Aldershot. Officers. Now workers are more friendly to us, so perhaps it's changing.

It seems to me that the students are now half-awake enough to try and wake up their brother workers. If you don't pass on your own awareness then it closes down again. That is why the basic need is for the students to get in with the workers and convince



them that they are not talking gobbledegook. And of course it's difficult to know what workers are really thinking because the capitalist press always only quotes mouthpieces like Vic Feather anyway. So the only thing is to talk to them directly, especially the young workers. We've got to start with them because they know they're up against it. That's why I talk about school on the album. I'd like to incite people to break the framework, to be disobedient in school, to stick their tongues out, to insult authority.

*R.B.: Communication is vital for building a movement, but in the end it's powerless unless you also develop popular force.*

Yoko: I get very sad when I think about Vietnam where there seems to be no choice but violence. This violence goes on for centuries perpetuating itself. In the present age, when communication is so rapid, we should create a different tradition. Traditions are created every day. Five years now is like a hundred years before. We are living in a society that has no history. There's no precedent for it, so we can break the old patterns.

\* \* \*

*T.A.: No ruling class in the whole of history has given up power voluntarily and I don't see that changing.*

Yoko: But violence isn't just a conceptual thing, you know. I saw a program about this kid who had come back from Vietnam—he'd lost his body from the waist down. He was just a lump of meat, and he said, "Well, I guess it was a good experience."

John: He didn't want to face the truth, he didn't want to think it had all been a waste. . . .

Yoko: But think of the violence, it could happen to your kids. . . .

*R.B.: But Yoko, people who struggle against oppression find themselves attacked by those who have a vested interest in nothing changing, those who want to protect their power and wealth. Look at the people in Bogside and Falls Road in Northern Ireland; they were mercilessly attacked by the special police because they began demonstrating for their rights. On one night in August 1969 seven people were shot*

*and thousands driven from their homes. Didn't they have a right to defend themselves?*

Yoko: That's why one should try to tackle these problems before a situation like that happens.

John: Yes, but what do you do when it does happen, what do you do?

*R.B.: Popular violence against their oppressors is always justified. It cannot be avoided.*

Yoko: But in a way the new music showed things could be transformed by new channels of communication.

John: Yes, but as I said, nothing

really changed.

Yoko: Well, something changed, and it was for the better. All I'm saying is that perhaps we can make a revolution without violence.

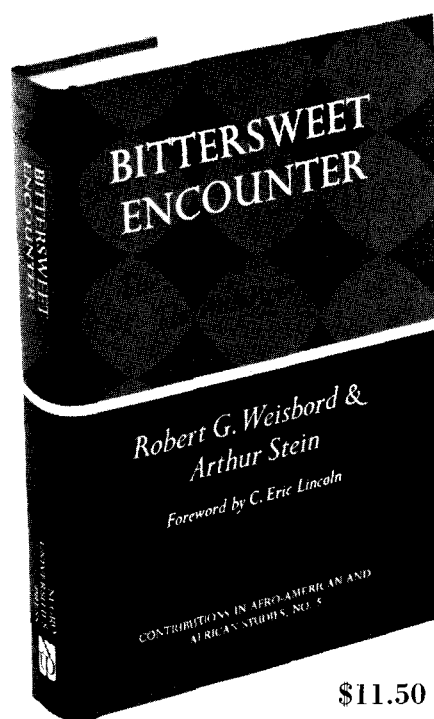
John: But you can't take power without a struggle. . . .

*T.A.: That's the crucial thing.*

John: Because when it comes to the nitty gritty they won't let the people have any power, they'll give all the rights to perform and to dance for them, but no real power.

Yoko: The thing is, even after the revolution, if people don't have any

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trust in themselves, they'll get new problems.

John: After the revolution you have the problem of keeping things going, of sorting out all the different views. It's quite natural that revolutionaries should have different solutions, that they should split into different groups and then reform, that's the dialectic, isn't it—but at the same time they need to be united against the enemy, to solidify a new order. I don't know what the answer is; obviously Mao is aware of this problem and keeps the ball moving.

R.B.: *The danger is that once a revolutionary state has been created, a new conservative bureaucracy tends to form around it. This danger tends to increase if the revolution is isolated by imperialism and there is material scarcity.*

John: Once the new power has taken over they have to establish a new status quo just to keep the factories and trains running.

R.B.: *Yes, but a repressive bureaucracy doesn't necessarily run the factories or trains any better than the*

*workers could under a system of revolutionary democracy.*


John: Yes, but we all have bourgeois instincts within us, we all get tired and feel the need to relax a bit. How do you keep everything going and keep up revolutionary fervor after you've achieved what you set out to achieve? Of course Mao has kept them up to it in China, but what happens after Mao goes? Also he uses a personality cult. Perhaps that's necessary; like I said, everybody seems to need a father figure. But I've been reading *Khrushchev Remembers*—I know he's a bit of a lad himself—but he seemed to think that making a religion out of an individual was bad—that doesn't seem to be part of the basic Communist idea. Still, people are people, that's the difficulty. If we took over Britain, then we'd have the job of cleaning up the bourgeoisie and keeping people in a revolutionary state of mind.

\* \* \*

T.A.: *A personality cult is totally alien to Marxism, which is about ideas. . . . Marx, Lenin and Trotsky were always against it and so was Mao to begin with but then he found it politically useful to use it to break the grip of the Liu Shao Chi group on the Party. I was in China briefly last year and it was obvious that the cult of Mao had got out of hand. Of course Mao is quite different from Stalin—Mao led a revolution, while Stalin betrayed one. But that doesn't mean that there aren't serious weaknesses in the Chinese revolution. During the cultural revolution some very interesting criticisms were developed by Red Guard groups in Shanghai and elsewhere—they insisted on discussing the real issues much more openly than they were being encouraged to. . . .*

John: The cultural revolution seems to have been instigated by Mao himself, wasn't it? There was no national feeling, "Well, there are too many opportunists and too much apathy."

R.B.: *Clearly the cultural revolution was a very bold step in spite of the limits set on it. Mao felt in a position to take it, partly because the popular participation in the Chinese revolution, built up over 20 years of*



The wheel of the law turns without pause.

After the rain good weather in the wake of a cyclone.

The universe throws out its match clothes.

For ten thousand miles the landscape spreads out like a beautiful brocade.

Light breezes smelling flowers.

High on the trees amongst the sparkling leaves.

All the birds sing at once.

Men and animals rise up reborn.

What could be more natural? After sorrow, comes joy.

Ho Chi Minh

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people's war, was much deeper than it could be in Russia where the old order almost collapsed of itself under the tremendous strain of the First World War. Mao couldn't have instigated the masses against the Party bureaucracy unless he was confident of their support. But of course the decisive thing is to build popular power right into the heart of the new revolutionary state. In Britain, unless we can create a new popular power—and here that would basically mean workers' power—really controlled by, and answerable to, the masses, then we couldn't make the revolution.

Yoko: That's why it will be different when the younger generation takes over.

John: I think it wouldn't take much to get the youth here really going. You'd have to give them free rein to attack the local councils or to destroy the school authorities, like the students who break up the repression in the universities. It's already happening, though people have got to get together more. And the women are very important too, we can't have a revolution that doesn't involve and liberate women. It's so subtle the way you're taught male superiority. It took me quite a long time to realize that my maleness was cutting off certain areas for Yoko. She's a red hot liberationist and was quick to know how people who claim to be radical treat women.

R.B.: There's always been at least as much male chauvinism on the left as anywhere else—though the rise of women's liberation is helping to sort that out.

John: It's ridiculous. How can you talk about "power to the people" unless you realize the people is both sexes.

Yoko: You can't love someone unless you are in an equal position with them. A lot of women have to cling to men out of fear or insecurity, and that's not love—basically that's why women hate men . . .

John: . . . and vice versa. . . .

Yoko: So if you have a slave around the house, how can you expect to make a revolution outside it? The problem for women is that if we try to be free, then we naturally become lonely, because so many women are willing to

become slaves, and men usually prefer that. So you always have to take the chance "Am I going to lose my man?" It's very sad.

John: Of course, Yoko was well into liberation before I met her. She'd had to fight her way through a man's world—the art world is completely dominated by men—so she was full of revolutionary zeal when we met. There was never any question about it: we had to have a 50-50 relationship or there was no relationship, I was quick to learn. She did an article about women in *Nova* more than two years back in which she said, "Woman is the nigger of the world."

\* \* \*

T.A.: How do you think we can destroy the capitalist system here in Britain, John?

John: I think only by making the workers aware of the really unhappy position they are in, breaking the dream they are surrounded by. They think they are in a wonderful free-speaking country; they've got cars and tellies and they don't want to think there's anything more to life; they are prepared to let the bosses run

them, to see their children fucked up in school. They're dreaming someone else's dream, it's not even their own. They should realize that the blacks and the Irish are being harassed and repressed and that they will be next. As soon as they start being aware of all that, we can really begin to do something. The workers can start to take over. Like Marx said, "To each according to his need"—I think that would work well here. But we'd also have to infiltrate the Army too, because they are well trained to kill us all. We've got to start all this from where we ourselves are oppressed. I think it's false, shallow, to be giving to others when your own need is great. The idea is not to comfort people, not to make them feel better, but to make them feel worse, to constantly put before them the degradations and humiliations they go through to get what they call a living wage.

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Robin Blackburn is an editor of Britain's *New Left Review*. Tariq Ali is an editor of *The Red Mole*.



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# Letters:

[LOS SIETE]

EDITORS: I'd like to bring readers up to date on Los Siete de la Raza, the six young latinos who inspired a major political movement in San Francisco's Mission District *barrio*.

Immediately after their acquittal on charges of killing a San Francisco policeman, Los Siete were charged with an armed robbery allegedly committed when they were fleeing for their lives. Under California's "indeterminate sentence," the penalty for armed robbery is five years to life. It is under this sentence that such political prisoners as George Jackson have been kept in jail over ten years. If convicted, there was little chance Los Siete would be free again before they were old men. The police hated them too much.

This became clear after Los Siete were bailed out pending their second trial. The Police Officers Association furiously attacked the verdict; a police rally was held in protest; the judge was demoted to civil court; and the press used the cop's widow again, as it had

18 months before, to stir up race hatred against Los Siete and the whole class of brown street-people they had come to represent.

The organization of Los Siete, which since had grown far beyond a political defense committee, understood, as it said in a recent statement, that "when Los Siete were acquitted they were no longer individuals. They were the number one target of the San Francisco police, and therefore could no longer lead normal lives. The organization, realizing this, met with them, explaining the need for security and discipline. Tony and Mario Martinez became part of the leadership. The other four decided to take the path of four individuals, totally ignoring the fact they were political prisoners acquitted of killing a policeman."

The fact that the other four—Nelson, José, Bebe and Gary—preferred tripping to serious political work is understandable. But it led to serious consequences for them. About a month after the acquittal, Nelson and José were busted for dope. The police celebrated. Soon after, José was stopped by the Tactical Squad and beaten mercilessly; after three days in

jail with no medical attention, all the important charges against him were dropped and he went directly to the hospital for surgery.

Then in late April, Bebe and Gary, after being tailed for several days, were caught in what police said was an attempted robbery of a liquor store. Gary was shot in the legs; then his bones were crushed with a rifle butt—the crippling is probably permanent. Bebe is back in jail facing several counts of armed robbery and attempted murder.

Los Siete, after a week of painful analysis, wrote: "It was through their individualism in placing their personal interests first and the interests of the people second that Gary and Bebe ended up trapped by the police. . . . They are representative of the brothers on the street; they are aware of who the enemy is and know all the revolutionary rhetoric. But they lack the discipline and determination to work to liberate the people. . . ."

Meanwhile, the other four had gone underground. "The essence of the liberation movement is the self-determination of all peoples," Tony and Mario said in a tape sent to Los Siete; "and as revolutionaries we feel it correct that we should determine our own destiny, so we can live another day to fight another day."

They added: "Brothers and sisters, after our victory in San Francisco our families had to put up their houses as part of the ransom that made it possible for us to walk the streets again. We are therefore making a mass appeal, and we are asking all of you—students, workers, professionals, brothers and sisters off the block, and movement people—to help by donations."

Los Siete has learned a great deal and come a long way since it began as a political defense committee for six brothers in May 1969. In a way, it was inevitable that the six "heroes" would have to be de-mythified: through no fault of their own, both the establishment press and Los Siete blew them up bigger than life.

Almost \$30,000 is needed to save people like the Martinez family from losing their homes. Los Siete is asking everyone who has supported the movement in the past, and who supports La Raza's efforts toward self-determi-

## KEEP THE SPIRIT OF LOS SIETE FREE



Six months after their acquittal on charges of killing a San Francisco cop, two of Los Siete de la Raza are back in jail and the other four have gone underground. All six were facing life in prison on new charges of armed robbery stemming from an incident six days after the cop's death, when Los Siete were fleeing for their lives, and police had orders to shoot them on sight. "As revolutionaries we should determine our own destiny," Tony and Mario Martinez said, "so we can live another day to fight another day."

Almost \$30,000 is needed immediately so that families and friends of Los Siete will not lose their homes, which were put up as bail. Los Siete is making a mass appeal, and asking students, workers, professionals, movement brothers and sisters, to send what you can.

LOS SIETE DEFENSE FUND: P.O. BOX 40159, San Francisco 94140