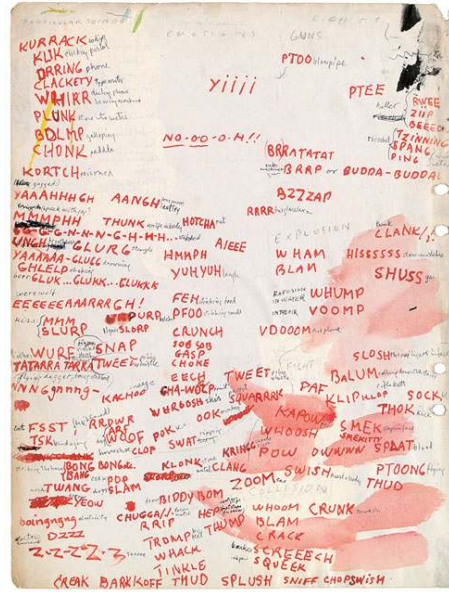
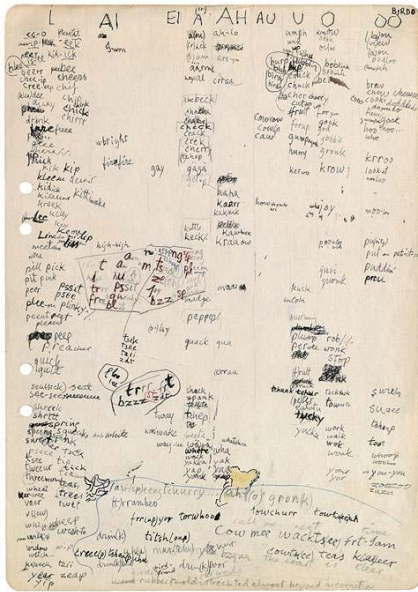


S.O.M.B.A. (SOME OF MY BASIC ASSUMPTIONS) 1971-73

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1. Basic Assumption

All people are different, but everyone is of equal worth.

2. Class. Needs.

Marxism is about destroying class differences, not differences between individuals.

"From everyone according to his ability, to everyone according to his needs."

3. "Human Nature"

Are people intrinsically evil (aggressive, etc.)? Or are they basically good?

People are conditioned by society. "There are no evil people, only evil governments." (Ho Chi Minh)

4. Two Economies

(A) Capitalism, Lopsided development: development for the strongest, for "the best", (Up: wealth and power for the elite, consumer goods; technology; elite education. Down: employment and job control; health pensions, schools, housing, etc.).

Basis: profit, People are a factor of production, a means to an end: capital output.

(B) China. Development for all (even for the weakest).

Basis: cooperation, Production is a means, people are an end (even if efficiency is lowered).

5. The Brain, The Family

"After humans were born, their brain almost trebled in size. Thus childhood had to be lengthened...This brain, divested of its precise instinctive responses, would learn how to utilize what it received from others." (L. Eiseley)

"Pressured to survive, unsure of their instinctual responses, humans develop neurosis: a mechanism for adjusting to society..."

Neurosis is transferred through generations and is institutionalized. The neurotic-repressive-patriarchal family: a model for society," (Wilhelm Reich)

6. Capitalism

What is wrong with capitalism? It benefits the few and exploits the many.

It promotes greed. The stock market: playing Monopoly with the fruits of people's labor.

It promotes aggressiveness. (In English, "aggressive" is fre-

quently used in a positive sense), USA: world record of homicides - 6.8 per 100,00 persons). (No. 2: Finland - 3.4 per 100,000). USA: 190 million privately owned guns - an average of 1.5 per household.

USA: the slaughter of a small country (Vietnam).

The basic paradox: since people are conditioned by society, society should be good, or should be changed. But people are already shaped by no-good societies.

"Thus the existing society is reproduced not only in the minds of men, but also in their senses, and no persuasion can break this petrified sensibility," (Marcuse)

7. Gradualism

Recommended by American Social Democrats. Implemented by Labor governments in Western Europe.

The program: by reforms, undermine and ultimately break capitalism.

The reality: strengthen the Social Democrats and union bureaucracy, while co-administering the nation with the capitalist powers. The result is to legitimize and to strengthen capitalism.

In addition, the myth "we have contained capitalism".

People are pacified with certain reforms and with consumer goods. Payed for with high taxes and prices.

Sweden, After forty years of Labor rule. 6 per cent of business nationalized, 5 per cent owned by the cooperative movement.

8. The Knot of Imperialism: Expansion and Racism

The capitalist firm, based on the profit motive, tends to produce more than can be consumed.

The expansion spiral: more profit buys more machines that produce more goods. So the corporations "must strive to acquire new markets in both the product and the geographical senses. One leads to conglomeration, the other to multinationalism." (P. Sweezy)

Racism: (white) Americans are the Master Race.

"Without air supremacy, we would be an easy prey for any yellow dwarf with a pocket-knife." (Lyndon Johnson)

"A Mongoloid Trotskyite" (Time Magazine on Ho Chi Minh)

On the battlefield, the "Viet Cong" are seen as "fanatics".

"VC" is a pun on WC, promoted by the US psychological warfare.

"The struggle against imperialism is partly a struggle to see the Vietnamese as human beings." (Tom Hayden)

9. Three Dictatorships

USA: dictatorship of profit. USSR: dictatorship of the Party.
 China: dictatorship of Party and people. On the national level: complete top-down control. (1970 Cambodia invasion: a million demonstrators in Peking. 1972 mining of Haiphong: not one demonstrator, Nixon's visit to China: no discussion of this among the people). On the local level, extensive participation, especially since the Cultural Revolution.

In the ideal People's Republic of the future:

1. decentralize most power functions
2. rotate all key positions
3. create channels for participation (videophone debates? -- homes and jobs hooked into computers for national, regional and local referenda?)

10. Martians

We are like Martians on this planet, (The industrial nations in Europe, America, USSR, Japan, etc.)

Alienated: from our body - our mind - our work- society
 - elite or garbage culture - nature - the world.

A colossal waste of the energy of people's lives.

11. The Revolt of the Sixties

Palestinians, N. Ireland, Uruguay, Bangladesh and W. Bengal, Indochina, etc.

USA, The National Guard was called out-1920-30: 78 times; 1940-50: 22; 1967: 25; 1968: 104.

France. Paris, May 1968, workers and students unite.

Factories occupied. But the Stalinist CP and union stall until it is too late.

"The new sensibility has been the great force in the first powerful rebellion / Paris, May 68 / for a qualitatively different way of life." (Marcuse)

During crisis, radical consciousness grows naturally.

Thought and action go hand in hand, Personal and social liberation. National (or racial) struggle and class struggle.

12. Three If's

The Left in "peace"-time: confusion, infighting, and endless splits.

The radical groups in USA might become a force.

IF they unite for larger actions (strikes, demonstrations).

And in the future: if they form a coalition Third Party, and put out a widespread daily newspaper of the Left.

IF they find where their communities are, and how to connect of them. (Women, minorities, interest groups, neighborhood activity).

IF the individuals are able to know themselves. They study theories of revolution, but in their life they occasionally act

according to patriarchal petty bourgeois values and are unable to attract new people into the movement.

13. Three Risks. The Women's Movement

Involution: personal liberation, meditation, therapy, etc. as an end in itself, i.e. to be contented in a sick society.

Separatism: for instance, Black nationalism, Black political power, African life-style, etc, as an end.

Fashion; Two weeks after Nixon's visit to China, "Mao-suits" in New York's Upper East Side stores. Ten months later, Mao-prints by Andy Warhol.

Could a radical women's movement tip the scale in the USA?

Maybe, since the women's movement (along with labor) is the only potential mass movement in the USA. Also the women's will to change grows out of their entire life situation: an evolving, self-made new consciousness.

It could lead to "a weakening of the primary aggressiveness which, by biological and social factors, has governed the patriarchal culture..In Delacroix's painting, it is a woman that leads the people on the barricades.

She carries a rifle, for the end of violence has still to be fought

for." (Marcuse)

14. Future Society

No existing socialist nation is a truly integrated People's Republic, But there are some good micro-societies: collectives in China and in the West, liberated areas in Indochina, Africa, etc.

Six points for a future society (based on an article by P. Sweezy, Monthly Review, 1972:2).

EQUALITY, not only in a material sense, but in access to education and power. Workers must participate in management, managers in manual work.

FREEDOM of discussion and criticism, And of creative expression. Not by creating a state-financed elite of fantasy parasites - but by artists participating in society, on all lev-

els ("pure" and applied art, social projects, manual work).

COMBINE agricultural and industrial development, and

DECENTRALIZE: break up urban agglomeration.

WORK: must become not only a means - for production, for income etc.- but be dealt with as "life's most important creative activity,"- (And in Utopia: everyone a life-artist)

BALANCE. "Needs like food, shelter, leisure, etc" must be brought into balance with each other, and with society's resources and the environment. The absurd and disastrous bourgeois notion of insatiable wants must be repudiated."

SYSTEM OF DISTRIBUTION. Eliminate the present system of distribution: services and goods acquired through earning and spending of money. Free services and goods (according to need). An end to all relations between value and commodity.

15. A New Sensibility

"The new rebellion is both moral and aesthetic, rather than a clear-cut class struggle." (Marcuse)

Vietnam. According to Kim Chi, a Vietnamese woman teacher, the NLF soldier should combine an "imposing appearance" with a "romantic quality...He shows his 'romantic quality' when he installs a wire on the trees in such a manner that birds can perch on it and sing on it." NLF-bulletin: "Soldier, spring in Vietnam is ineffably beautiful. Apricot blossoms cheer your feats, and swallows soar, waiting for good tidings. Fire your rifles instead of fireworks.

Wave your flags in lieu of flowers and ornament Vietnam's spring with everlasting beauty!"

USA and Western Europe. The three major trends.

1. Dada. Zen, John Cage. The sixties: new art, poetry, music, dance, events, mixed media. The Living Theatre. Counterculture, new life-style, communalism, new drugs.
2. Ways to self-realization. Mysticism, meditation. New Psychology. Reich, Lowen, Janov, Schultz, Perls, Laing.
3. New consciousness: women, minorities.

USSR: the political (material) revolution that never grew into a psychological revolution.

USA, Maybe, in the future, USA will generate some kind of psychological revolution. But will it ever become political? The dilemma: can you be happy (individual happiness = the deep and total being in the Now) and still feel enough outrage to rebel?

16. To Rebel

The rebel/radical

- is not a "fanatic" (brave enemies of USA are at best "fanatical")
 - is not moved by the intellectual appeal of an ideology
 - is not a pragmatist, looking for success stories (Social Democrats like Harrington, etc.: US is capitalist, China is totalitarian, everything so bad, so sad...)
 Being radical is about moral commitment. A sense of outrage, once your eyes have been opened. And, ideally, it should permeate every aspect of your life.
 Question no.1 for the future: Will "the worms" erode the existing capitalist or socialist- bureaucratic power structures?
 China: local self-management. USSR: underground dissent.
 USA and Western Europe: movements of women, minorities, anti-Vietnam war, rank and file, Third World: liberation movements.

17. My Work

"The bourgeois artist paints the hulk of a sinking ship."

(B. Brecht)

Question: isn't it "radical chic" to try to sell paintings criticizing

capitalism to rich people and institutions in USA?

1. As long as you live in a capitalist system you are a part of it, whether you make art or drive cabs.

2. Supposing I were to sell a work to Mr. X, he would have to pay my price, thus enabling me to go on with my work. Supposing I had to drive one of X's cabs, I would have to take what he offered me, and I would be unable to do artwork.

(P.S. Remember, your artworks are purchased with stolen money - surplus taken from workers.)

3. Only via art gallery shows do you reach out to museums, print editions, books, etc.

Ideally, I would like to make enough money to subsidize mass multiples of my works, priced like LP's and books.

Ultimately, a self-supporting alternative distribution system.

4. For me, it has been important to demonstrate in my works that "heavy" art (not cartoons, etc.) can be critical and socially concerned. Of course, most heavy art is not a tool for political change.

But artists can be (could be). Organize. Publish. Speak. Demonstrate, Strike. Work in community.

Öyvind Fahlström
 New York. 1972-73