They destroyed my bookstore and they had me in a cage.

Black Puerto Rican anarchist Martin Sostré recently won his release from prison after serving 20 years in solitary confinement. His sentiments are shared by many Puerto Ricans.

Q—Your legal suit, Sostré vs. Rockefeller, demands removal of the criminal case against you after another inmate, Jimmy Sullivan, overheard guards "plot and plan" to either kill you or to have you lynched. You were beaten by seven guards for refusing to submit to a rectal exam, then convicted of assaulting them. Could you elaborate on that incident a bit?

A—Yeah, sure. In 1970, when federal judge Motley first ruled that the rectal examination was dehumanizing and degrading, it would have seemed that the rectal examination would be prohibited, but it was not. You're dealing with a closed society (in prison). They have thirty foot walls. They have gun towers. Nobody can go in. We lost the important decision last year's challenge to the right of the press to go in. The courts ruled that the press could not go into a prison unless they were allowed by the warden. So they get away with anything.

Q—What are you gonna shake me down for? What are you looking for? Do you have a warrant? Am I . . . shut up! Get up there against the wall! And if you question them further they will assault you, throw you up against the car or bend you over the hooch of the car, beat your ass, shake you down. Then in order to cover up for their brutality they arrest you, put you in Q-How could they rationally accusing you of assaulting them? What happened in the trial itself?

A—Well, it's just like out here in the street when you get stopped by a cop, especially if you have long hair, a beard, or show any stereotype that is contrary to the system. I spent years in solitary because of my personhood and my personal freedom and that was what I held onto all those years. Obviously a cop's answer to the question, "What are you gonna shake me down for?" They destroyed my bookstore and they had me in a cage on the Open Road interview.
repression is many times more effective. Many times I was the only one resisting the repressive measures of the state. Many times it would get one or two to me but as soon as I did that they shipped them off to another place. Of course the police force, which had a population of about 1,800 to 2,000, there was never at one time, more than four or five. But they did this not just on two thousand. You can see what the odds are.

Now mind you, there’s quite a few prisoners who call themselves revolutionaries but they are just like some of these revolutionaries, militiants, activists out here who will try to make up false counts and not deeds.

Q—What sorts of things did you do to keep yourself busy during your daily prison routine?

A—I’ve been a yogi since 1956. The first thing I do in the morning, after I wash up and have breakfast, I do yoga exercises. Type of yoga I practice is unlike the type I usually just enough yoga exercises to keep myself physically and mentally fit, not with a view to achieve nirvana or further my incarna-
tion because I don’t believe in that, so I’m not trying to achieve it, but to strengthen my body and mind in order to fight oppression. If you’re going to be a real yogi you have to be self from mundane things. You’re going to have to concern yourself, like most yogis I’ve read about, just with attaining one thing and that is to become a righteous cooperator because you think culture is a very important aspect to be used on a global scale to show the interrelationship between different cult-
ures, that they’re not just the systems to be used for oppression. I’m for much more in the working class myself, just concentrating on the working class. The lumpen is a different story. They’re the ones I concentrate on. I’ll leave working with workers to others. The lumpen is the class that I relate to, that I come from — the detonators of the revolution as far as I’m concerned. It’s the lowest and most oppres-
sed class. Of course the revolutions have been taken over by others. But these are the ones who have started the process, the detonators, the ones who go out in the streets. Blacks, in the forties and the fifties, were the ones that were out; the ones that rebelled. Later on, other groups followed their acts — protests, marches and what not. They’re the ones who opened the doors and fought in the courts and on every level. In the same way, the feminist struggle from way back — the old feminists like Emma Goldman — has also been in the forefront. Groups like the unemployed, Third World people and prisoners are among the most oppressed so they’re the ones who rebel. The others are not as oppressed naturally don’t have the incentive.

Q—You were in prison during an era of cultural and political upheaval. What im-
pression of the revolutionary level of struggle did you have during your incarceration and what’s your reaction to what you’ve found since your release? Has it lived up to your expectations?

A—Not really. I’ve found the spirit among the masses is not at the height of the Sixties. As you know, in 1967 the Black Panther Party had been in existence one year. SDS was really at its height in all the universities and the 1968 Democratic Convention was just about that year. And there were many other politically dynamic groups that had fired the consciousness of the dynamic elements of our society, particularly the anti-Vietnam War move-
ment was at its height then.

However, now all that has changed. Currently, after Huey Newton’s det-
nations now the different programs they had to infiltrate and destroy the Left and frame up, kill, assassinate and everything — they finally destroyed that spirit. Partly because of the repression State and their FBI-Hoover programs. Partly because of the mistakes made and short-
sightedness of the anti-war movement mostly because they have lost sight of having its base on college campuses. It never established any bases or roots in the community in that never have the Vietnam War ended, the anti-Vietnam war movement remains the same thing. It’s a per-
manent sellout. I’ve noticed a lot of cynicism out here. Because of the turnaround that has occurred. It’s been weakened, gone through. Like Bobby Seale with his tie and coat on — the good Democrat. After advocating destroying the pig without any-
thing to try it out. And because of the sellout of the pig it’s found that you can’t get that chiseled by the system; by money or positions, anti-
poverty jobs given to them, desks put in them. We’ve laid out their formal commitment.

Q—Do you feel people are cynical.

They don’t want to hear shit when you approach them. People who have suffered, who were killed, who do not care about the various organizations. Many were injured, had their heads beat in various demonstrations, we have seen burned shit, gas, were faked over and arrested and spied upon. A lot of people have never been in jail before and they will listen, who will try. They don’t want to hear anything. Now everyone is into doing their own thing the way they say, which usually means nothing.

However, I’ve noticed another level of struggle developing and that’s the prolif-
eration of underground groups, the guidance for them. They have it going on. Here, in New York, the Black Liberation Army is an outgrowth of the Panthers. Many of our people were part of the pan-
ex-Panther who were tried. On the west coast you find that who have been chiseled by the system, who have never been in jail before will listen, who will try. They don’t want to hear anything. Now everyone is into doing their own thing the way they say, which usually means nothing.

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anarchism. As a matter of fact they are anarchists. This change has come about rather fast in the past few months, to my knowledge. They're wildly read. No doubt they've read about it before and no doubt they thought about it but, I mean, the decision to embrace revolution, or anarchism, in its more militant form, is quite a step after the letters they were incarcereated and I was still incarcerated. I've sent them anarchism, and I've also asked people on the West Coast to send them reading material books on anarchism to further rain on them the indissoluble and impressive of the different facets of anarchism. The last letter I sent to those prisoners Joe and Russ, have shown that they have embraced anarchism and they're very happy about it. It's a step away from the 'liberal' in a very broad sense. They're still studying anarchism, of course. It's a very heavy step and a step in the right direction because it's a step toward maximum free- dom. It's a step away from the party line of philosophy where others issues orders and you follow it's a step toward greater independence of thought and action.

I've supported these brothers and this sister even before they were captured. I was one of the few voices on the Left which supported them all the way while they were still captives. So far as I knew that was a very critical period, bringing this whole thing into a little heavier because they saw by my letter that it was a question of justice and a question of their right to the freedom of whether you're a Marxist-Leninist or any other type of Leninist, one should not side with the enemy denouncing a comrade because the comrade's activity does not suit you. This is one of the reasons you read some of the denunciations in the Left papers - calling the SRA terrorists and this and that - in the New York Times and New York Daily News.

So, these comrades in prison now are sincere comrades who should receive the best possible support and they have a conscience to get out. They're victims of the system and they've given their all. They've put their lives on the line. They went beyond just talking rhetoric. They have an intellectual background that allows them to use all means necessary to overthrow the system. You can't ask any more than that. They've done this in all the countries around and more than that: than when you put your life on the line.

So I urge everyone to support these comrades by using all means necessary to get them out. In this death grip that the enemy has upon them. We have to respond to the logic of the revolutionaries who tell us that armed action comes after mass consciousness has already been prepared. We have to help the people off ... the people aren't ready for revolution.

Well, that's a cop-out. I've always said that it's a cop-out for not doing anything. This is one of the reasons we've got to be courageous to confront the system, to stand up and do what has to be done. Whenever there's a move to oppress or to suppress by all means necessary. There's no reason they can defend that the people aren't ready. The people have always been ready. It's those who make the cop-outs who are not ready and they're trying to push it onto the people.

It's just like when some of them have to go down the street from the police department if you're going to march on the jail or the courthouse or whatever and you sit down and determine the route that you should march so everything is nice and orderly. They even try to escort you with motorcycles to make sure everything is orderly. There may be a helicopter up ahead. You have your marshals with the arm bands to make sure that the marchers are all there where you and the State have worked out. You finally get to this place where you have the rally or whatever happening and there are people speaking. They even know who's going to speak because you had to give them that in advance, so everyone can make sure everyone gets their frustration off. You make sure that everyone gets to entertain the people. Everyone has a good time and then it's time to go home so the march is over, and they come to the bus stations and leaves.
A—The current anarchist movement is not dynamic enough. There's no life like that. It appears to be just a set of people, very noisy, a natural dynamic force. It can't become the modern spirit raising examples like the anarchists in the old days of Bakunin. This is what anarchism that is not in action, not in action is. I am trying my damnedest to bring this about, but I think that you are adding to the attention of many anarchists who have been the passing of the line, the line, and I call them armchair anarchists. I'm confining my remarks to this country because I think that some of the anarchists in other parts of the world, like in Europe, are more active. A new coming tide of fascism will force many comrades to come out of their lethargy and put into practice the original anarchist tradition of being not only the detractors of revolution, but also of making of those who share the same aims of just detesting the revolution to have it rippped off by party lines as has been set up for you, but to give it an objective life and a sustained life to build the first anarchist base from which to go on. I see the oil emerge and which the deeds will inflame the spirit of the people.

In revolutionanary anarchism we have an abundance of examples. All through history, individuals and small groups of anarchists have been the detractors. The movements of the people, although it was not recognized as such by even the Leftists, what was it that anarchism—

Anarchism is the spontaneity of the people. This is a natural thing, not something that was planted in someone's head. It's just like when somebody tries to break into your house and you stop the thief in the street. There is a natural response to oppression, to aggression. This is a natural thing, to stop the movement. And it is the mechanism that all of us have for survival. I don't see where anarchism is anywhere else than in the natural thing. It's the natural thing. The movement of all of it. It's the natural thing with all of it. What has happened to the things that are dampened by society, by the State, to make it appear that it's a bad thing, that you shouldn't resist and that there should be a code you should respond according to some patriots is that we are being told to support the destruction of the revolution, to slow the revolution. But any fine they make, they will take the ones and there is the one you would like to make.

Q—What is your attitude toward Marxist-Leninist anti-imperialist struggles like the Viet Cong or MPLA?

A—My attitude toward those is that they help us. We will have to make an effort to create a situation where it will make it easier for us anarchists to deal with it. There's going to be much more celebrity attention paid to the anti-imperialist anti-capitalist movements, something like Angola, where the difference is, although not being fought like Portugal, they were fighting against the Portuguese.

I don't think it is as simple a thing where all the different factions will join. There's going to be competition. There will be a competition among the groups. I see that state of affairs, especially if the United States, this monster main base of imperialism, starts tottering, it'll be up for grabs. I can see many groups, not only the United States, they are fighting not only for themselves, just like China and Russia are fighting, but also for all the people in the world.

It may be a situation like in Russia where the anarchist Nester Makhno bough, had something to do with it. When he was thrown in to a cell until he was ripped off. That's why we've got to strengthen and participate in the struggle. We have to be with the people. We will start building our army. We better start preparing because it's coming very soon. Imperial intervention is in the domain. Now they're getting down to the actual fighting between Rhodesia, which they're going to lose just by that and the people in this fight is the people in the state.

That is the future of this country. In the not too distant future this State will be overcome in the world. It is that for our defense. If one State rises we anarchists — is there, I don't have to tell you what we want to do.

Q—What are the terms of your parole as of now?

A—My parole ends in the year 2001. However, if I stay out without violating terms of parole, I think I could have a chance to get that off parole but off. The parole officer intimated that I shouldn't be speaking in public and that I should be watchful of the overgrowth of the government using all the resources that are available at universities and where I speak. When I went to report to him several weeks ago he had some troubles with his staff from his superiors of a paper where I had spoken. He questioned whether or not this type of public speaking would be acceptable to him. Naturally he could not stop speaking because there's freedom of speech. I was have been behind the prison hinted that this type of thing might be detrimental to me.

Q—Do you think it didn't think that would be, that I think it's my duty to speak and that it's my duty to speak to the brutality, the racism and the torture that I've been subjected to. And it's the same reason, it's the same situation is going on and what their tax dollars were used for. I feel that it's my duty, the same duty that any reasonable human being has that is a citizen and the unconstutional acts against me. I don't think the government has the right to stop the people have a right to know under the First Amendment (to the U.S. Constitution). If I'm exercising this right and I don't see any way it could hurt me. So he shrugged his shoulders and told me, "Well, Mr. the don't know, maybe you should think about it a little more you know." Then he left me there.

They're not pleased at all that I'm attacking the government. I'm using the history of the government in its official and what was done in 1776 when all other means have been exhausted that they have been they have been — legal means because there's no justice in the courts; administratively, there's no legality and with the constraints of the political system, and the unconstutional acts against me. Then they have what they want — the right to stop the people have a right to know under the First Amendment (to the U.S. Constitution). If I'm exercising this right and I don't see any way it could hurt me. So he shrugged his shoulders and told me, "Well, Mr. the don't know, maybe you should think about it a little more you know." Then he left me there.

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