Recollecting the New American Movement: An Introduction

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The essays and interviews gathered in this issue provide a collective first-person account of the history of the New American Movement (NAM), a socialist-feminist organization active across the United States throughout the 1970s. This group was formed in 1972 by a cohort of antiwar and women's movement activists who felt there was both a need for, and a possibility of, generating a popular movement for socialism in the U.S. They recognized this would be a lengthy struggle involving a "long march through the institutions" rather than a dramatic "storming of the ramparts." They also felt this goal was attainable. Though this might seem ambitious from the vantage point of 2010, the skeptical optimism NAM embodied should remind us of the magnitude of the political and cultural changes that occurred throughout the 1960s and 1970s in the U.S. and abroad. While today it might seem curious that NAM formed after the '60s had ended, in fact, the trajectory of this organization should instruct us that the radical visions for social transformation that we associate with the 1960s inspired activists long into the 1970s and 1980s.

Many NAM members were veterans of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) among other groups, and had been inspired by what the antiwar, civil rights and women's movements suggested about the popular and political sensibilities of their era. They rejected the turn among the leadership of SDS in the late 1960s to what they considered to be the ultra-Left, epitomized by the Weather Underground and the groups that made up the New Communist Movement such as the Revolutionary Communist Party, the October League, and the Progressive Labor Party.[1] NAM activists, though sharing with these groups a commitment to creating a mass movement for socialism in the U.S., were fundamentally different in outlook and ambition. NAM members had no expectation that revolutionary socialist movements, which had gained ground elsewhere in the world and at other historical times, would, could, or should work as models for developing a mass socialist movement in the U.S. While NAM members might have joked about storming the White House, they were serious about transforming people's expectations for how everyday life could be lived, and through doing so, creating the basis for a mass movement for socialism.

NAM's theory of revolutionary change came from several sources. NAM was profoundly committed to socialist-feminism, more so than any other Left organization of its time—according to its members—and the insights of the second wave of the women's movement helped them understand the function of ideology at the most intimate level. From this, NAM members also gained an awareness of the magnitude of the work involved in creating an egalitarian society. NAM's touchstone for revolutionary theory and practice was the work of Antonio Gramsci. In particular, NAM members responded to his analysis of civil society and the concept of the "war of position," which held that in a non-revolutionary moment, the function of a revolutionary organization was to develop in and through popular consciousness a "common sense" that successfully could challenge and replace the dominant social order.

However, it would be wrong to characterize NAM members as followers of Gramscian thought. Their interest in Gramsci came from the way his insights enabled practical advances in their political organizing and a greater understanding of their experiences in the social movements and counter-culture of the 1960s and 1970s. The ideological question—how people find meaning in their lives, with and against the dominant social order—was a fundamental issue for NAM members. They saw the cultural sphere as the central arena of struggle in light of their experiences during the 1960s. Thus, while NAM members read Lenin, Mao and many other revolutionary thinkers, they insisted on creating a mass movement that couldpropose a socialist response to the conditions facing the 1970s U.S. working class, with its emerging white-collar and female clerical workforces, and slowly declining industrial economic base.

NAM's practical accomplishments are also striking. The history of Santa Cruz, CA NAM described in this volume by Mike Rotkin—a leader of the chapter—is compelling example of the political force NAM could generate in a small city. Through its push for a community health center, Santa Cruz NAM developed a broad progressive coalition that transformed Santa Cruz itself. It also led Rotkin, running as a declared socialist-feminist, to serve his first of five terms as mayor. These achievements were the result of NAM members' energy and dedication to community organizing, as well as to their theoretical outlook and commitment. Although Santa Cruz NAMwas a particularly effective chapter, it was not pursuing a different agenda from any other NAM chapter around the country. In the interviews and essays that follow, readers will find accounts of the many other ways NAM chapters experienced success; together these narratives outline the potential NAM represented to its members and the power of its revolutionary vision.

Practical Limits to Utopian Thinking

To its credit, NAM's ambitions were well matched by the challenges it faced. One of NAM's primary obstacles came directly from its inclusive vision of social transformation and its insistence on finding an "American" mode of socialism. This ambition, coupled with a rejection of older modes of revolutionary organization and politi-

cal sectarianism, made it difficult for NAM to articulate a concrete vision of a new social order. Unlike many of their ultra-Left and Old Left peers, NAM members did not believe, based on what they saw and understood of the world around them, that a revolutionary socialist movement in the U.S. would begin with the industrial proletariat. Their quest for a new model of social transformation proved challenging. They knew there was no chance of reorganizing society without the willing consent of the mass of industrial and organized labor. However, NAM members refused to imagine that a different economic system could be created without a broad, popular movement across all sectors of the working and middle classes that could call for such a transformation.

NAM was aware that there were precedents for its vision. Members knew that the Communist Party's Popular Front strategy it inaugurated in the 1930s to generate a united front against fascism resonated with their own ambitions. But if NAM members felt they had a great deal to learn from the Communist Party's success in engendering this broad progressive movement, they did not posit themselves as the revolution's vanguard. When asked about the Popular Front, NAM members reflected on it much the way Popular Front historian Michael Denning has described it, not as "a marriage of Communists and liberals" but as "a social movement" that was fundamentally non-sectarian, welcoming "those who were non-Communist socialists and independent leftists, working with Communists and with liberals, but marking out a culture that was neither a Party nor a liberal New Deal culture" (5). Many NAM members also looked to the Debsian Socialist Party as a precedent, especially in the context of James Weinstein's histories of the Socialist Party. Weinstein, in fact, was influential early in NAM's formation by making sure NAM members were committed to remaining openly socialist, and the two movement journals he was deeply involved with—*Socialist Revolution* and *In These Times*—provided a forum for debate and analysis of different models of socialist politics.

If NAM members were united by their goal of creating a broad movement for socialism, they were overwhelmed by it as well. To paraphrase Richard Healey, one of NAM's leaders during its most coherent period, the gap between struggling for reforms of daily life and creating a socialist transformation proved too massive to for an organization such as NAM to bridge. As readers will discover, one of NAM's primary challenges was keeping its members focused on building NAM as an independent, non-sectarian socialist-feminist organization. Members spent their energy in coalitions and on projects that would improve the communities in which they lived. This left little time for members to build NAM itself. Rotkin's essay usefully provides both a study of NAM's effectiveness and a careful account of the toll its successes had on the organization. The "donut" problem, as NAM members characterize it, was a phenomenon that eventually proved insurmountable. With membership active in a variety of projects not designed directly to further NAM's revolutionary goals, where there should have been a vital organizational core of activists, a "hole" developed instead. NAM never found a way to link the grass-roots movements it was involved in to a nationwide

movement towards socialism. The utopian ambition that drew people to NAM—to create a socialist movement that could attract the working class majority of the U.S.—became a primary challenge it could not overcome. One way to place NAM in its historical context is to note that it was a socialist organization that came of age in the era that saw the rise of single-issue political formations supplant its broader vision.

NAM's perspective toward creating an indigenous revolutionary movement was encapsulated in its name: the New American Movement. It was formed during a time when the antiwar movement had placed anti-imperialism as the radical Left's primary political project, a situation that to some demanded that organizations like NAM model themselves after revolutionary movements in the global south. Against this current, NAM contended that any successful socialist movement in the U.S. needed to be "American" in tone and form. NAM members saw their organization's name as an historical rather than nationalistic gesture, a rhetorical opportunity to champion a homegrown socialist movement based on overcoming the lived contradictions of 1970s American life.

One of NAM's legacies that is most challenging to examine is its failure to attract members in significant numbers from among nonwhite communities. While NAM had working relationships with the Puerto Rican Socialist Party, revolutionary nationalist organizations, and activists from a variety of communities, the organization remained largely white in spite of its clear commitment to antiracism and anti-imperialism. Many NAM members, by their own accounts, worked hard to change the organization's racial makeup. That they were not more successful indicates the magnitude of this challenge. It is no surprise that many NAM members welcomed the Rainbow Coalition as a positive development in local and national politics, or that they took part in it as actively as they were able.

NAM never became the movement it set out to be. It flourished and grew throughout the 1970s, but by 1980, in spite of increasing degrees of organizational and theoretical sophistication, its membership leveled off. It claimed about 1,300 active and up to 2,500 general members altogether, including those who paid a lower dues rate and were not central to the organization's daily life.[2] These numbers held steady as that decade unfolded. In 1982, NAM merged with the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee (DSOC), an off-shoot of the American Socialist Party, to form the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), which remains today the largest socialist organization in the U.S. This merger did not come about easily, and NAM members view it in an ambivalent light—as a positive development of its socialist politics, as a conservative reaction to the rise of the Reagan era, or both.

If the merger of these socialist groups sounds relatively straightforward, in fact, the opposite was true. The Socialist Party of the 1960s had chased out its antiwar, anti-anticommunist members, who in turn helped create SDS. NAM members who came of age protesting the Vietnam War did not overlook DSOC's anticommunist roots. The fact that NAM welcomed into its organization a cohort of older Communist Party members only complicated relations between the

two groups. These two organizations also differed profoundly on strategy, evinced by their contrasting views of electoral politics. DSOC's vision was based around influencing national electoral politics and shifting the Democratic Party to the left. Many NAM members saw the Democratic Party as hopelessly committed to capitalism and imperialism, so they focused instead on local electoral politics and community organizing. The merger ultimately was possible because DSOC had formed around its members' desires to move beyond the earlier positions of the Socialist Party and because NAM was committed to creating a truly non-sectarian mass movement for socialism.

That these two groups merged is itself a significant event in U.S. left history. The differences between the two organizations went to the core of long-standing fissures in the post-World War II socialist groupings—namely, that to exist as DSA, DSOC members had to accept as valid the perspectives of the new social movements of the 1960s and 1970s. They had rejected these views as narcissistic and ahistorical, especially NAM's reluctance to locate a revolutionary agency narrowly within the industrial working class and its skepticism regarding the efficacy of national electoral politics. DSOC also had to reconcile itself to the fact that NAM's cohort of Communist Party activists from the 1930s and '40s were viewed by its membership as a unique strength—not a liability—of the organization. NAM members, in order to exist as members of DSA, had to accept that they had something to learn from the sector of the Old Left they had long imagined was irrelevant and which they felt might actively prevent the actualization of their goals.

A simple way to summarize NAM's and DSOC's differences is to note that they were organized by qualitatively different political desires. DSOC championed social democracy; NAM advocated democratic socialism. This distinction may sound arcane against today's political landscape, but at the time it signified a stark opposition between the limits of progressive versus revolutionary social change. NAM members were skeptical of the merger, and many—up to a third by some member's accounts—chose to leave the rather than join DSA. This was a painful moment for NAM members on both sides of the issue, and careful readers will note how the merger's legacy, and the tensions it generated, continue to be felt.

Readers should also note that NAM and DSOC members were not so different in many important ways. In cities such as Portland, Oregon, where both groups were active, each organization was involved in similar struggles. NAM members' history in the new social movements of the 1960s and 1970s distinguished them from the older cohort of DSOC leaders and long-term activists who had come of age in the preceding decades. Yet here, too, many differences were not as profound as they might seem. According to NAM members who had the opportunity to work with the older cohort of DSOC members in the early years of DSA, many valued the socialist-feminist traditions NAM had worked hard to develop. They also were aware of the dangers posed to their own organization from the 1980s cultural and political shifts. While Healey takes credit for officially raising the prospect of merger with DSOC, DSOC members could not have

been far from feeling similar pressures as NAM. The fact that the two groups merged suggests their ideological differences were outweighed by both group's desires to remain politically viable.

In the eyes of those involved, the merger was a success in that it created a new political organization that drew on a remarkably wide variety of left political traditions. As NAM leader Holly Graff explains it, DSA was designed to become a socialist organization that practically nobody on the Left could refuse to join. It would combine the grassroots activism and élan of the 1960s and 1970s Left with the strength of an established socialist organization that had ties to union and electoral party machinery. In DSA, leaders hoped, members could create a political force that could challenge the Democratic Party's liberal-centrism. That this has not yet happened is not a reason to reject the impulse behind its creation.

One indisputable legacy of the merger is that many NAM members did not feel at home in the new organization. As readers will discover, even those who championed the merger have developed lives of activism and engagement elsewhere. I hope this collection provides an opportunity for critical reflection on the interplay between historical forces, political strategy, and personal agency that shaped these developments in U.S. left politics and NAM members' lives.

Contextualizing Memories of Political Logic

Today, NAM's goals seem beyond "the left wing of the possible," to use the phrase DSOC's main spokesperson, Michael Harrington, would employ to characterize his organization's ambition. For this reason precisely, the memories of these NAM members are valuable. They introduce us, and in some cases reintroduce us, to a utopian imagination that had not yet been dismantled by the rise of the Reagan era with its stunning economic and social shifts to the far right. Readers of this collection will, I hope, be shocked by the revolutionary ambition voiced by these individuals, as well as the specific contours of the movement they worked to create. They indicate a tutored political sensibility and analysis, and helpfully point to the dramatic ways in which our popular consciousness has changed since NAM formed.

In seeking to represent to audiences this organization's basic features, I chose to focus on recovering not simply the facts of the New American Movement. An objective account of what NAM "was" does not explain how NAM formed or why its members devoted such a tremendous amount of their lives to the organization. The activists in these pages saw NAM not as a full-time job, but as a complete life. They dedicated hour after hour, month after month, and year after year to bringing a political organization to life on a shoestring budget, with the support of few movement luminaries or well-heeled donors. Even decades later, the people who offered their time and memories to this project look on NAM as one of the most significant activities of their lives.

A guiding principle to this project has been the recovery of the "structure of feeling" that enabled NAM's formation. This term, coined by socialist theorist and cultural critic Raymond Williams, is

valuable here because it frames the complex interplay between the "personal" and the "political" that lies at the core of NAM's birth, growth, decline and transformation into DSA. As Williams good-naturedly explains it:

> The term is difficult, but 'feeling' is chosen to emphasize a distinction from more formal concepts of 'world-view' or 'ideology'. It is not only that we must go beyond formally held and systematic beliefs, though of course we have always to include them. It is that we are concerned with meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt, and the relations between these and formal or systematic beliefs are in practice variable . . . We are talking about characteristic elements of impulse, restraint and tone; specifically affective elements of consciousness and relationships: not feeling against thought, but thought as felt and feeling as thought: practical consciousness of a present kind, in a living and interrelating community. We are then defining these elements as a 'structure': as a set, with specific internal relations, at once interlocking and in tension. (132)

Though Williams sought to use this term as a means to orient traditions of cultural production (novels, for instance) within the developing historical forces of an era, I find that it can also help us to read NAM members' recollections. These narratives establish the broader contours of history and sensibility that "structured" their imagination and inspired them to create and shape the organization. Though these narratives establish the practical work people carried out as activists in the organization, they also point towards the legitimating currents of thought and affiliation that enabled their activity. To understand NAM, we need to grasp the set of beliefs shared by its members, but we cannot understand NAM's historical significance without reckoning with the ways these beliefs were empowered by its members' lived experiences. One particular value of this collection is the way it teases out the "structure of feeling" this cohort shared and illuminates its power to organize their lives through this political formation.

From a few hundred members present at its inaugural convention in 1972, by 1980, NAM could claim at least 1,300 active members and 43 chapters in cities across the U.S. Though these numbers may seem minute, in smaller-sized cities such as Santa Cruz, CA, Pittsburgh, PA, or Dayton, OH, NAM made its presence felt. In Pittsburgh, NAM posed a formidable challenge to the formation of privately held utilities, and in Dayton, NAM developed media projects that touched local communities as well as national audiences. Even in an area the size of Los Angeles, NAM developed an educational institution that was available nowhere else in the city by creating a school for activists that drew a surprising number of students and teachers. One thing is certain—you would have known about NAM if you lived in a city that had a chapter, or were involved in political and cultural organizations such as the National Organization of Women or the Marxist Literary Group. And if you liked a good

party, wanted to organize and agitate, and enjoyed a reading load of fairly challenging Marxist and feminist analysis, you might have even joined. If you did, and were spirited enough to attend one of their national conferences, you would have met people from across the U.S. engaged in similar work and felt a part of something much larger.

There are drawbacks to focusing our attention on the subjective experiences of NAM members at the expense of providing a singular organizational account. However, interviews and personal essays enable insights not available through other means. Through them, we gain individual accounts of NAM members' practices, as well as their own sense of what led them to join and develop the organization. When added up, what emerges from these personal narratives is a finely grained after-image of the organization's life, articulated through its member's unique sense of time and space. Though memory is a selective process, a description of NAM consistently emerges from each contribution to this volume. This project unapologetically assumes the value of these recollections for activists, intellectuals and historians. The pressing questions we face are not simply what NAM did, but how it formed at all, and what obstacles exist today to the formation of a similar organization.

In this context, it is also worth mentioning what NAM member and long-time Communist Party activist Dorothy Healey told many NAM members—social movements are never the same twice. Rather than frame NAM in hagiographic terms, this collection is designed to highlight NAM's limits as well as its triumphs. Though we might read NAM's story as a tragic account of a failed political organization, even in this light its example is valuable to us for the way it highlights the historical boundaries to its utopian imagination and practical strategy.

Following Dorothy Healey, a key lesson to take from the stories collected here, if I may emphasize one of many that these accounts provide, is that NAM cannot form again. NAM members came to the organization on the heels an historically specific set of events, including the formation of the civil rights, antiwar, and second wave women's movement, not to mention the formation of revolutionary nationalist groups such as the Black Panthers and national liberation forces throughout the world. These experiences galvanized NAM members and instructed them in creating their own political projects. That NAM did not get farther than it did suggests both the limits of its own vision, as well as the limits of those movements and organizations that inspired them.

NAM members learned the hard way that their organization was insufficient to the next generation of activists. The people who might have filled its ranks as its "elders" no longer had the time to devote to full-time organizing, never materialized. One difficult concept that these stories call forth is the notion that generational structures of feeling apply to the revolutionary imagination, and that this is a cultural problematic not easily overcome. It is also worth pointing out that NAM members came of age in an economic environment that today is unthinkable, with an absence of widespread student and credit debt and a job market that was open and fluid. As one NAM member remarked to me, you could drop out, drop in, and

drop out again, secure that a job awaited you when you were ready to take one up. NAM's history should teach us that it is not only times of immediate economic crisis that can give rise to utopian thinking. When NAM members spoke about "dropping in," they were not speaking of getting a job on Wall Street, or even Main Street. Their professional goals were rooted in community service and activism, ambitions bolstered by a federal government that encouraged community organizing. Many, though not all, NAM members held jobs funded by grants designed to foster a life spent in the service of society's most vulnerable. As Reagan took office, this funding was gutted, and NAM's fortunes suffered as well. Nonetheless, many NAM members have stayed true to these origins and have found careers in unions and social service agencies; several in this collection work as professors.

Though NAM members were drawn together by a particular set of shared experiences and through cultural channels that no longer exist, the conditions of social and economic inequality to which they were responding remain with us, and their analysis of these conditions is just as astute and relevant. Readers will readily assent to the assertions of second-wave feminism—the personal is political, for instance—or Gramsci's notion that the dominant social order maintains its status through its ability to consistently garner the consent of the governed in an always contested hegemonic fashion. We should remember that the continued validity of these concepts lies in the way they accurately identify structural forces of oppression; it also rests in the way they challenge us to think through the need for an alternate social order.

The Organization of the Present Volume

The first two essays provide a look at NAM's starting points. Stanley Aronowitz, a NAM member, provides a useful account of the ways NAM formed out of the twin needs of keeping alive the energy of the social movements of the 1960s and the impulse of movement activists to create a popular socialist movement unique to the conditions of the U.S. Though many people came to NAM from a much-less formal standpoint in Left history, there was a singular document that helped bring the organization to life, written by Michael Lerner and others and eventually published in the pages of *Socialist Revolution*. Lerner's essay here is not that document, but rather a memoir of the making of that document and his subsequent experience with the organization that formed around it. Lerner's piece captures the culture and ethos of the student movement that influenced these activists' lives, and accounts for the unique position NAM imagined for itself as the alternative to the ultra-Left groups that formed following SDS's dissolution.

The next three contributions—an essay by Judith Gardiner, and interviews with Torie Osborn and Chris Riddiough—juxtapose the narratives of NAM's foundation proposed by Aronowitz and Lerner against NAM's emergence within the women's movement, and in particular, its socialist-feminist tendency as articulated in the Chicago Women's Liberation Union. These contributions help establish

NAM's fundamental commitment to this pivotal social movement of the 1970s, and their recollections are in turn echoed throughout many of the interviews and essays that follow.

Though NAM had a tiny national leadership, those who served in it had a significant hand in the organization's development. Many contributors to this volume participated in NAM's leadership throughout its existence and into DSA. Particularly, the interviews with Richard Healey, Holly Graff and Bill Barclay—all national leaders during the latter half of NAM's existence—provide focused accounts of the organization's strategic vision during its most cohesive and vital era and describe the practical work involved in giving a national presence and character to this grass-roots, activist organization. These interviews also provide a rich account of the details of the DSOC merger, including the tensions and hopes with which NAM entered process. Also, while practically all who contributed to this collection refer to Gramsci's significance to the NAM's vision, Healey's and Graff's recollections are especially valuable in this respect since both helped design and lead NAM's workshops on the relevance of his thought to the organization.

Though its national leadership was important in many respects, NAM was the sum of its chapters. The next set of interviews and essays establishes the regional characteristics of several NAM chapters. The interview with Steve Tarzynski—a national leader of NAM and DSA himself—and Kathie Sheldon builds on topics established in earlier interviews and gives an account of the Los Angeles chapter, one of NAM's largest and most sophisticated. Tarzynski's recollections also draw the story of NAM through to its merger with DSOC. The essay by Carl Boggs is a nuanced and forthright account of Gramsci's life and revolutionary strategy. Along with Aronowitz and others, Boggs taught in the Los Angeles Socialist Community School that NAM established. With his essay, Boggs also provides us with a valuable look into the way this cohort read Gramsci. The next three interviews—with Joni Rabinowitz and John Haer, John Beverly, and Julia Reichert—provide an account of the Pittsburgh, PA and Dayton, OH chapters, two significant groups whose contributions to the NAM's community activism and media were well-known and instructive to the entire organization.

The next contributions—an essay by Mike Rotkin, an interview with five members of Portland's NAM chapter (Beverly Stein, Rhys Scholes, Marcia Barrentine, Scott Bailey and Nancy Becker), and an interview with Barbara Epstein—indicate the strong presence NAM had along the U.S. west coast. Rotkin's essay and the Portland NAM members' interview dramatically portray NAM's power in local and statewide politics. Rotkin currently serves as Mayor of Santa Cruz, California, and Stein, of the Portland NAM chapter, not only served three terms as State Representative in the Oregon Legislature, but also as Chair of the Multnomah County Board of Commissioners and Chief Executive of the county for eight years. Stein did not serve in these offices as a NAM member; however, NAM was fundamental to her political development and successes.

While NAM chapters were its foundation, NAM's "at-large members"—individuals who did not belong to a specific chapter but who

paid full member dues and were active in creating a NAM presence in their community—were also vital to the organization. Interviews with Victor Wallis, Joanne Barkan and Leo Casey, all "at-large" members for a significant portion of their time with NAM, present us with an indication of how NAM functioned as a national organization that gave a meaningful context for their work as socialist activists. These three interviews also provide an international backdrop for NAM's development and its merger with DSOC. Barkan's experiences with the Il Manifesto group in Italy, Casey's work with socialist parties in Canada, and Wallis's reflections on liberation struggles throughout the global south bring into focus how NAM appeared in this larger context. Barkan and Casey, as NAM leaders who went on to leadership positions in DSA, also illuminate NAM's transition into that organization.

Along with these essays and interviews, this volume includes a series of NAM-produced posters. They are archived in the Center for the Study of Political Graphics, an institution run by Carol Wells who, along with her husband, Ted Hajjar, belonged for a short time to the Los Angeles NAM chapter. In addition, the photos of NAM merchandise that appear throughout this volume (carefully collected by Steve Tarzynski and Kathie Sheldon and photographed by Kate Romero)—pins, t-shirts and a coffee cup—speak to the unique humor and flair with which NAM carried itself. These objects are not meant to stand as leftist *memento mori*, though it is not hard to recognize that in the context of this collection, they function as an ephemeral reminder of NAM's longing to speak as a movement through the syntax of mass culture.

As a final note to readers, I want to emphasize two points. First, the depth of these reflections provides significant insight into NAM's history, they nevertheless create a partial and limited picture, one for the most part crafted by members who look upon NAM positively. While there are several NAM members in these pages who did not support its merger with DSOC, most contributors here not only supported the merger but also served in DSA's leadership. The stories of members who left NAM rather than become DSA members are not as present here as they should be. Though few NAM members in this volume who supported the merger are today of the same mind, this does not necessarily signify a consonance between these two positions.

Secondly, while these accounts critically reflect on NAM, they can also serve as primary source material that can open up further avenues of inquiry into the history of the organization they describe. It should be noted that current standards of oral history complicate this claim. These interviews received extensive editing and so are representations of the original conversations. Yet this process was collaborative, and no interview appears in this volume that has not been approved for publication by those who took part in it. Our process was fairly straightforward. After I conducted each interview, the recording was transcribed verbatim. Then, I and the interviewee(s) edited it. When the participant found the interview to be acceptable for publication, the editing ceased.

Readers should also note that though these contributors provide an account of NAM that is consistent with my study of its internal doc-

uments and publications, there are many other people who participated in its formation and development who are not represented here. Some, such as James Weinstein and Dorothy Healey, were not alive when I began this project. Others, such as Harry Boyt and Frank Ackerman (to name just two), are still living, and this volume is the lesser for not having their contributions. Ultimately, this collection should be read as the beginning of a larger project that can account for the breadth of opinion and thought to which these reflections point. I look forward to continuing this work and hope others join me. I also hope any NAM members who would like to contribute their stories to this project will contact me. I can be reached through the offices of *Works and Days*, via its general e-mail address.

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Notes

[1] Max Elbaum's *Revolution in the Air: Sixties Radicals Turn to Lenin, Mao and Che* (London: Verso, 2002) provides an excellent account of these groups' theoretical as well as practical projects.

[2] These numbers come from two sources. According to a 1980 internal survey conducted by Bill Barclay, NAM Political Secretary, "NAM Chapter Membership, July 1980," NAM could count 1300 members. The second number—2,500—comes from Mike Davis' "The Lesser Evil? The Left and The Democratic Party," (*New Left Review* 115 [1986]: 5-36), which references the merger of NAM and DSOC. The variation in these numbers is understandable, given NAM's membership structure which encouraged active chapter membership but allowed for people to be members without a chapter ("At-Large Members") and members with a significantly lesser degree of involvement than either of the other two ("Associate Members").

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I.
Origins of the New American Movement