



# Rolling Thunder

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an anarchist journal of dangerous living

A fault line runs through every society,  
through every community, through every human heart.  
On one side is obedience; on the other, freedom.  
On one side is cowardice; on the other, compassion.  
On one side is despair; on the other, action.  
Sometimes the boundaries shift as gains are made or lost—  
but however things appear, that fault line is always there.

*Most everything you can read nowadays is published from one side of this divide.  
This magazine hails from the other.*

“Every normal man must be tempted at times to spit upon his hands,  
hoist the black flag, and begin slitting throats.”

—Henry Louis Mencken

*The first step must be the secession of intelligent pioneers from this society.*

## ONE ANARCHIST, ONE REVOLUTION



Before anything else is possible, the revolutionary must win back her own life and psyche from the occupying powers of fear and despair, and from the daily forms capitalism and hierarchy take: the wasted time of employment, the deception of corporate media, the damage of abusive and controlling relationships, the isolation and passivity of suburban routine. She must make of her existence a daring adventure, a heroic journey away from all she has known and into the arms of those with whom she will be safe in the most dangerous undertakings.

Revolution demands and creates a new kind of person, who acts and develops outside the mass. Don't follow or seek followers—find your equals. Don't just seek numbers—seek to multiply *yourself*.

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"I see you, and I know that my dreams are right, right a thousand times over, just as your dreams are. It is life and reality that are wrong. I understand it only too well, your dislike of politics, your despondence over the chatter and antics of the parties and the press, your despair over the war, the one that has been and the one that is to be, over all that people think, read, and build today, over the music they play, the celebrations they hold, the education they carry on. Whoever wants to live and enjoy his life today must not be like you and me. Whoever wants music instead of noise, joy instead of pleasure, soul instead of gold, creative work instead of business, passion instead of insipidity, finds no home in this trivial world of ours."  
-Hermann Hesse, *Steppenwolf*



# LIVING DANGEROUSLY

If you weren't in Miami in November of 2003 to see it for yourself, no superlatives I could string together would convey the drama in the air at the protesters' convergence center the day before the Free Trade Area of the Americas ministerial.

All the same, try to imagine it: night has fallen, and a fierce wind is buffeting the vast tarpaulin stretched high over the shadowy lot outside, which is bustling with activity—knots of friends in heated discussion, tables at which grizzled volunteers serve free food to long lines of starving, sleep-deprived protesters, generators droning noisily around a great trailer of supplies. Up on the roof, hooded anarchists stand watch, smoldering eyes gazing out from behind black masks to scan the distance for signs of a feared preemptive strike; at the gate, below, organizers with two-way radios allow protesters to pass while holding at bay two suspicious men in Guardian Angels uniforms with video cameras.

Inside the building, there are tables stacked to overflowing with radical literature and practical information, a workshop in which bicycles are being repaired, signs painted, and puppets manufactured, and an independent media center in which unaffiliated reporters type ceaselessly while fielding phone calls; in the central space, over a hundred activists of a wide range of ages, ethnicities, subcultures, and nationalities sit in concentric circles, painstakingly making their way through an organizational meeting, while around the fringes *hushed consultations* take place: Did you get one of the graffiti kits those kids were passing

out? Has anyone gotten word yet from the folks in that other meeting? Listen, I heard about something that might interest you . . . Dozens present bear facial and neck tattoos: circled As, flaming hearts, grenades; this is not a single-issue reform campaign, but full-scale tribal war. Many will snatch their few minutes of sleep on this concrete floor tonight with welfare-issue bags of liquid pear for pillows, if they sleep at all. Every few minutes another truck or van pulls up bearing five or ten more brave souls from up to two thousand miles away, come to give whatever they have to offer in the struggle for a free world.

A police helicopter swoops low overhead, its spotlight scouring the lot, harshly illuminating us in the midst of our frenzied activities; we shiver, but most don't try to rush out of its path—being here at all means being under scrutiny from every direction, means gambling that our enemies are so overloaded with information that they won't have time to read every pair of lips in every film sequence or identify every face. On high poles across the street, more cameras peer down—not to mention the police cars cruising by, the informers who must be among us, the constant surveillance of email, cell phones, movement through the city. Downtown, a mere few blocks across the ghetto, thousands upon thousands of fully armored riot police await us in military formations, tear gas rifles and water cannons and concussion grenades and stun guns and rubber bullets at the ready. To be here is to face off against the assembled might of an entire militaristic

civilization, to be David against Goliath. We are, in fact, a rebel alliance, come together to contest the empire in all its power and excess; this is the great story of our time.

Some years ago, in childhood, I wondered what had become of such great stories, what we had in place of the epic deeds and struggles of ages past I read about in books. There must still be some among us who know no better than to believe the television commercials that proclaim joining the army to be the greatest adventure possible today, who don't realize how beautiful and even glorious life can be when we cast off fear and subservience and embark upon adventures of our own outside the ranks'.

So, this magazine. Here we will chart what we experience and what we learn, as we set out to liberate ourselves, to live dangerously. *Living dangerously* means risking the consolation prizes we have for more precious things, and tasting how much sweeter life is when not taken for granted; it also means living in a way that is dangerous to everything that would smother life, confronting and beating back death in whatever guises it takes. The content of this issue is admittedly biased in favor of explicitly political disruption, but future issues will give more space to subtler subversions; often the most important struggles take place not in courtrooms but in bedrooms. Sometimes we change the course of history, sometimes we simply change our own lives; it is transformation itself, on whatever scale it occurs, that counts.

And it is upon us. Stay tuned for civil war.

<sup>1</sup> Editor's Note for the Disenchanted: Oh, don't think I don't see you scowling, even from here, my dear disillusioned friends who also have staked everything on the revolution, and know how hard this can be, how miserable and humiliating! And don't think that I haven't fought desperately through my own share of difficulties and despair in the process of testing out on my own skin which of our dreams are possible and which impossible. But what would you do, tell people to strangle their own longings, and try to make do in their absence? The sheer fact that some of us have survived, and the stories we have to show for it, is enough to convince me that our romantic foolishness is sounder than what the resigned call common sense—and to set out to live another half-century that will put the finest exploits of my past decade to shame.

## Don't Submit—*contribute!*

*Send us writing and artwork for publication!* That's right, we want photo essays documenting the inflammatory graffiti that appears mysteriously in your neighborhood, witty true stories of fighting the law and winning, on-the-spot reporting on and analysis of life and resistance in any of these occupied territories, excerpts from unpublishable novels, the heart-rending poetry you wrote as a precocious teenager, how-to tips on cutting-edge vegan recipes and scamming techniques, crossword puzzles teeming with unfathomably obscure subcultural references, naked polaroids of your ski-masked lover(s) pissing on police cars . . . if they're up to scratch, we'll print and distribute them so thoroughly you'll be guaranteed an F.B.I. file of your very own!

*Send us letters!* Help out by identifying incorrect or disputed details in our writers' accounts, or suggesting points of departure for readers to learn more or get involved, or countering absurd arguments with cogent, nuanced ones. We'll respond with lengthy rebuttals or, worst case scenario, disavowals of responsibility, reserving the final word for

ourselves (after all, the home team always bats last) in the time-honored tradition of radical journalism.

*Send us material for review!* Send us your zines, books, compact discs, websites, whatever it is you're doing; we'll toss them in a teetering pile of neglected review submissions, from which we'll occasionally seize an item at random to exalt or ridicule, according to our fancy. Hurry to get your releases in to us before our embittered reviewers finally start taking antidepressants and lose their edge, so to speak.

As per the old anarchist notion of freedom of association, we feel entitled not to run any submission we don't care to—but that said, we do want this to serve as an open forum for all adventurers, malcontents, and insurgents, and that means we need *you* to use it as one. Please, *please* don't leave all the fun to us (and don't throw me in that briar patch, either), or make us have to take any more time out from our exploits to write about them than we already do.

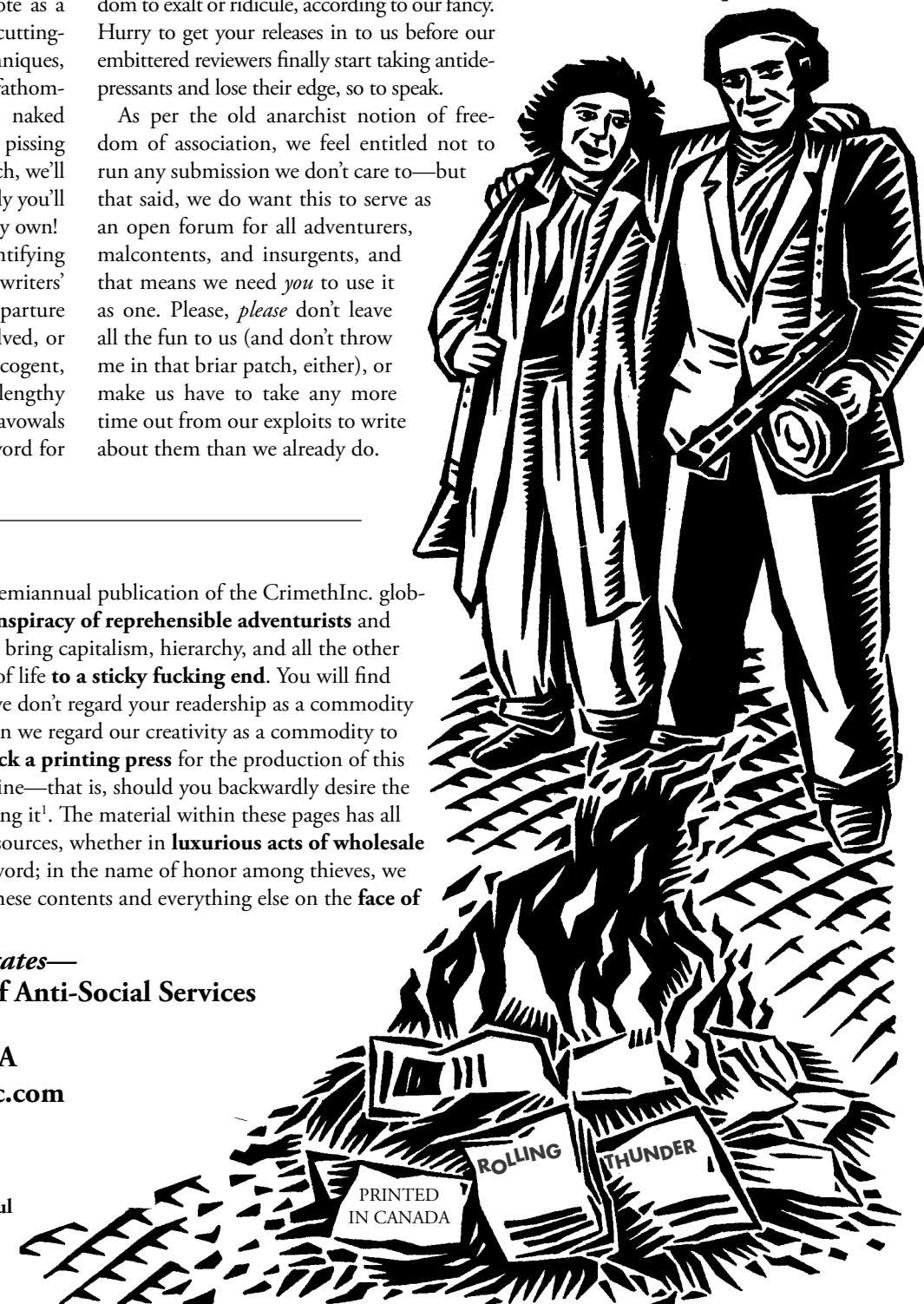
**Rolling Thunder** is a semiannual publication of the CrimethInc. global underground, an international conspiracy of reprehensible adventurers and nefarious provocateurs determined to bring capitalism, hierarchy, and all the other impediments to the total enjoyment of life to a sticky fucking end. You will find **no advertisements herein**, because we don't regard your readership as a commodity to be sold to advertisers any more than we regard our creativity as a commodity to be sold to you; alas, **we failed to hijack a printing press** for the production of this issue, so you must pay for this magazine—that is, should you backwardly desire the hideously bourgeois privilege of owning it<sup>1</sup>. The material within these pages has all been mercilessly pillaged from other sources, whether in **luxurious acts of wholesale plagiarism** or word by excruciating word; in the name of honor among thieves, we urge you to do the same, both with these contents and everything else on the **face of the earth**.

*Join the barbarians at the gates—*  
**CrimethInc. Department of Anti-Social Services**  
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[www.crimethinc.com](http://www.crimethinc.com)



Design Construction by the Paul F. Maul Artists' group with the heavy-lifting by the specialist CrimethInc. Sleepwalkers.  
*Our other computer is a sunset.*

<sup>1</sup> Should this not be the case, you need only persuade a local library to order this publication, take up a collection in your community to purchase a communal copy, or learn to do without spurious representations of radical activity in favor of real-life participation in it.



# Reader Survey

So we might learn how better to serve and protect *you*, our precious readership, our sacred cash cows ripe for the slaughter, we present this reader survey. Please immediately *drop everything*, violently rip this page out of the magazine, scrawl your answers across it, and mail it back to any of the various CrimethInc. addresses out there. You'll be paid in kind for your trouble.

## 1. Today's radical publications today don't feature enough:

- a. Vicious infighting and invective
- b. Academic one-upsmanship
- c. Tedious, irrelevant history
- d. Inflated crowd estimates and self-congratulatory rhetoric
- e. Promotion of pseudo-subversive cultural commodities such as alternative internet pornography and organic blah blah blah

## 2. The most promising feature of today's radical milieu is:

- a. The phasing out of print media in favor of internet-based ("virtual") outreach and communication
- b. Puppets
- c. A powerful solidarity between rank-and-file workers and revolutionary anarchists, facilitated by cooperation between national union bureaucrats and self-appointed representatives of The Movement
- d. An irrepressible optimism that enables us to act decisively in the face of all odds

## 3. The number one obstacle to be overcome for full-scale social revolution to be possible in this society is:

- a. The dearth of education about the Platform of the Anarchist Communists as it was proposed seven and a half decades ago
- b. The absence of membership organizations complete with dues, transparent processes, recruiting drives, and protracted meetings

- c. Insufficient guilt and re-  
crimination among activists
- d. The widespread misconception that most people get involved with radical politics because it is exciting and fun
- e. The CrimethInc. Ex-Workers' Collective, obviously

## 4. You have been involved in radical activities and/or communities since:

- a. Most of the members of the I.W.W. were trainhopping traveler kids
- b. You quit your job and discovered the only ones who still cared whether or not you got anything to eat were Food Not Bombs volunteers
- c. Rumors of people actually contesting authority (!) in Seattle, Prague, Quebec, and Genoa peaked your interest
- d. You figured out that liberal anti-war activism is ineffective at stopping wars, but suspiciously effective at providing a justification for feelings of smug self-righteousness
- e. About a minute ago when you opened the cover of this magazine (there's still time to put it down—but hurry!)

## 5. Your income this year will add up to approximately:

- a. Enough money that your taxes will finance a couple cruise missiles for the U.S. military
- b. Enough money to keep you on the highway, supporting the oil industry whose interests are secured by those cruise missiles

- c. Enough money to get you through the turnstile at the subway, if only you could find another nickel in the couch
- d. You're the infamous anarchist kid with the trust fund whose existence is always alleged in hostile reviews and rumors
- e. "Uh, I read that book *Evasion* a couple years back, and..."

*If you answered a. or b., please proceed to questions #s 6 through 10. If you answered c., you're off the hook, free to go back to figuring out how to get the alarm tags off the shaving razors at K-mart. If you answered d., it's about time you sent us a cut—seriously, should we suffer on your account without enjoying the benefits of bourgeois pigdom, too? If you answered e., please go online or find a copy of the reunion issue of Inside Front and read the emergency dispatch "All Traveler Kids Purged From CrimethInc. Membership."*

## 6. How do you sleep?

- a. Like a baby—a Beverly Hills baby, not a Palestinian or Iraqi baby
- b. In the employee bathroom whenever the boss is distracted
- c. Better now that you've been prescribed antidepressants
- d. Can't sleep a wink, not even with sedatives and all-night television

## 7. The majority of your financial holdings are:

- a. In a bank, so they can be loaned out to earth-destroying corporations without you having to think about it
- b. In stocks and bonds—you don't mind loaning out your money to earth-destroyers yourself
- c. In an envelope under the mattress (if your place of dwelling has more than one bed, please specify which)
- d. Do college loans, utility bills, alimony payments, and credit card debt count as financial holdings?

## 8. Your place of residence is secured by means of:

- a. A good relationship with the neighbors
- b. So many residents with so few jobs between them that someone with nothing to lose is always bound to be at home and awake
- c. Deadbolts
- d. Alarm systems (specify brand)
- e. Security guards (specify weight, height, and fitness)

## 9. The police in your area:

- a. Respond promptly to all 911 calls
- b. Respond promptly to 911 calls made from predominantly white and/or middle class neighborhoods
- c. Respond eventually to 911 calls made from predominantly white and/or middle class neighborhoods
- d. Report immediately to the donut shop upon notification of a 911 call

## 10. You are likely to be gone at work:

- a. Whenever the temp office calls you in
- b. Every day from nine to five
- c. Every day from nine to five, and business trips on the weekend
- d. Every day from nine to five, and fancy vacations on the weekend
- e. Every day from six in the morning until midnight at one of your three jobs

## Your address (street addresses only, no post office boxes):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Thanks very much! Your cooperation is deeply appreciated. Expect to hear from us soon!

## Bonus question for ten extra points

Fill in the blanks: *Humanity won't be free until the last \_\_\_\_\_ is strangled with the guts of the last \_\_\_\_\_!*

# Glossary Of Terms

**The Bourgeoisie**—People who get up early in the morning cause war, famine, pollution, and genocide

**Civilization**—A crime against nature

**Convert**—As a verb, it is used by basketball coaches discussing how to turn a game situation around for the better, and thus also by activists plotting to transform social conditions context by context (see also *subvert*); as a noun, it describes something unspeakably obscene

**Delayed Gratification**—Tomorrow will use you the way you use today (see also "after the revolution")

**Dream**—A crime against reality

**Education**—(also, *reeducation*) see figure i.

**Economics**—Communism didn't work, capitalism doesn't work—you work (so stop already!)

**Family Values**—All I learned to do at home was lie, all I learned to do at school was cheat, all I learned to do at work was steal

**Hierarchical Power**—see figure ii.

**Hope**—Not all the dinosaurs became extinct—some of them evolved into birds

**Ideology**—see figure iii.

**Indoctrination**—Without verbs, slogans are beyond contradiction: "war on terror," "military intelligence," "information superhighway"

**Intransigence**—I'll make any compromise, except the ones I'm *supposed* to

**Invention**—Mother of necessity

**Left Wing**—According to the historical

It sure can be hard to make sense of the talk of activists these days, with all the insider terminology they bandy about! We're pleased to do our part to remedy this problem by providing you, the unwashed initiate, with this handy pocket guide to the latest in hip vocabulary. We'll add additional installments in future issues as necessary.

revisionists of representative democracy, the political spectrum has only one dimension, running from those on the Right who wish for state power to be used to defend the economic and moral interests of property holders to those on the Left—who desire the same thing, only in the name of "the people." But there are many other criteria that can be used to chart political differences—see figure iv., for example, in which various political tendencies are plotted on a two-dimensional plane that accounts for both the degree to which power is shared and the processes by which decisions are made. For additional nuances, one could add a third axis to this display—"good cheer," for example, an important quality often overlooked in political thinking and activity of all stripes. (see figure iv.)

**Love**—If you mean it, say it with barricades!

**Mass Movement**—There is safety in numbers—if you are a number

**Mental Illness**—see figure v.

**Moderation**—The one cause for which the bourgeois man is prepared to kill and die

**Molotov Cocktail**—A martini made with too much vermouth and not enough olives

**Motherfucker**—An epithet that goes back to slave days. Back then, the man in power, the slave owner, was, as likely as not, a rapist who took advantage of his position to sexually assault slaves. If you were a slave, it was probable that he was raping your mother on a regular basis—hence the term. To call someone in power a motherfucker is to cast light on the genealogical ties that connect their current abuse of power with the history of power imbalance and abuse in this nation. This use of the term is

"If you don't tell us that you like us hitting you, we'll have to go on hitting you—understand?"

"OK, OK, I've had enough! I like you hitting me—alright?"

"Well then, if you like it so much, we'll go on hitting you..."



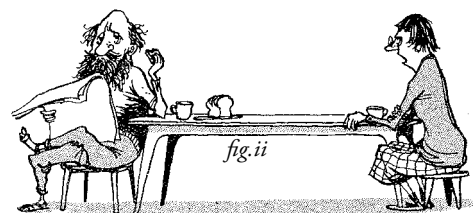
"Hurry up with those meatballs! Who's the boss around here, anyway?"

"What do you mean, dear? I thought Mr. Gates was the boss."

"No, I'm the boss, too. Just the other day, at the checkout counter at the grocery store, I said 'give me those cigarettes,' and the clerk did, just like that."

"Did you have to pay for them?"

"Well, yeah—but you have to make some compromises if you want to be the boss."



not to be confused with the Motherfuckers, short for the Up Against the Wall Motherfuckers, the self-professed “street gang with an analysis” that fought for revolutionary liberation in New York City at the end of the 1960’s. Pressed to come up with a suitable moniker for their gang, they presumably named themselves after the order police would shout at them when a street battle or heist went awry: “Up against the wall, motherfuckers!”

**Nihilism**—To be a nihilist is to renounce, willfully, freedom, happiness, tranquility and transgression alike; to abandon, above all, the romantic possibilities of an unknown future—in fact, to do deliberately what so many others do by rote. This seems unthinkable; but for most modern citizens, living lives without any great stakes of suffering or success, nihilism would be something to aspire to. That is to say—in the suburbs, hell is overhead.

**Natural Capitalism**—If capitalism were natural, nature would issue its own banknotes

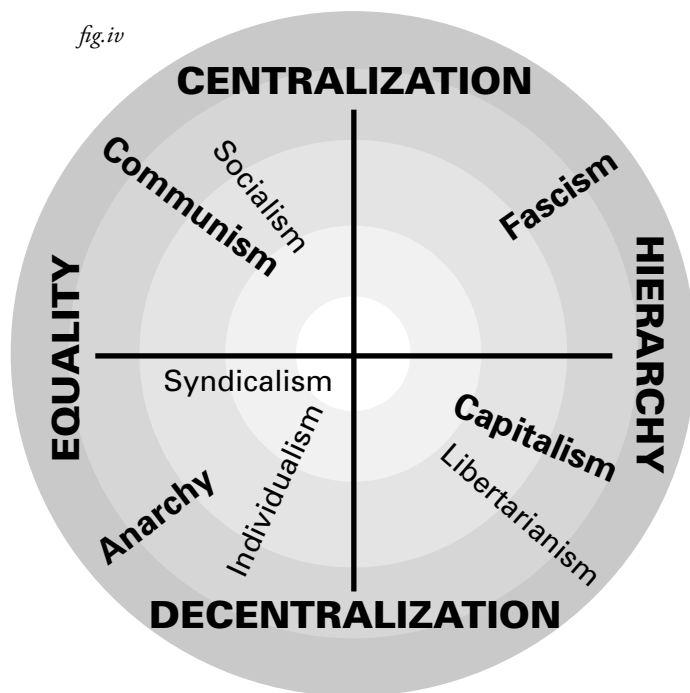
**Order**—Government justifies itself on the premise that order is a prerequisite for liberty, but in fact it’s the other way around

fig.iii

anarch  
capital  
commun  
futur  
post-modern  
primitiv  
real  
social  
surreal  
syndical

**M  
N  
S  
I**

fig.iv



**Pacifism**—“...peace? Peace is what’s written on the diploma you get when you arrive at the cemetery!” -Peter Tosh, introducing the song that helped give rise to the saying “No Justice, No Peace!” popularized during the L.A. riots in 1992 and recently employed by Iraqis in anti-occupation demonstrations

**Patriot**—An individual willing to give up freedom without a fight (see “Patriot Act”)

**Power**—We love power and hate authority

**Praxis**—“Practice,” as often misspelled by intellectuals unfamiliar with it

**Progress**—The forest before us, the desert behind

**Property Destruction**—A kind of therapy to loosen the unnatural hold certain inanimate objects have on the popular imagination

**Prosperity**—You can’t fool my grandfather—he just counts the bums

**Red Herring**—An inconsequential subject that distracts from the root of matters; e.g., George W. Bush, anti-pornography legislation, the Green Party (see also *Symptomatic Treatment*)

**Reform**—Oh yeah, reform—I remember that from reform school!

**Regime Change**—The details are negotiable, so long as power stays in the hands of a regime (see also *Reform*, *Red Herring*, *Symptomatic Treatment*)

**Revolution**—War without enemies

**S.U.V.**—(“Suburban Utility Vehicle”) a gated community on wheels (see also *Property Destruction*)

**Subculture**—A slur intended to cause those who hear or read it to conflate lack of access to media representation with marginality, extremism, and insignificance. Middle class customs, for example, are the idiosyncratic province of a select minority, no less so than punk, hobo, or trucker customs are; but because every bill-

board and sitcom bustles with idealized portrayals of middle class characters, many accept the insane idea that middle class norms are “normal” and all others are sub-normal. In fact, every sub-section of a given culture is a subculture, just as every variant of English is a dialect, just as Puerto Rican immigrants don’t have any more of an accent than the white newscasters on prime time television do. Seeing any one cultural group as being the “mainstream,” or for that matter rejecting some other cultural group as fanatical or inconsequentially peripheral, is chauvinistic and superstitious at best.

**Symptomatic Treatment**—The perpetuation of injustice and misery by the adjustment of their superficial aspects; e.g., therapy, antidepressants, dieting, charity, career counseling, getting more education, going “back to the land,” electoral politics (see also “blame the victim”)

**Trotskyist**—Being the most Trotsky, e.g. “Ralph is Trotsky, Noam is Trotskyer, but Howard is the Trotskyist of us all.”

**Utopia**—A tool for the education of desire. Advertisements present a pristine utopia, in which grinning idiots find their hearts’ deepest yearnings entirely fulfilled by household appliances and acne medication, in order to promote gratuitous consumption; therefore it is disingenuous, to say the least, for critics to accuse anarchists of being utopian—when we speak of a world based on individual liberty and mutual aid, we’re simply fostering other desires, so as to enable other activities... perhaps more sensible activities, in fact.

**Veganism**—Take a bite out of crime!

**Writing on the Wall**—In this day and age, a certain kind of illiteracy is a prerequisite for business as usual

fig.v



“You’re antagonistic to the idea of being robbed, exploited, degraded, humiliated, or deceived. Misery depresses you. Ignorance depresses you. Persecution depresses you. Violence depresses you. Slums depress you. Greed depresses you. Crime depresses you. Corruption depresses you. You know, it wouldn’t surprise me if you’re manic-depressive!”

## Word of the issue: Autogestion

This Spanish and Italian word has equivalents in many other languages, with the unfortunate exception of English. It basically means “giving birth to one’s own activities,” as in self-determination, but with emphasis on indi-

vidual initiative, voluntary cooperation, and doing-it-yourself in a cultural sense. Social centers in squatted buildings, folk traditions like anarcho-punk that are developed and preserved without any institutional involvement, so-called “uncontrollable” or “extra-parliamentary resistance” groups outside party organization who plan and carry out direct action to address social problems—these are exam-

ples of autogestion. The closest English term I could find is “autogenous,” one of the possible definitions of which reads “used to describe insects that do not require a meal of blood in order to produce viable eggs”—which is not entirely unrelated, if you think about the do-it-yourself underground as one of the few cultural milieus in the West that can reproduce itself without exploiting others.

# LETTERS

Thursday, June 17, 2004  
9:03 pm

Dearest CrimethInc.,

When my comrades and I departed from our warm state on June fifth, I never thought that I would be wasting away in a jail cell for this long. We came to this little town to protest the fascist policies of the G8 through direct action, and received two misdemeanor charges for non-violently marching to the fences of Sea Island, sitting in front of over three hundred riot police, and asking to speak with those who are making the decisions that control over sixty million people—people who are oppressed and impoverished, who never get the chance to live their lives. Now, we go unnamed as political prisoners who refuse to plead guilty to a charge that seems so unfounded. We have been denied visitation rights from friends, family, media, and group visits with the legal team, not to mention medical specialists. Everything we do here requires a request form, and we have been told that to get anywhere with our trial we must give names.

A lot of us have made previous plans to go to the CrimethInc.

convergence and then the RNC. In the beginning we were the Brunswick 15, but by tomorrow we will be six. We are constantly struggling to get the media to focus attention on this case; four of the six of us are on hunger strike until we attend the preliminary hearing on June 24<sup>th</sup>. I am writing this letter to you because I have been drawing inspiration from the CrimethInc. press since I began to take interest in anarchism. For instance, in order to get here, my friends and I gave out copies of Harbinger as well as other materials and records that we distribute at our infoshop in exchange for donations. The library here is very, very limited, so I am reading Huckleberry Finn, as of now. One of the rules of Glynn County Detention Center is that we may only get literature from publishers, so I am asking you to send whatever you can, because we are in dire need. We can all share whatever, and pass it on to other inmates. I would love to help with the convergence, if I am free by then, so I could return the favor then. Let me know of anything I can do or of other places I could write for literature. We all sit around every night dreaming of when we will be free and heading to the convergence, but most of all of when we will

be able to see sunlight again.

Just please keep writing beautiful 'zines and doing great things. Please spread the word of the injustice that is escalating in Brunswick, Georgia as a result of the militarized occupation at the orders of the G8. I hope we are released soon so we can keep building and exploring. If you would like to read statements or see visuals of our last march, you can check out Indymedia's page. We are writing journals, poems, and letters and drawing pictures for the 'zine that we will be compiling after our release. Thank you for reading this, and may you keep your heart first.

Friends forever,  
The Brunswick Six (Skunk, Whiskers, King Will, Baldy, Last Jane Standing, and Dirt)  
We have no names, just numbers—no rights, just demands—but the world is still in our hands

John Doe G-0177  
SO# 974360  
Cell E104  
1812 Newcastle Street  
Brunswick, GA 31520

*This letter arrived shortly after the G8 summit at Sea Island in Georgia, June of 2004. It was*

*heartening, to say the least, to hear from people involved in such an idealistic confrontation with the powers that be. We wrote back swiftly, but of course the authorities at the jail returned our letter as undeliverable.*

*John Doe and friends, if you're out there somewhere and this humble publication somehow crosses your path—thank you. Thank you for going to Savannah with stars in your eyes, and for writing us this sweet letter that brought us a little light in dark times of our own. Are you still involved in the struggle? Did you ever compile the 'zine about your incarceration that you were planning to? Write us again now, with a more reliable return address than a jail if you are able, and we'll send you a letter and some new reading material—though if you ask me, you can't go wrong with Mark Twain. All the best, dear friends.*

Dear CrimethInc.,

My name is Neal. Whoever is reading this probably knows me, and vice versa. I've been an organizer and activist in North Carolina now for many years. I do guerilla gardening, labor work, Earth First!-type shit, anti-war organizing, work against police brutality, and

transgender/queer activism.

I've never been a huge fan of CrimethInc. I know and love most of the people who work with y'all—but the romantic lifestyle politics hop a train “drop out of” capitalist society style just ain't my thing. Emma Goldman once said, “it's not my revolution if I can't dance to it.” Well, another anarchist I know also said, “it ain't my revolution if all we're gonna do is dance.” Whatever. I find most of the sloganizing overly romantic (perhaps its purpose), often naïve, rooted in a middle-class perspective on the appeal of poverty and consumer asceticism. I suppose taking a shot at that obnoxious and fucked up evasion book is probably cliché at this point.

Anyway, I'm not writing to rant to y'all or discuss anarchist theory. I merely wanted to relay my rage and anger at your latest propaganda. Now I like a lot of y'all's art and posters—I think the one on [not] voting is well done and poignant. But this latest bullshit on plastic surgery (“Plastic surgery is self-imposed domestic violence,” with a graphic picture of a person with a bandaged face, super-imposed upon an application for such surgery) needs to be nipped in the bud. I'm bothering to write y'all because I don't think it was

intentionally insulting or dismissive of trans people (and others), but rather a naïve product of ignorance and an extremely poorly thought-out analogy. The reason for my previous rant was to give you a context for my position, so to speak. This bullshit flyer affects me and the trans folks I do activism with personally, and you need to know and understand why that is before you print more and seriously piss off our tranny comrades.

I work with a transgender activist/direct action group in Asheville, NC called transmission. We do a lot of good stuff—education, free literature, queering public spaces, fundraising with punk/drag shows, demonstrations. A lot of our group is trans, and some isn't. Some have had surgery, some are on hormones, some choose not to go that route at all. One of the most important guidelines we have for allies who want to be supportive is not to challenge a trans person's decision to get treatment, surgery, whatever—it can be an extremely confusing, difficult, scary place to be in—we need love, support, friends, allies, people who understand what it's like to be forced into a gender box we don't belong to. We don't need presump-

tuous activists (who are most likely not trans) comparing us to perpetrators of domestic violence.

Do y'all understand that hormones and surgery can be a liberating experience for many people? And get this, for all my fellow anti-capitalists out there, it is sometimes a decision made within the context of an oppressive workplace where someone HAS TO PASS in order to keep their job, feed their family, or even avoid rape, assault, or murder. Do you fucking get it?

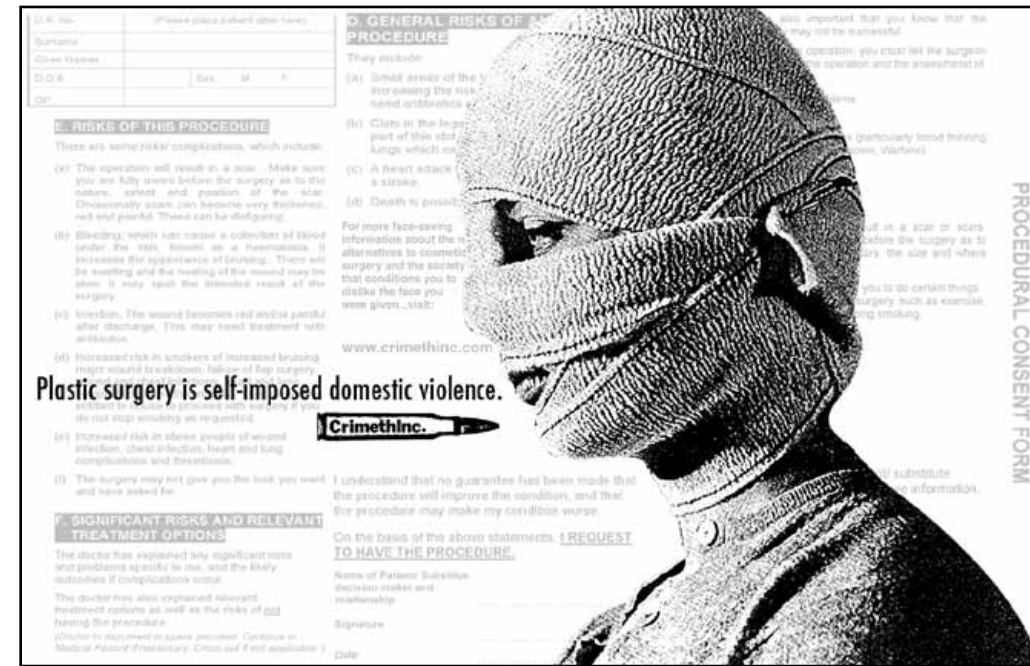
Your bullshit poster here trivializes the experiences of my good friends in struggle Zac, who spent the little money he had to get upper chest surgery, and Victoria, who is going under the knife next week out west. She might be scared shitless, but in need of the work-oriented and psychological and social liberation the surgery can offer her. I find your naïve poster analogous to asshole Christians screaming at women entering an abortion clinic, who are trying to make a vital and extremely delicate decision. Tranzmission would just like to say—please keep your moralistic propaganda off our fucking bodies. Do you get it yet?

Not everyone going to get surgery is a fur-coat wearing, vain, insecure, beauty-obsessed

rich lady. We are real, oppressed people, with dreams and hopes of our own, and your moralism is not one bit helpful. You may anticipate many others of like mind and experience to be writing you in anger and frustration if you continue distributing this flyer.

Solidarity Forever  
Neal  
Tranzmission  
P.O. Box 1874  
Asheville, NC 28802

*Tone aside, Neal is right to chide those who conceived the poster for not even considering the way it would be perceived outside homogeneous middle class circles. It has since been removed from circulation on the grounds that, even if it was intended only as a critique of the sexist, abusive “beauty” industry, people who already have to deal with the bigotry and violence of our gender-normative society shouldn't have to deal with the stress of feeling disregarded or attacked by radicals as well. Distributing provocative propaganda is always going to mean stepping on toes, but it's important to be thoughtful in considering which toes to avoid and which to stomp on.*



Plastic surgery is self-imposed domestic violence.

CrimethInc.

PROCEDURAL CONSENT FORM

# demonstrating resistance

## AN ANALYSIS OF THE SUCCESSES AND FAILURES OF RECENT MILITANT DEMONSTRATIONS

### TALKING TACTICS: THE MASS ACTION MODEL VERSUS THE AUTONOMOUS ACTION MODEL

IN the past six years, the North American anarchist movement has gone through all the stages of a turbulent love affair with mass actions, including messy breakups and attempted reconciliations. In the process, some anarchists have taken up with other approaches to demonstration activism—including, most notably, an emphasis on more autonomous, decentralized actions. In this review of the past year's demonstrations, we'll discuss the strengths and weaknesses of both approaches, and analyze how these have played out in the streets.

IN considering how to evaluate both mass and autonomous actions, we should begin by establishing what it is fair to expect of them. Most anarchists thoughtlessly describe them as direct action, but, technically speaking, demonstrations—even confrontational, militant ones, in which police are forced out of neighborhoods, corporate property is set afire, and bureaucratic summits are shut down—are not direct action. Making love, growing or stealing food, providing free child care—these are concrete actions that

directly accomplish their goals. Militant demonstration tactics, on the other hand, may qualify as direct action to the extent to which they circumvent liberal or police control to make a point or create an atmosphere outside the dictates of the powers that be, but most anarchists who participate in them would argue that their primary purpose is to bring closer the abolition of the hierarchies and institutions against which they are staged, and viewed in this light they are generally more symbolic than direct<sup>1</sup>.

THIS is not to say that they are never worthwhile. Even if a demonstration doesn't serve to solve immediately the problem it is staged to address, it can contribute to this process by spreading awareness, raising morale, exerting pressure on those opposed, and providing useful experience for participants. Not even a whole city of smashed windows could suffice to stop any one multinational corporation from wrecking the ecosystem and exploiting workers; but if a broken window serves to focus attention on an issue and inspire others to mobilize themselves, it at least qualifies as highly effective indirect action.

THE protests against the meeting of the World Trade Organization in Seattle in November 1999 remain the most popular example of effective mass action in our time. Though countless pundits have typed them-

selves blue in the face on the subject, it is possible that anarchists have not yet finished refining the lessons of Seattle regarding the advantages of the mass action model and the elements that must be in place for it to work. The very fact that no mass action since Seattle has been as successful should make it easier for us to evaluate what made it a success, now that we have plenty of experience with actions that lacked those qualities.

### WTO 1999

WHAT worked in Seattle and the mass demonstrations that followed it? When they were effective, what exactly did they accomplish, and how?

FIRST, it's important to understand that, unlike every mass action that followed it, the protests in Seattle benefited from the element of surprise. The powers that be had no idea what they were in for, the police

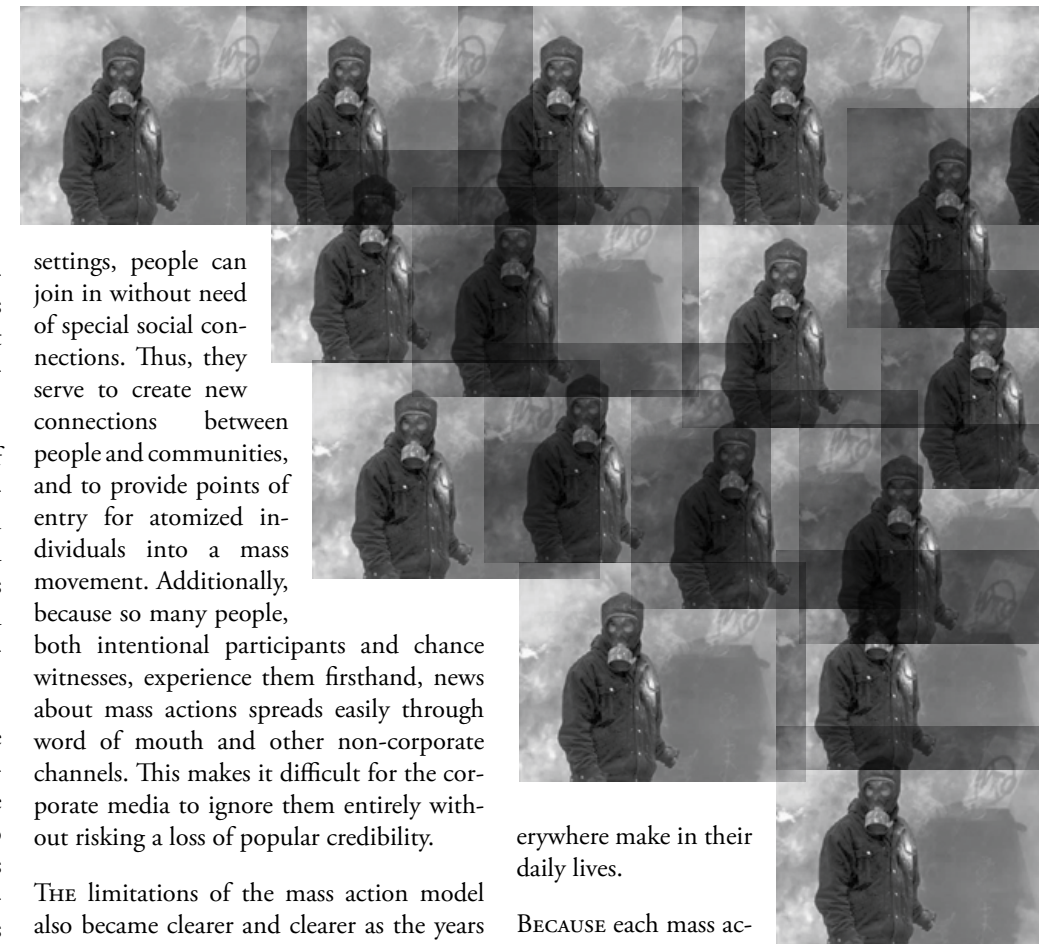
<sup>1</sup> Setting out to shut down a capitalist summit and succeeding in doing so may qualify as direct action in the most immediate sense, but an anti-capitalist movement that succeeded in shutting down summit after summit without bringing any closer the abolition of capitalist social relations would be a failure, not a success. Hence, such feats ultimately have their greatest value as demonstrations of what is possible.

were correspondingly unprepared, and, just as significantly, the corporate media didn't know better than to broadcast the news of the victory far and wide. When subsequent protests failed to succeed in actually halting summit meetings, decimating shopping districts, or receiving international news coverage, this should not have come as a shock: the forces of repression were thoroughly prepared for them, and capitalist media moguls had learned it was not in their best interest to advertise anti-capitalist resistance as effective and exciting.

ALL the same, even without the element of surprise, subsequent mass actions were effective in some ways. They brought attention to anarchist ideas and resistance, enabled radicals to gain experience in militant tactics that were impossible in other contexts, and continued to build momentum and connections in insurgent communities.

THE chief strengths of mass actions are due to the opportunities accorded by the concentration of many radicals and activists in one space. When a broad range of groups who regularly employ different tactics to address different issues come together, all can benefit from the ways their different approaches complement one another; not only this, but what they accomplish can easily be recognized as a part of a broad-ranging program, rather than a single-issue campaign. For radicals who are used to feeling like a powerless minority lost in a sea of apathy, the presence of many others of like minds can be intensely empowering. In large groups, people can inspire one another to find the courage and sense of entitlement necessary to act in ways they otherwise would not, and there is no shortage of potential comrades with whom to collaborate. When great numbers are present, radicals can plot large-scale strategies and achieve ambitious goals, and the achievement of these goals serves to attract future participants. So many beautiful people concentrated in one space can create a temporary real-life example of an anarchist society, something practically unimaginable for those who grew up in the sterile, colonized, hopeless environments of modern day capitalism.

THE other really advantageous aspect of mass actions is that they are accessible and participatory. Because they can incorporate a wide range of tactics, they offer space for participants of a wide range of capabilities and comfort levels; and as they are announced openly and take place in public



settings, people can join in without need of special social connections. Thus, they serve to create new connections between people and communities, and to provide points of entry for atomized individuals into a mass movement. Additionally, because so many people, both intentional participants and chance witnesses, experience them firsthand, news about mass actions spreads easily through word of mouth and other non-corporate channels. This makes it difficult for the corporate media to ignore them entirely without risking a loss of popular credibility.

THE limitations of the mass action model also became clearer and clearer as the years passed after Seattle. Organizing events on such a large scale, not to mention traveling to them from a great distance, demands a lot of energy and resources, which must be drawn from the same pool of energy and resources upon which ongoing and locally-based projects depend. If a demonstration results in mass arrests, as the less militant civil-disobedience-oriented mass action models are wont to, this can consume time, money, and attention that might be more profitably applied to some constructive end; the same goes for the felony charges and arduous court cases that can result from individual arrests at more militant actions. The connections made at mass actions are more often between spatially distant, culturally homogenous communities than between local, culturally dissimilar ones that could benefit from continuing to work together outside the mass action format. It has been charged that, though they demand a lot of organizing from those in the host city, mass actions often drain more from local communities than they give to them. More insidiously, because the mass action model focuses on exceptional events that largely take place in well-known cities, it can foster the unhealthy impression that history is determined at special occasions in Washington, DC rather than in the decisions people ev-

erywhere make in their daily lives.

BECAUSE each mass action demands so much from so many, organizers who seek to put on major demonstrations must compete with one another for the privilege of getting to stage one of the few that can happen in any given period; under these conditions, it is easy for authoritarians to seize the reigns, or sabotage the labors of many with a few bad decisions. Because traveling great distances to events and risking arrest is not feasible for people of many walks of life, the mass action model has been criticized as the domain of privileged activists; this does not necessarily undercut the possibility that it can achieve worthwhile goals, but it does indicate certain limits to its effectiveness as outreach and as a participatory form of resistance.

FINALLY, and most significantly in the post-9/11 era, the mass action model enables authorities to prepare extensively, making every demonstration into a spectacle of their intimidating might. This gives the misleading impression that people are powerless in the grip of an all-powerful government, when in fact the state must draw troops from far and wide to stage these shows of force. It is especially convenient for intelligence-gathering departments to have so many radicals concentrated in one place, working on one

project. Working publicly, in great numbers and under constant surveillance, it is very difficult for radicals to disseminate new tactical ideas without infiltrators and police apprehending them.

KNOWING these limitations all too well, but not wishing to retire into inactivity, some activists argue in favor of more decentralized, autonomous actions. Generally speaking, an autonomous action is an action on a small enough scale that it can be organized without coordination from a central body, below the radar of the authorities. A classic modern day example of autonomous action is an attack on an army recruiting station, in which its windows are broken and slogans are spraypainted across its walls. Throughout this discussion, we will be addressing three basic kinds of autonomous action: actions carried out by individuals or individual affinity groups that take place entirely apart from mass actions; actions carried out by individuals or affinity groups that coincide with mass actions; and larger mobilizations, such as impromptu street marches, that are organized and initiated autonomously by small groups.

THE autonomous action model has many advantages that mass actions lack: such actions almost always benefit from the element of surprise, they require significantly less infrastructure and preparation, and those who organize them can choose the time and terrain of engagement, rather than simply reacting to the decisions of the authorities. Autonomous actions are perfect for those with limited resources who do not desire to act in a high profile manner. They are practical and efficient for striking small blows and maintaining pressure on a broad range of fronts, and provide an excellent learning opportunity for small groups who wish to build up experience together.

IN choosing to focus on this model, however, activists should also take into account the ways in which its advantages are also limitations. It is easy to maintain secrecy in preparing for an autonomous action, but it is often correspondingly difficult to spread word of it afterwards—let alone carry it out in a manner that offers those outside the immediate circle of organizers the chance to join in. While the autonomous action model

<sup>2</sup> This is not to say that widely publicized but purely symbolic actions are sufficient to build a movement that can pose a threat to capitalism! To inspire others and attract future participants, militant actions must actually strike blows and accomplish immediate goals.

el is useful for those already involved in the direct action movement, it is rarely useful for helping others get involved or develop more experience. Without participatory, accessible forms of resistance, a movement cannot be expected to grow.

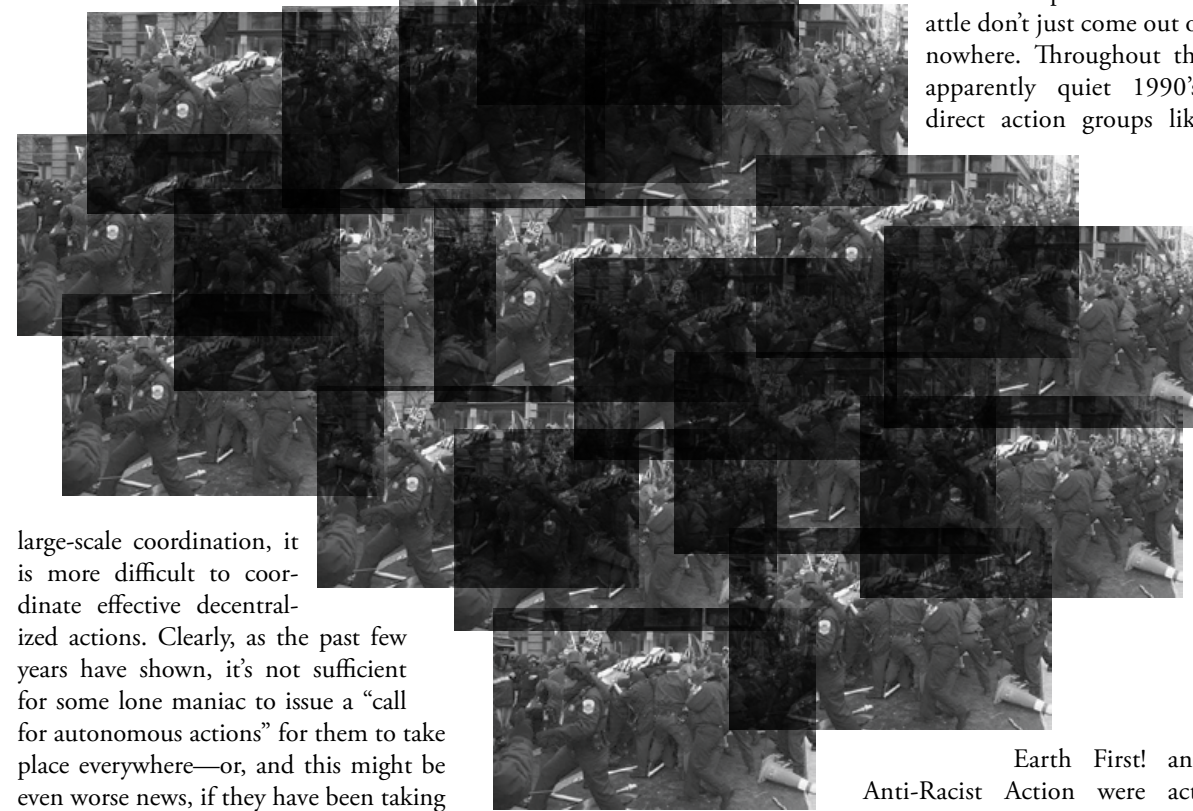
THE essential idea of autonomous action—that individuals can organize their own activity, without need of direction or superstructure—is also the essence of anarchism. The problem here is that the essential challenge of spreading the autonomous action model is also the essential challenge of the anarchist revolution: most people are not used to acting on their own—without direction, organization, and the energy and sense of urgency that special events and large numbers of comrades provide, many find it difficult to cross over from hesitation into action. Even for those who hope to act autonomously, mass actions provide momentum, morale, crowd cover, legal support, numbers, media attention, and many other important elements. Outside the mass action model, we have to figure out how to do without these, or provide for them some other way.

FOCUSING on autonomous actions is a strategic retreat for radicals if it means dropping out of the public eye. Merely material blows, such as financial losses to corporations, will not suffice to topple the powers that be, at least at this juncture in the struggle; the hurricanes that struck the southeastern USA in the summer of 2004 did literally tens of thousands of times the financial damage of all the direct actions carried out that year combined, without posing any threat to the stability of the capitalist order. What is truly dangerous about anticapitalist resistance is not the actual effects of any given action, but the danger that it might become contagious and spread<sup>2</sup>; and for this to be possible, people have to hear about resistance, and know how to join in. Too often, autonomous actions that are prepared and carried out in secret depend entirely on the media to publicize them. With the corporate media determined to limit coverage of direct action and independent media struggling to reach any audience beyond a few subcultural ghettos, this can be a serious flaw.

EVEN when they do attract attention, autonomous actions do not necessarily mobilize others. In the worst case, a direct action movement oriented around the autonomous actions of a dynamic few can degenerate into a sort of spectator sport. This is one

of the many reasons most anarchists reject terrorism and other approaches that depend on the actions of a vanguard: for an action model to stand a chance of being useful in the project of revolutionary struggle, it must be possible for others to adopt and apply it themselves—indeed, it must promote and encourage this, it must seduce people into using it who might otherwise remain inactive.

FINALLY, while mass actions by their very nature involve and benefit from



large-scale coordination, it is more difficult to coordinate effective decentralized actions. Clearly, as the past few years have shown, it's not sufficient for some lone maniac to issue a "call for autonomous actions" for them to take place everywhere—or, and this might be even worse news, if they have been taking place everywhere, it doesn't seem to have made any discernable difference. We need a model for autonomous actions that actually enables them to take place, and to be effective when they do. In the discussion that follows, we'll analyze the lessons of the past year's attempts to develop such a model.

IN considering these issues, it's important to emphasize that neither mass actions nor autonomous actions represent the only possible form of radical activity—they don't, and shouldn't, represent even the primary one. If a total moratorium on both could enable an accordingly greater focus on other activities such as the development of community infrastructure and alliances, it might be for the best for the anarchist movement; some have argued in favor of just that. If we continue to invest energy in demonstrations of any kind, it should be because they can, as

part of a broader strategy, enable us to make gains on other fronts as well; this author, for one, feels strongly that this can be the case.

## BACKGROUND: DIRECT ACTION AT DEMONSTRATIONS FROM THE 1990'S TO 2004

WATERSHED events like the aforementioned protests in Seattle don't just come out of nowhere. Throughout the apparently quiet 1990's, direct action groups like

Earth First! and Anti-Racist Action were acting on a smaller scale, building up experience and momentum, while previously apathetic milieus like the punk rock scene and college activism were politicized by lifestyle politics and the anti-sweatshop campaign, respectively. Once Britain's successes with the Reclaim the Streets model demonstrated that mass anticapitalist action was still possible in the post-modern era, it was only a few months before activists tried to do something similar in the USA at the meeting of the World Trade Organization.

<sup>3</sup> This was probably more of an irrational emotional reaction than a miscalculation. To the extent that it was a judgment call, it indicates that activists overestimated either the ability of the government to identify and repress them or the threat the government perceived them to pose.

THE results surprised everybody. Suddenly, everyone had a working example of anti-authoritarian, anti-capitalist resistance as a reference point. Anarchists, among other radicals, came out of the woodwork, and everyone was itching to have a go at repeating that success. Because the Seattle protests had not been a mere fluke but rather the culmination of a long period of growth and development, there was a root structure in place to sustain further such actions—the most notable being the protests against the World Bank and International Monetary Fund in Washington, D.C. the following April, against the Democratic and Republican National Conventions that summer, and against the Free Trade Area of the Americas summit in Quebec in April 2001. And because each demonstration attracted new attention and additional participants to the anarchist movement, the root structure quickly deepened and spread. The movement, focusing much of its energy on these convergences and mass actions, rode a wave that sometimes made it appear to be an unstoppable historical force.

IMF/WB

By summer of 2001, when great numbers of people participated in streetfighting at the G8 summit in Italy and planning was underway for more protests against the IMF in Washington, DC, some felt that the movement had reached the crest of that wave. Many were exhausted from the demands of constant organizing, long-distance traveling, and court cases; at least as many felt that the anarchist movement was on the verge of a breakthrough that would change the nature of resistance in North America. We'll never know whether or not the effectiveness of mass mobilizations had already reached its peak, for before the planned protests in DC could take place, hijackers flew airplanes into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, and the entire context changed. The anarchist response to the new situation was, for the most part, embarrassing: rather than seizing the opportunity to emphasize that now even U.S. citizens were dying as a result of their rulers' foreign policies, many hesitated to speak out in fear that they would be attacked or seen as insensitive, and thus

ceded all the gains made by anarchists over the preceding years. Fears ran rampant that new anti-terror legislation and enforcement would be used to imprison and suppress the anarchist movement, a concern that has since been shown to be unfounded<sup>3</sup>. Now that most activists did not believe that positive revolutionary change could be around the corner, all the internal conflicts and burnout that had been building up over the preceding years of constant action came to the fore, and over the following months anarchist communities saw the worst infighting in recent history.

9/11

IN retrospect, it is possible to argue that mainstream media attention was responsible for a significant part of the high morale and sense of entitlement that enabled anarchists to act so effectively in the period between the Seattle demonstrations and the 9/11 attacks. Few if any in the anarchist milieu had addressed this irony. In Western society, everyone is raised to desire, however secretly, to be famous—to be on television—because what is on television is "real," is important. Although at the time many anarchists insisted they didn't care whether or not they received coverage in the corporate media, it could be said that the simple knowledge that they were "famous" as a movement if not as individuals sustained their spirits and sense of urgency. When this attention was withdrawn, morale plummeted immediately. The corporate media is unlikely to return the spotlight to anarchist activity in the foreseeable future, and the motivation of anarchists should not be dependent upon other's representations of them in the first place. Anarchists now must find ways to maintain momentum and energy even through a total media blackout.

As the anarchist movement struggled to regain its footing throughout the year following the 9/11 attacks, some tentative attempts were made to apply the mass action model again, notably at the protests against

<sup>4</sup> Another notable exception to this generalization occurred during an otherwise placid liberal march in Washington, DC when a small group of anarchists broke away, marched to the World Bank, charged into the building, and trashed it from the inside.



the World Economic Forum in New York City and then at the “People’s Strike” protests against the IMF in DC a year after the terrorist attacks. These were admirable efforts, and if nothing else they served to give those seriously committed to demonstration activism a way to stay involved, but they showed that for the most part the large numbers and high morale previously associated with large mobilizations were no longer available. Older activists were demoralized, younger ones were unsure how to proceed, and people on the fringes of activism and radical politics were too distracted by the spectator sport of the so-called War on Terror to refocus on the struggle against capitalist globalization on other fronts.

WHEN the Terror War shifted into a new gear, demonstrations became popular again, but anarchists were no longer in the forefront of the organizing. Liberal and authoritarian groups attempted to appropriate all the mystique radicals had recently given mass action, while only taking on the superficial aspects of the organizing models that had made protests before 9/11 exciting, participatory, and thus dangerous to the established order. The first two major demonstrations to protest the impending war in Iraq, in DC on January 20 and then worldwide on February 15, were dominated by liberal single-issue politics and models. The protests in New York City on February 15 became a little more raucous when the police attempted to block the march and rank-and-file protesters fought back, but for the most part consciously radical militant tactics seemed a thing of the past at mass actions<sup>4</sup>. This was all the more disappointing in that the February 15 protests were perhaps the most heavily attended protests in history; because militant activists had surrendered the mass action context, millions of people marching in the streets neither helped to sway the opinions of the masters of war nor to obstruct their preparations for it—nor, for that matter, to build a movement capable of disarming them.

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<sup>4</sup> Protestors had applied this tactic at the previous FTAA ministerial in Quebec City, and met with some success, as it was fairly new at the time. By the time of the ministerial in Miami, however, fences had been attacked from Genoa to Cancun, and it was exactly what the authorities were expecting. As a general rule of thumb, it’s a bad idea to try an approach that worked or almost worked in a similar previous confrontation, assuming your opponents are in as much of a position to learn from the past as you are.

THINGS changed when the United States attacked Iraq on March 20, 2003. On this day, and over the months that followed it, countless cities were struck by demonstrations that went beyond the limits liberal organizers try to impose. San Francisco was entirely paralyzed; more importantly, radical communities appeared in more surprising locations such as Saint Louis, Missouri, conceiving and carrying out their own disruptive actions as the militant core of the anti-war movement. A new generation of activists, many of whom had not participated in the post-Seattle phase of demonstration activism, gained experience during this time.

## FTAA

As that phase of the war in Iraq died down, activists also slowed the pace of their activity, taking time to recover from such a demanding period of organizing. Anarchists nationwide began to focus their attention on the Free Trade Area of the Americas ministerial that was to take place in Miami the following November. Many believed that, thanks to the new momentum generated in the anti-war movement, this could be the first really effective, exciting demonstration against capitalist globalization since September 11; some hoped this would be the triumphant return of Seattle-style protest activism. Consultas were held around the country at which plans were hashed out, posters were designed and distributed, groups disseminated calls for various forms of action.

UNFORTUNATELY, Miami was a poorly chosen playing field for this grudge match. It was the most militarized police state North America had ever seen: there were so many police, equipped with so much destructive weaponry, that any kind of militant confrontation would have been doomed to failure. The protestor turnout was bound to be limited: the majority of potential participants were still distracted by the Iraq war, not thinking about corporate globalization, and Miami was a great distance from most active communities. Consequently, there wasn’t a wide range of diversity among the protesters, which can otherwise temper police repression: this made it easy for the police to

pigeonhole protesters as either law-abiding union members or unruly anarchists, so as to ignore the former and attack the latter.

THESE factors alone might not have spelled doom for the protests, but there were also several strategic errors in the organizing. The plan organizers put forth, to attack the fence surrounding the meetings, was exactly what the authorities expected<sup>5</sup>—and while the latter were thoroughly prepared for this scenario, few activists arrived mentally or physically equipped to undertake this. Even worse, certain organizers cut an unbelievably foolish deal with the labor unions—which, it must be noted, were closely collaborating with the police—to the effect that no direct action would take place during the permitted union march on the afternoon of the primary day of demonstrations. Thanks to this agreement, the police were free simply to maintain order during the union march, with little fear of having to divide their attention; then, as soon as the march was over, they steamrolled across the entire city, beating, gassing, shooting, and arresting everyone who remained, confident that everyone they attacked was acting outside the law and therefore a safe target. The only way anarchists could have turned the tables would have been by acting unexpectedly and en masse outside the occupied district of Miami, but the initiative necessary for that kind of autonomous, covert organizing was painfully lacking. The consulta model, while it indicated an admirable commitment to decentralized organizing, failed to provide intelligent strategic decisions, adequate security for planning, or commitments on which participating groups actually followed through. These may all have been incidental failures, but each one cost dearly.

## MIAMI

THIS is not to say nothing of value was accomplished in Miami. People still came together and acted courageously, with all the benefits that entails, and the police state was revealed for what it was, at least to eyewitnesses and through the few venues that ran coverage of the events. But coming away from a protest with a martyr’s tale of police violence and abuse, or, at best, a story of heroic narrow escapes, is a poor second

to actually feeling like one has struck blows and made gains.

IN the wake of what many felt to be a debacle, some anarchists began to emphasize the importance of acting outside mass models in smaller, more autonomous groups with the element of surprise. Some had been promoting this idea for a long time; it had even been tested to some extent in mass actions, such as at the People’s Strike in Washington, DC, September 2002, when the organizers distributed a list of targets and intersections and announced that actions would take place throughout the city. Others, notably environmental and animal liberation activists, had been acting in clandestine cells for decades. So it happened that, as the election year approached, the war in Iraq wore on, and political matters came back to the fore of public attention, anarchists were preoccupied with the question of whether mass actions could ever be effective again, and what forms of decentralized action might be able to replace them.

## DIRECT ACTION IN THE ELECTION YEAR

THE year 2004 was ushered in by a midnight march in downtown Washington, DC, commemorating the ten year anniversary of the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas, Mexico. More than one hundred masked anarchists bearing banners, torches, and percussion instruments took over a major thoroughfare for a full hour, leaving spraypaint and stencil designs in their wake. This march appeared as if out of nowhere in a crowded business district, on a night when the police department was so overextended that it took over a half hour for even one patrol car to show up. There were no arrests. Clearly, some anarchists had learned the lessons of Miami, without withdrawing from public actions altogether.

ALL the same, the first months of 2004 were quiet ones for direct action. March 20<sup>th</sup>, the anniversary of the declaration of war on Iraq, saw largely peaceful mass demonstrations

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<sup>5</sup> One person or group calling for others to act is little better than a vanguard, and can be expected to meet with as much success as the various communist splinter groups currently do. Calls for decentralized actions work best when activists who are already organizing themselves call upon others in their networks to join in, offering the opportunity to be part of an effort that already has participation and momentum in its favor.

along the lines of those before the war, lacking the urgency and militancy of the actions carried out during it. In April, there was another protest in Washington, DC against the IMF and World Bank; the extent to which it was a ritualized, placid affair revealed just how far anarchist attention had drifted from the formerly prioritized terrain of mass actions opposing corporate globalization. It was followed immediately by the March for Women’s Lives, a rally in support of abortion rights that drew over a million people. Although there were hundreds of anarchists present, if not more, the possibility that militant action of any kind might take place was never broached. People of militant perspectives were still coming together when liberal organizers solicited their participation, but without a sense that it was feasible to organize events on their own terms.

## G8

THIS impression was sealed by the G8 summit in Georgia that June. The protests at the G8 summit in Genoa, Italy in the summer of 2001 had been the high water mark of the anti-globalization movement: hundreds of thousands of protesters had converged on the city, engaging in tactics of all kinds that had left entire financial districts in wreckage. Eager to avoid another such catastrophe, the powers that be picked a secluded island off the coast of Georgia to host the G8 meeting in June of 2004, and set aside tens of millions of dollars for security. Not only the island itself but much of the coastline around it was thoroughly militarized; as has become customary, the media ran a series of articles demonizing predicted anarchist protesters while emphasizing the invincibility of the police and military forces that would be waiting for them.

DEMORALIZED by the Miami experience, most advocates of direct action assumed from the outset that nothing would be possible in Georgia. In retrospect, it was wise to let the G8 summit pass rather than squandering the last optimism of the movement on a doomed venture, though at the time this resignation seemed to be a troubling symptom of general cynicism. Many brushed off mass actions as obsolete; in the end, there was only one protestor for every sixty-seven security officers at the G8 summit. Much of the energy of those few who did take the

trouble to go to Georgia was invested in the “Fix Shit Up” campaign, in which anarchists provided volunteer labor supporting disadvantaged families in the areas of police occupation. The name of this venture, which could neither successfully solicit media coverage nor appeal to liberal sympathies nor inspire the punk rockers whose slogan it referenced, speaks volumes as to its long-term effectiveness as an insurrectionary strategy. When no actual blows can be struck against the system that creates and enforces poverty, anarchists should at least do what they can to alleviate its effects—but many anarchists are already doing this where they live, and traveling long distances to do so has all the disadvantages of traveling to carry out more militant actions without most of the advantages. In every aspect, the G8 summit was the nadir of the general slump through which mass action activism passed following 9/11, notwithstanding the renaissance during the Iraq war.

SOME had called for widespread autonomous actions around the country to coincide with the G8 summit. A little-known example of one such call was the “Insurrection Night” proposal, which was circulated via email listservs. In incendiary language, it called for people everywhere to carry out militant, confrontational direct actions the Saturday night preceding the week of the G8 summit. The advantages of this approach over going to Georgia to get tear-gassed and arrested in the middle of nowhere were obvious: it allowed radicals to plan their actions in familiar, unguarded terrain and with the benefit of surprise. On the night so designated, however, nothing happened—or if anything did, news of it was never circulated. If all it took to get people to rise up and strike blows against the apparatus of control was to issue a call to action, this revolution would have been over a long time ago; and even if such calls were to work, it seems clear that the system can survive a burning dumpster here and there—the problem is how to concentrate such blows, and strike them in such a way that they give rise to wider uprisings. From this example, one can surmise that both calls for autonomous action and autonomous actions themselves must proceed from an already thriving culture of resistance if they are to offer any results<sup>6</sup>—and neither, alone, are sufficient to give rise to such a culture. If the G8 summit in Georgia was the nadir for mass action, the “Insurrection Night” prototype represents the weakest version of the autonomous action model.

A few days after the proposed night of insurrection, on the final day of the G8 summit, activists in North Carolina shut down an entire corporate business district with steel cables, smoke bombs, and banners decrying the G8 and corporate power in general, causing a massive traffic jam in the center of the state. Local newspapers and television gave this more coverage than they gave the protests in Georgia against the G8 summit, and local residents experienced it far more immediately. This took place only two days

tegration of autonomous action into a wider strategy for building radical communities and gaining widespread attention.

ANOTHER example of effective autonomous action occurred a month later in Maine, following an Earth First! gathering, when approximately 150 people converged on the Governor's Mansion to protest a proposed liquid natural gas pipeline. First, a few activists erected a thirty-foot tripod with a pro- tester locked atop it, blocking the driveway.

keep opposition to the pipeline visible, gave those opposing it more bargaining power, and demonstrated an alternate model for autonomous actions.

EARTH FIRST!

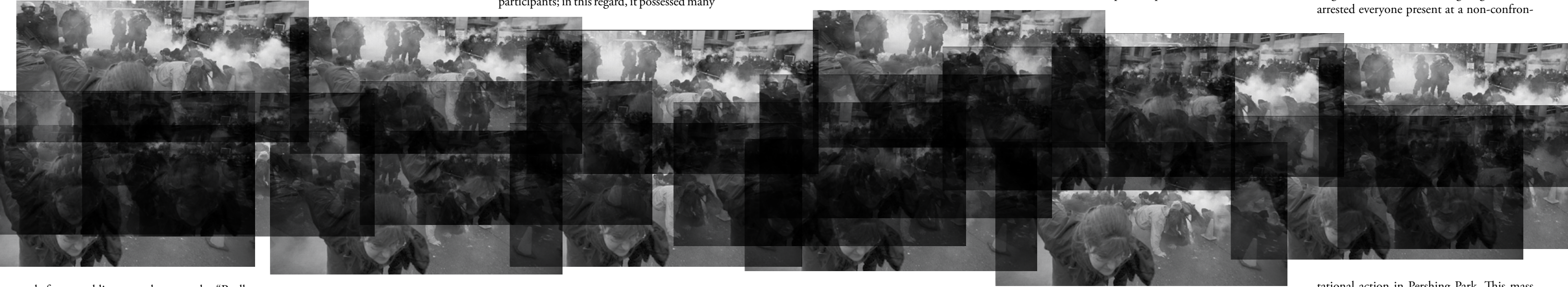
THE Maine action was organized in secrecy by a small circle of people who nonetheless managed to open it up to great numbers of participants; in this regard, it possessed many

the general nature of the target and affinity groups formed to focus on different aspects of the action. The morning of the action, a caravan left the gathering; the bulk of the participants did not know where they were going until they were led onto the site. This negated the risk of informers being present.

THIS kind of organizing demands a careful balance of security and communication, for those invited must learn enough about the action to be excited about participating and equipped

National Convention. Regardless of theoretical matters such as whether anti-authoritarians should focus on contesting the most powerful political party or all political parties, activists laying plans for mass actions must take into account practical questions such as how many people will actually show up. Perhaps if thousands of anarchists had converged on Boston to show their opposition to the false alternative represented by the Democratic Party, it would have made an important point, but this was not to be.

cally militant tone of their rhetoric was one of the most salient features of that mobilization. Although it turned out that not enough militants, and not militant enough ones at that, turned out to follow through on this threat, the media and police accomplished it themselves by spreading hysteria in advance and clogging up the city in their attempts to defend it. After most of the actions planned had been accomplished, the police, still unnerved and always most likely to go after defenseless sitting targets, mass-arrested everyone present at a non-confron-



before a public outreach event, the "Really Really Free Market," in the state capital, at which people gathered to share resources and entertainment freely. As a result of the direct action that preceded it, the police and media both paid a great deal of attention to this event: the nightly news showed hundreds of people happily dancing, eating, and exchanging gifts, while police helicopters circled overhead and a hundred riot police waited nearby. Thus, this combination of tactics resulted in free publicity for the effectiveness of covert action, the munificence of community activism, and the heavy-handedness of the state. In contrast to the "Insurrection Night" prototype, this can be seen as an effective in-

Once this was accomplished and all but the police liaison and the woman on the tripod had escaped unseen, a small masked group arrived and took advantage of the distraction occasioned by the tripod to dump hundreds of pounds of foul lobster guts across the lawn. They disappeared as other protesters showed up with food, games, and other festive forms of entertainment, further confusing the slowly responding authorities. Two communiqués were delivered: one a serious one for the mainstream media, the other a hilarious statement on behalf of the "lobster liberation front" for activists and others with a sense of humor. The event helped

of the advantages of both the mass and autonomous action models. As the target was three hours' drive distant from the gathering at which participants were recruited, and its identity was never openly revealed, the action retained the element of surprise. At the gathering, two preparatory meetings were held at which organizers described

<sup>7</sup> Seriously, where do they get this stuff? No anarchists have sprayed urine or acid on police officers in the entire recorded history of the current anarchist movement, and yet every corporate newspaper has dutifully repeated these lies as gospel.

to do so effectively. This model requires a large number of people to place a high level of trust in a few individuals; thus, it often works best in tight-knit or culturally homogeneous communities. While it is not as accessible to broad ranges of people as the mass action model, it is more participatory than other forms of autonomous action, offering introductory roles for less experienced activists.

THE events in North Carolina and Maine were only two of several local actions in mid-2004; but for radical activists and well-behaved citizens alike, the central political events of the summer were the Democratic and Republican National Conventions. At these, the possibilities and limitations of the anarchist movement's preoccupation with autonomous actions were tested.

DNC

THE Democratic National Convention took place in Boston at the end of July. It was not heavily attended by radicals; many were saving their time and energy for the Republican

As many learned in Miami, anarchists must always devise strategies that take into account the number of participants an event will draw and how much militancy can realistically be expected of them.

To get perspective on the protests at the Democratic National Convention, we can compare and contrast them with the People's Strike protests against the International Monetary Fund in DC September 2002, with which they shared many features. Both protests were less attended than organizers hoped; both included calls for autonomous action, as well as organizing for more centralized, accessible events; both took place in cities that are known for having police that show restraint during protests. At each event, the main day of action featured a critical mass bicycle parade, a march, and decentralized actions around the periphery. Both protests were organized by explicitly anti-authoritarian groups that made media coverage an integral part of their strategy.

THE organizers of the People's Strike had emphasized the confrontational character of their action, declaring explicitly that the city would be shut down; the unapologeti-

tational action in Pershing Park. This mass arrest, though somewhat inconvenient at the time, proved to be the most important legacy of the action: it ensured international media coverage for the protest, made the police look absurd, and ensnared the city in lawsuits that kept the demonstration in the news for years afterwards and forced the police to be more hesitant to make arrests during future protests.

BOSTON

By contrast, in Boston, the organizers—the "Bl(A)ck Tea Society"—were careful to distance themselves from violence, striving to offset the media campaign of extreme misinformation about anarchists that had become typical by that time<sup>7</sup>. Presumably, they hoped that by doing so they could attract more participants; unfortunately, as the prevailing sentiment in liberal circles was that getting "anybody but Bush" elected president was the first priority, participation in protests against the Democratic Party was bound to be limited to radicals. The Boston organizers were also kept on edge by a campaign of

## SNAPSHOT FROM THE FINAL DAYS OF A CIVILIZATION

IN April, 2004, during his reelection campaign, George W. Bush presided over a \$2000-a-plate luncheon in Charlotte, North Carolina that raised \$1.5 million. Guests were served such culinary delights as beef tenderloin with golden tomatoes on herb-encrusted baguette, but no eating utensils were provided; each menu read, "At the request of the White House, silverware will not accompany the table settings." The conservative Charlotte Observer speculated that this was so "the tinkle of silver would not disrupt the President's speech," but it's also possible that even the richest of the rich are not allowed access

to potential projectiles within flinging distance of the President. The Observer went on to report that, not surprisingly, most of the food went untouched.

THIS is what it was like to live in the last days of the Roman Empire: the sycophants and psychotics are gathered at the feast, having paid more for this meal than most can afford to spend on food in a year, only to be forced to sit absurdly before it as it goes cold. Their stomachs growl, but each is restrained by a lifetime of bourgeois conditioning, not to mention disapproving scowls from the secret service agents that line the walls. The hereditary ruler presides over the event, a boy idiot yammering on endlessly and saying precisely the opposite of what he means, while outside the gates—the storm gathers.

police and FBI intimidation, but this never panned out into the raids and arrests they feared. The fact that there were so few arrests in Boston indicates that, however intimidating the police made certain to be before and during the event, they themselves hoped to avoid illegal raids and mass arrests that would draw more attention to the protests. Had the organizers figured this out in advance, they could have strategized accordingly.

FOLLOWING the People's Strike model, the organizers in Boston distributed a list of targets throughout the city suitable for autonomous action. However, in preparing the People's Strike, the organizers had also covertly coordinated many actions, so as to be sure that something would happen—consequently, there were freeways shut down by burning tires, bank windows smashed, locks glued, and a major avenue barricaded by a giant inflatable, though many of these actions went unnoticed by the media or other activists because they took place over such a broad area. In Boston, the organizers don't seem to have been as proactive, and neither, apparently, were many of the other activists who came to the protest—the most militant action of the event seems to have been an incident in which a dozen people turned over shelves in a Gap clothing store, leaving spraypaint in their wake.

JUST as the “Insurrection Night” model failed to yield results, simply distributing a list of targets is hardly sufficient to enable militant action to occur. If they hope to see militant autonomous actions carried out to the extent that mass actions have been in the past, organizers must provide some of the prerequisites that enable people to apply militant tactics in the latter context. These include crowd cover, communications and scouting, media attention, and, above all,

the reassurance that somebody somewhere has actually invested energy in making sure something will happen. The BI(A)ck Tea Society attracted the necessary media attention; they provided a text messaging communications system, though it proved vulnerable to police surveillance, resulting in a few arrests after a botched attempt to assemble following the “Really Really Democratic Bazaar”; they seemed to have done little else to facilitate autonomous actions. This is not to disparage their organizing efforts—in addition to media and outreach work, they also organized a convergence center, prepared legal infrastructure, and staged a variant on the Really Really Free Market model that attracted thousands of participants. But if autonomous action is to rival mass action as a model for militant activity, anarchists have to learn that the “clap your hands if you believe in Tinkerbell” approach, in which organizers call for decentralized actions and then cross their fingers and hope an army of maniacs will show up to plan and execute them, does not produce results.

THE Democratic National Convention was not an opportune setting for a doomsday showdown with the forces of law and order, and it's important that a movement limited in numbers and experience not overextend itself. Perhaps anarchists should have concentrated all their energy on accessible, non-confrontational approaches in Boston; it certainly doesn't pay to make empty threats too many times. If effective militant action of any kind was to happen there, given the massive police presence and small numbers of protesters, it would have had to have been decentralized and autonomous: twenty such actions as happened at the Gap, for example, could have caught the police by surprise, generated media attention, and raised morale in anticipation of the Republican

were critical of this campaign on the grounds that it was too soft on voting. Indeed, insofar as people conflate it with actual political participation, voting is extremely pernicious—as every text circulated by the “Don't (Just) Vote” campaign emphasized. That being the case, these critics seem to have been raising a new and daring question: entirely apart from the dangerous superstitions associated with it, can voting itself, taken in a vacuum, be harmful?

Your humble editor, anxiously concerned about such safety issues, has done quite a bit of research on this subject and has finally turned up some evidence that this may be the case, if only in extreme situations. A dissident account of the untimely death of Edgar Allen Poe, advanced most recently in the amusing miscellany *Why Americans Zigzag When They Eat*, suggests that the renowned author was killed by being voted to death. In those days, political gangs would rig elections

National Convention. Failing that, it would have been more sensible to focus on more outreach and community-building, in which the Boston protests were already superior to the People's Strike. In trying to have it both ways by calling for militant action while neither preparing it nor tricking the police into making it unnecessary, the organizers played into the hands of the authorities, who hoped to show that they could easily thwart anarchist attempts at disruption. This had negative consequences for Boston locals as well as the anarchist movement. While the long-term effects of the “People's Strike” were that local police became more hesitant in dealing with crowds, the millions of dollars of funding that the Boston police received to prepare for the convention paid for an arsenal of semi-lethal weapons—one of which was used to kill a woman during a post-game sports riot a few months later.

RNC

A month after the protests in Boston, the Republican National Convention was held in New York City. Unlike every other demonstration since the invasion of Iraq, this was a historic opportunity for anarchists to apply the mass action model effectively. All the necessary pieces were in place: the local populace was furious with the Republicans for invading their city, and enthusiastically supportive of the protesters; radicals were coming by the thousands from all around the country, hoping this would be the event of a lifetime; and there was to be a wide range of people involved in the protests and a great deal of media attention focused on them, both of which would help deter the

by shanghaiing vulnerable gentlemen and liquoring or doping them up to make them agreeable. On election day, these unfortunates would be frog-marched around to all the polling stations as fast as possible; once one circuit was completed, their handlers would change their clothes, trim their mustaches, and run them around again. The faster the pace they kept, the more votes they were worth, so it must have been a grueling process. (Nowadays, political gangs bypass such clumsy methods and accomplish the same thing with advertising and voting machine fraud.) Poe was known for his stylish dressing, but when he was found—drunk, delirious, and in the process of dying of exhaustion, at a Baltimore bar that doubled as a polling station—he was wearing a very cheap suit that didn't seem to belong to him. It was an election day. So there you have it: voting, horror of capitalist horrors, killed the greatest horror writer of all time—and might kill you, too, if you put too much stock in it.

police from a violent crackdown such as the one in Miami the preceding year. The attention of the whole world was concentrated on New York City, and while many liberals feared that a serious confrontation there would undermine the chances of the Democratic Party's presidential hopeful, countless others longed for one.

IF all that wasn't enough, there was a struggle going on between the liberal organizers and the city police department as to whether the giant permitted march would be allowed to go to Central Park. This was the same situation that had precipitated the street confrontations during the anti-war protests in New York a year and a half earlier; if the city was unable to reach an agreement with the organizers in time, everyone knew that the march could turn violent. The leaders of the liberal organizing coalition backed down on their demands on one occasion, only to be forced by their grassroots membership to reinstate them. This conflict provided a perfect opportunity for anarchist organizing. A nationwide call for a black bloc on the day of the main permitted march would have taken perfect advantage of this conflict, giving those frustrated with the city government and its liberal accomplices a rallying point. Had the first major day of protests ended in streetfighting, it would have changed the entire character of the protests and perhaps of opposition to the Bush regime in general. The very last thing the police department of New York City wanted was to have to use tear gas in the crowded streets of the most populated city in North America; this

would have been a public relations debacle for both the city government and the Republican Party, and it would have shown that anarchists could pose a real threat to the imposed domestic peace that enables wars overseas. Even if this had resulted in massive numbers of arrests, it could have been worth it—hundreds, if not more, of the anarchists who went to New York ended up getting arrested, anyway.

ALAS, anarchists were so caught up in solving strategic problems from past actions that they failed to apprehend these possibilities. While a heavier focus on autonomous actions would have been the only hope of enabling effective militant tactics at the demonstrations in Miami and Boston, New York was a perfect setting for a large-scale, centrally organized strategy, and anarchists passed this chance up in favor of a focus on decentralized, autonomous actions. Perhaps older activists were still shell-shocked from the protests at the Republican National Convention in 2000, at which a poorly planned mass action had ended in a lot of pointless, demoralizing arrests; perhaps it was just too difficult to coordinate actions centrally between groups from around the world in such an enormous and complicated city; perhaps it really was the legacy of Miami frightening anarchists out of using their heads. Regardless, as the communiqué delivered weeks before the demonstrations by the NYC Anarchist Grapevine admitted, there was no “Big Plan” for militant action in New York.

NEW YORK

UNFORTUNATELY, what anarchists fail to coordinate themselves will be coordinated by authoritarians, and so, while anarchist labor was central to the infrastructure that enabled them, the character of most of the actions planned for New York was non-confrontational, even liberal. At the last minute, the organizers of the main march finally accepted the conditions of the city, agreeing to march in circles rather than follow through on the desires of the rank-and-file who wanted to go to Central Park with or without a permit; likewise, though anarchists and militants swelled the numbers of many other actions, these were largely orchestrated to avoid actually challenging the activities of the Republicans or the occupation of the city.

To be fair, some anarchists, notably including many who had traveled from San Francisco and other parts of the West Coast, organized a day of direct action late in the protests, but they focused only on enabling symbolic tactics of civil disobedience. Worse, they made exactly the same mistake that had been made in Miami and at the Republican National Convention four years earlier: they arranged for their action not to coincide with any others and to take place after most of the less radical protesters had left the city, so the police had free hands to focus on repressing everyone on the streets that night. This resulted in over one thousand arrests, without any con-

## LATE AFTERNOON, JANUARY 20<sup>TH</sup>, 2005, WASHINGTON, DC

THE riot police were already pouring out of their vehicles and suiting up when we arrived at the reconvergence point. The anarchist march had been broken up before reaching any of the checkpoints surrounding the inaugural parade route, and we'd spent the following hour lost in the multitudes outside those checkpoints, trying to figure out where our friends were and how to reach a critical mass again. We passed the police and crossed the street into the assembling throng.

THERE were more militants concentrated here, but no clearer indication of what to do next. As far as any of us knew, now that the initial march was over, no one had a backup plan. At a discussion the night before, when I'd broached the question of what we would do if the march failed to break through the checkpoint, one maniac had coldly responded, “What's with all this talk about backup plans and exit strategies? People are fucking dying in Iraq.”

“So what are you saying, that we should just go until we all get arrested?”

“WELL, yeah.”

THINGS hadn't played out that way in the streets. Now we needed to come up with a new strategy—and quick, before the spectacle was over and it was too late to refuse our part in it.

PROSPECTS for this weren't looking good. People were milling around indecisively, conferring in small groups; there was a feeling of dejection in the air. To one side, some activists were bickering about the decisions made during the earlier march. Others—from the looks of it, not the most experienced protesters present—had actually sat down in a circle to hold a formal collective discussion, which didn't seem to be turning up any answers either. This, while riot police were amassing across the street! Perhaps they wouldn't arrest us all →

<sup>8</sup> In another hilarious and ironic development, it turned out that there was a theater group in New York for the protests under the moniker Greene Dragon Society. Scrambling to give the impression that they were in control of the situation, the FBI announced that it had infiltrated the “Green Dragon Group” over a year earlier and were abreast of all its nefarious plans; this could only be to the misfortune of both the aforementioned liberal group and the FBI, however, as the Greene Dragon Society doesn't appear to have been anywhere near the puppet that went up in flames, nor to have had anything to do with its construction. A more likely story was circulated by Starhawk of the pagan cluster, who was engaged in a spiral dance a block away when the dragon caught fire; she speculates that it was the energy released from their ritual that triggered the conflagration.

<sup>9</sup> Some few anarchists, mostly of the persuasion given to hyper-radical rhetoric and little action to back it up,

crete objective being accomplished besides the news coverage these attracted and the harassment of some Republican delegates.

ONE of the most important lessons that can be drawn from the aforementioned action is the importance of different kinds of actions taking place simultaneously. In Seattle, Quebec, and Genoa, legal marches, civil disobedience, and confrontational militant action all took place at once, and the division of the city into zones according to level of risk made it possible for protesters to pick the form of engagement with which they were most comfortable. In the Republican National Conventions of both 2000 and 2004, as well as the FTAA protests in Miami, organizers did exactly the opposite, senselessly endangering those committed to militant action and undercutting the effectiveness of the protests as a whole. The costs of this could have been offset had militants organized a major mass action themselves, but none dared do so.

In the absence of a unified approach, the hundreds of different actions that took place in New York never quite added up to the insurrection they could have. As a demonstration of the possibilities of localized autonomous action, New York was unparalleled, but it was also a missed opportunity in an era that provides few good chances to apply the mass action model.

Two groups did attempt to organize actions on the day of the main march; ironically, one applied the mass action model as if car-

rying out an autonomous action, while the other did exactly the opposite. The former of these groups was a militant contingent, apparently organized by word of mouth, that took part in the main permitted march; this might be the first case on record of a black bloc going undercover by mixing with civilian protesters and leaving their faces uncovered until the moment before the action. When this group approached the point at which the march turned around to march away from Central Park, right in front of the building hosting the convention center, an enormous green dragon puppet was set afire, and streetfighting broke out; however, there were not enough numbers or preparation to maintain this. Within an hour, the police had reestablished control and the march proceeded as before; only a few impressive photographs of the fire remained, one of which ran in one especially poorly informed tabloid with a caption describing it as the work of “the anarchist group ‘Black Box.’”<sup>8</sup>

THE other notable militant effort that day was a call for anarchists to intercept Republican delegates on their way to their evening’s entertainment at several Broadway shows. However, because this call was promoted in such venues as the New York Times, these actions lacked the element of surprise, the most important aspect of the autonomous action model. Many anarchists showed up, but as there was no strategy for mass action and few partici-

pants brought individual plans of their own, there were many arrests and little more was accomplished than a few delegates being shouted at.

WHATEVER strategic miscalculations anarchists may have made, it was still thrilling to be in New York with so many others determined to change the course of history. The Critical Mass bicycle parade, which took place before most of the other events, offered a moving illustration of just how many people and how much energy were gathered together that week; to stand at a corner and watch groups of thirty and forty surge constantly past for a full half hour was simply breathtaking. Most who went to New York left with new energy and inspiration, which helped to catalyze further action as the elections drew near.

right here, but the longer we dallied, the less likely it would be that we could get past them to do anything.

I went from cluster to cluster of my friends—in each one, ideas were being tossed around, but none seemed to be sticking. In my pessimistic frame of mind, it struck me as a microcosm of the anarchist milieu in general: every clique has a pet plan they’d like to see put into action, but none is willing to do more than talk about how great their plan is.

THERE was no sense in joining the marketplace of ideas. I returned to the friend I trusted most, the one with whom I’d shared so much experience at other demonstrations. “Listen, nothing’s going to happen unless somebody decides something and goes for it. I trust you to make the call for both of us. Just pick a plan, and count me in.”

ONE of his friends had an idea—apparently, she’d seen a flatbed truck parked near the checkpoints, loaded with wooden pallets we might be able to seize for our own uses. This seemed hard to believe, but stranger things have happened.

So we had an idea, but how were we going to get people to participate? My friends went around to a few other knots of peo-

ple, making the proposal. Everything just seemed to turn to mush: “Yeah, we could do that, or...”

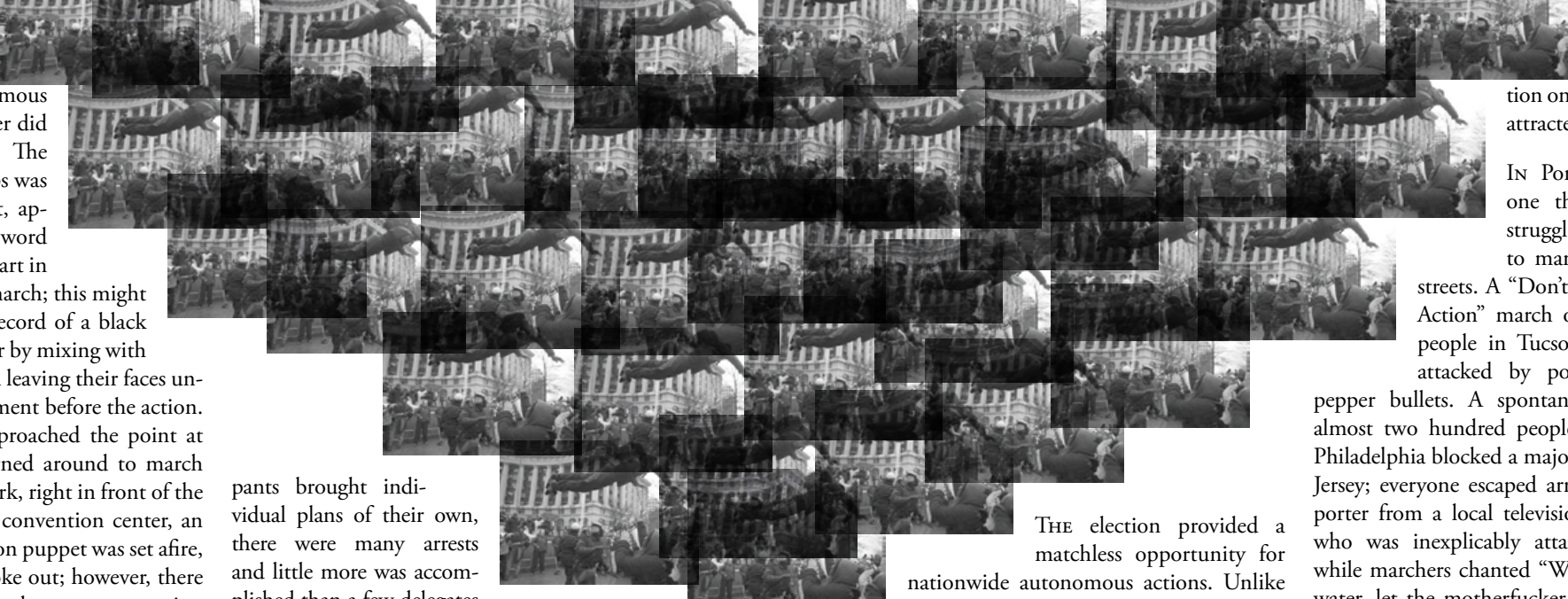
REGROUPING quickly, we decided—insanely, impetuously—that we would just go, the ten of us, and try it, since we had to do something. Ten people was a quixotic number with which to storm flatbed trucks and charge police checkpoints, but at this point it seemed like a quixotic attempt could only be an improvement on what would happen otherwise.

WE stepped out onto the street opposite the now thoroughly prepared riot police and set off in the direction of the trucks. To our surprise, a dozen more people trailed after us—curious what was happening, perhaps, or just responding, sheeplike, to movement.

ANOTHER of my friends seized the chance. “Come on! This way! Join us!” he shouted, waving his arms. I put my riot whistle between my teeth and blew series of blasts in a marching rhythm.

IN a matter of seconds, the whole crowd poured off the corner and into the street behind us.

Now something was happening, and the initiative was ours again! Behind, the riot police reoriented themselves, as if submerged



tion on the same theme attracted sixty people.

IN Portland, Oregon, one thousand people struggled with police to march through the streets. A “Don’t Just Vote, Take Action” march of two hundred people in Tucson, Arizona was attacked by police employing pepper bullets. A spontaneous march of almost two hundred people in downtown Philadelphia blocked a major bridge to New Jersey; everyone escaped arrest except a reporter from a local television news station who was inexplicably attacked by police while marchers chanted “We don’t need no water, let the motherfucker burn!” In New Orleans, a radical Day of the Dead march featuring a marching band, seventy-five skeletons, and an alter screamed and moaned its way through the French Quarter to the riverfront, at which the alter was filled with remembrances of deceased loved ones and then set afire as a naked attendant swam it out to sea; on the return route, participants dragged newspaper boxes and garbage cans into the streets and smashed the window of a stretch-SUV deemed too revolting to ignore.

Don't Just Vote  
Take Action

THE election provided a matchless opportunity for nationwide autonomous actions. Unlike any summit or local issue, it happened everywhere at once, focusing public attention on a wide range of issues that could be addressed on a variety of fronts. Among others, a nationwide campaign on the theme “Don’t (Just) Vote, Get Active” urged people to take action on election day to demonstrate all the possibilities for political engagement beyond the voting booth.

THE diversity and scope of the actions anarchists carried out around the election make it worth recounting some of them here. In Washington, DC, fifteen polling stations were decorated the night before election day with a stencil design fifteen feet long and four feet high reading “Our dreams will never fit in their ballot boxes.” In Baltimore, the following afternoon, a Reclaim the Streets ac-

in molasses, and prepared to follow. We were already well down the street, moving swiftly, once again appreciative of each other’s presence and sure of our collective strength.

IT struck me that there was a lesson of sorts in what had just transpired, but before I could explore this thought further, we were swarming over the trucks, unloading the pallets.

COULD we really do this? In the full light of day, here we were, commandeering a full truckload of defensive materials in the most occupied zone of the capital city of the most powerful nation on earth. Why hadn’t we done this during the larger march earlier in the day? If we had been equipped then, we certainly could have gotten to the checkpoints, and history might have played out differently. We had passed construction sites, garbage heaps, and plenty of other opportunities to gather what we needed. Did we really want a revolution, or just a protest march?

IT remained to be seen if we would be able to get to a checkpoint this time, either. There were police behind us, presumably on the streets to either side of us, and in much greater numbers ahead. I kept close to my companions in the mass. We were moving swiftly, almost running.

No squad cars or baton-wielding officers blocked our path. Perhaps as we had reentered the area they had not at first identified us as the anarchist menace against which they had mobilized police from the eastern half of the country. We arrived at the street running parallel to the parade route, a scant block from the checkpoints. We could see one ahead of us, a fence of towering black metal grate with lines of bulky police behind it.

NOW the police behind us were catching up, and we sighted a larger force in armored vehicles approaching up the street on our left. If we went straight for the checkpoint ahead, we would be surrounded. Instinctively, the crowd veered to the right, increasing speed; some threw down their pallets in the intersection as a makeshift barricade to slow our enemies’ pursuit.

A couple blocks more, and we arrived at another checkpoint, having somehow left our escort behind. Here, before the fence, we suddenly slowed to a stop, as the gravity of what we were doing hit us. We looked around at one other: there weren’t more than a few dozen of us, really, and we were scarcely equipped with hooded sweatshirts and bandannas, let alone the tools it would take to get

DURING Chicago’s “Don’t Just Vote Week of Resistance,” which included several demonstrations and other events, police tried and failed to prevent over one thousand people from taking the streets in a massive unpermitted march. At another incident in Chicago, a rock was thrown through the window of a GOP office in which Republicans were gathered to watch election results, sending glass flying all over the room. Large rocks were also thrown through the windows of the Republican headquarters in downtown Buffalo, New York and a nearby army recruiting center, and the local news station received a letter claiming responsibility.

IN Red Hook, New York, 250 Bard college students shut down an intersection in the center of town for almost an hour until police forcibly dispersed them. In northern Los Angeles county, a group carried out what they suggested might be the first banner drop in their area, with a banner on the “Don’t (Just) Vote” theme reading “Workers: Which Millionaire Will You Vote For?” In Vermillion, South Dakota, a town of only 10,000 residents, fifty people maintained a presence outside a voting booth, stretching a volleyball net to bear a variety of signs, sharing food, and inviting all with grudges of their own against the system to join them. The same town was to host another such demonstration two and a half months later on the day of the Inauguration, attracting media coverage from as far away as San Diego, CA.

THE day after the election, a march in downtown Washington, DC on the theme “No Matter, Who Won, The System Is Rotten” attracted one hundred people. Equipped with a powerful sound system, it snaked through the streets, disruptive and rowdy, evading police repression. In San Francisco, five thousand people marched against Bush; afterwards, a breakaway group built a bonfire out of US flags and an effigy of Bush, then marched through the city pulling urban debris and newspaper boxes into the street and smashing the windows of two banks. In San Diego, fliers posted the preceding night on UCSD campus reading “Where’s the Riot?” attracted one hundred people to an impromptu forum as to what forms resistance could take next. When the question “Who’s willing to get arrested today?” was broached, many raised their hands.

TWO days later, in perhaps the most militant participatory action of the week, a surprise march of over one hundred people bearing torches, drums, anarchist banners, and a two-headed effigy of Bush and Kerry took over downtown Raleigh, North Carolina, decorating the streets with graffiti and destroying bank machines until it reached the state headquarters of the Republican Party. The windows of the building were smashed, its walls were covered in spraypaint, fireworks were set off inside, and the effigy was set afire in the front yard. The following day, over fifty-eight major media outlets ran a story covering the event, in which the state GOP chief of staff was quoted as saying that campaign offices and party headquarters were being vandalized through-

out the nation. “They have a right to disagree,” he pleaded, “but to do it agreeably.”

THE following night, yet another spontaneous march occurred in Washington, DC, leaving spraypaint in its wake and meeting with enthusiasm from locals. From one side of the country to the other, by day and by night, militants were carrying out actions that demonstrated the seriousness of their discontent and invited others to express their own. This was the autonomous action model, which had evolved over the preceding year, finally being used to effect in circumstances for which it was appropriate.

## INAUGURATION

IRONICALLY, as the Inauguration approached in January of 2005, it was activists from New York City that insisted protests be organized on the mass action model and called for a massive anti-authoritarian march, while others called for autonomous actions. This time, both were right, and it was only tactical errors, not errors in strategy, that prevented the protests from shutting down the spectacle. Presidential inaugurations provide a rare opportunity for centrally-organized anarchist mass actions: they can attract large numbers of anti-authoritarians, they offer an obvious target, and the risk of arrests and police brutality are forestalled by the presence of diverse crowds and media and the desire of the authorities to maintain the illusion that everyone is pleased with the ruler

being sworn in. At this particular inauguration, the ongoing legacy of the mass arrests of the People’s Strike a full two and a half years earlier also served to tie the hands of the police. At the same time, Washington, DC, being the nation’s capital, provides an excellent field for autonomous actions, which could only serve to heighten tensions, distract and confuse the police, and emphasize popular discontent.

THE massive anarchist march was wisely planned to coincide with the other protests of the day, so as to benefit from the crowd cover they provided and the divided attention of the police. Hundreds of people participated in the march, even though, as a result of some strange misunderstanding or internal conflict, it left the convergence point early, before many would-be participants had even arrived. At the previous inauguration, a black bloc had successfully broken through one of the checkpoints surrounding the parade route, and the organizers planned to repeat this feat and go on to block the route. This was the major tactical error that prevented the march from being really effective: a basic rule of thumb in planning for an action is not to count on being able to repeat the past. Had the organizers prepared a back-up plan, such as a way to maintain the coherence of the bloc if it could not penetrate police lines and a secondary target outside the immediate zone of police control, it would not have been such a misfortune that the police blocked the path of the march before it arrived at a checkpoint. As it was, having no backup plan, the march bogged down at this point, and broke up; a smaller company of

anarchists regrouped and succeeded in reaching and charging a checkpoint, but lacked the numbers and equipment to break through.

OTHER problems afflicting the march included an apparent loss of contact with the scouting team and poor internal communication dynamics that led many to accuse one participating group of hijacking the march. Aside from these, the fact that the march did not succeed in its professed objective can be attributed to the hesitance with which most participants approached it, as it was the first militant mass action of its size since Miami. There were enough people there to break through the police lines, had more of them been ready to put their all into it; next time, assured by that experience that mass actions are indeed still possible in the post-9/11 world, perhaps activists will arrive better equipped and more psychologically prepared. Speaking of equipment, it’s worth pointing out that the black bloc that broke through the checkpoint in 2000 used an appropriated industrial wheelbarrow to spearhead their charge, while the march at the 2004 inauguration had only a banner reinforced with PVC pipe. PVC pipe is notoriously fragile, and has failed militant marches several times now; the beginning convergence point was so free from police control that participants could have brought in massive wooden shields and other fortifications, which would have served much better in the ensuing mêlée. Likewise, the march passed several construction sites that less hesitant militants would have raided for materials.

JUST when it seemed the day’s events were over, the crowd leaving a packed show by punk band Anti-Flag filled the street in a surprise march of hundreds. Bearing torches, drums, anarchist banners, spray-paint cans, and shopping carts full of useful materials, the throng marched through Adams Morgan, an ethnic neighborhood suffering rapid gentrification. The results surprised everyone, presumably including those who initiated the march. A vast banner reading “From DC to Iraq: With Occupation Comes Resistance” was dropped from the top of a Starbucks coffeeshop, along with a great quantity of fireworks. Demonstrators smashed the windows of several corporate outlets, including Citibank, Riggs Bank, McDonald’s, and KFC, as well as those of a police substation and the windshield of a police car following the demonstration; police reports estimated the damage to corporate and police property at \$15,000. Anarchist graffiti covered walls, and many pulled newspaper boxes and dumpsters into the streets. Locals who witnessed the march were supportive and encouraging to an almost surprising degree, honking car horns and cheering; a worker at a local Ethiopian restaurant raised his fist and shouted “Down with Bush! We have to shut this city down!”

MASSIVE numbers of befuddled riot police arrived before the march could reach a hotel hosting an Inaugural Ball to which Bush had just paid a visit. Most participants dispersed safely; approximately seventy were trapped in an alley and arrested, but almost

all of them were released without charges after paying \$50. Even factoring in the subsequent backlash from those who always oppose confrontational tactics, as militant actions go, this was a raging success. It received support from unusual quarters, too, including members of Anti-Flag, the representative of Iraq Veterans Against the War who had spoken at the show, and parents of minors arrested in the alley.

So this is where we leave our heroes, escaping from downtown Washington, DC in the middle of the night, helicopter spotlights flashing overhead and sirens wailing nearby. Is this only a momentary anomaly in a world of consolidated state control, or a precursor of things to come? Will they manage to find common cause with dissidents of other demographics, so a real, broad-based insurrection will be possible? How can they hone their tactics and strategies to fit the current political and social context?

## CONCLUSION: WHEN TO ACT EN MASSE, HOW TO ACT INDEPENDENTLY

FROM the events of the past few years, we can derive some basic lessons about both mass and autonomous actions. We had better do so—if we don’t, the anarchist movement may have to go through this learning process all over again.

this fence down while protecting ourselves from the troops behind it. We were a shoddy bunch in a time that called for far fiercer forces.

At this moment, when, in our hesitation, it seemed like we all might go no further, I heard a familiar voice behind me. “Ten! Nine! Eight!”

It was the maniac from the night before, wearing a motorcycle helmet, shouting at the top of his lungs with a cool certainty. There, his impetuosity had been a liability—but here, he was the only one who could muster the morale to imagine we would actually do what we had come to do. “Seven! Six!”

This was obviously insane behavior. A few unarmed, skinny lunatics could no more break through this fortification than a bundle of flowers could flip a tank. “Five!”

OUR arms were linked tightly, binding us into lines. My friends and I were in the third of perhaps seven of these. Over the heads of the taller people in front of me, I could just make out police, ready-  
ing large pepper spray dispensers. “Four!”

THERE was nothing else for it. If we didn’t do something now, it would just be embarrassing. By the final numbers, we were all screaming: “Three! Two! One!”

I exchanged a glance with my bosom companion, at my side to the right. In an instant, it conveyed, “This is absurd. But fuck it, here we go.”

“Yes. Here we go,” his eyes responded.

AN instant later, we were surging towards the checkpoint—and then, before those of us behind the front line could see the object of our charge, everything went black and our lungs seized up. The crowd heaved forward and broke against the line of police officers showering us with pepper spray, then fell back in choking disarray. The fence shook, rattled, and was still.

I staggered back about fifty feet with the friends on either side of me, all of us blind and unable to breathe. There we paused and helped each other to regain use of our eyes and throats. A cynical television cameraman hurried up to capture this poignant moment; I chased him off. We cleared out of the area before the police could secure it. Maybe they were under orders not to arrest us en masse unless we did something really dangerous.

I later heard that after our charge, they shut down all the checkpoints around the parade route. I’m not sure whether or not to believe it, or whether I dare believe it was because of our meager effort.

FIRST of all, let's address once and for all the question of whether mass actions are still effective in the post-9/11 era. The answer, in the opinion of everyone involved in the development of this analysis, is a resounding yes. The examples of the Republican National Convention and the recent Presidential Inauguration both indicate that it is still possible to act en masse, according to widely disseminated, publicly coordinated plans; we have only to be more judicious in choosing when and how to do so.

WITHOUT at least occasional mass actions, anarchist communities risk losing the ability to combine forces, not to mention the visibility and influence that are critical to their proliferation. At the same time, anarchists must pick the mass actions in which they invest themselves carefully; every time anarchists call for a mass action, it should be a resounding success, so people will feel safe investing themselves in participating in the next one.

WHAT elements make for a perfect mass action? First, and most obviously, a mass action must be massively attended. The model should therefore only be employed when great numbers of people can realistically be expected to show. Organizers should promote far in advance, and seek to collaborate to this end with as wide a range of other groups as possible; just as importantly, they should be skilled in reading the zeitgeist, so they can pick the right occasions to call for mass actions.

SECOND, a mass action must be attended by a wide range of people, and receive a lot of media attention. When diverse crowds are present and television cameras are running, police almost always hesitate to use extreme force; when they choose to do so under those circumstances, it costs them a lot, and can even end up being a tactical victory for protesters. Organizers must nurture their ability to predict the factors that determine police strategy: Will the police want to show their control of the situation by making a lot of arrests, or will it be more important to them to avoid this and instead focus on bluffing and intimidation? What will police be expecting, and how will they respond to the unexpected? How quickly can they apprehend new information, and how concentrated will their attention be?

THIRD, a mass action should have an objective that is immediately comprehensible and attractive, and offer a strategy that people

can easily adopt for themselves. The demonstrations against the Free Trade Area of the Americas summit in Quebec City spread from a few hundred militants to the population of the entire city because the tactics employed—masking up, throwing back tear gas canisters, blocking roads—were easy to apprehend and apply, and because locals were already angry about the police occupying their city. This question determines whether a militant engagement ends up as a vanguardist group slogging it out in a private war with the government or a generalized popular insurrection.

FOURTH, militants in a mass action should make sure their plans are intelligently coordinated with those of others. As described above in the analysis of the protests at the last two Republican National Conventions, it is almost always better for dissimilar actions to take place simultaneously rather than consecutively. In a best case scenario, actions employing different tactics can be arranged to complement one another. Healthy relationships between activists partial to different tactics facilitate this; these require a lot of nurturing between actions, and a lot of patience when conflicts arise.

FINALLY, organizers must take matters such as morale, momentum, and crowd dynamics seriously. Under some circumstances, all it takes to turn a passive mass into a militant force is for a few maniacs to step forward and show what is possible; in other cases, an entire militant bloc can be intimidated into inactivity by police bluffing. In learning what factors enable people to take action, organizers can formulate strategies based on realistic expectations.

IN planning a mass action, organizers should look back in recent history for similar precedents from which they can determine what to expect. At the same time, attempting to repeat the past—especially when one's enemies have learned from it—is almost always a doomed venture. Organizers should consider, instead, the opportunities that have been missed before, and try to take advantage of these. When employing a strategy for the first time, it is important to be prepared for the possibility that it will succeed as well as the possibility that it will fail. New strategies generally work, and fail only because people lack the assurance to follow them through completely; old strategies, on the other hand, usually fail because opponents are all too ready for them, however ready

people are to apply them. Employing an old strategy in an entirely new context can be tremendously effective; this is something at which the anarchist movement, being internationally active and interconnected, should excel. Also, both organizers of massive events and individual participants in them should formulate backup plans for different scenarios, so they can turn any development to their advantage.

THE communities in which militant activists develop must share basic skills such as how to read a volatile situation, how to work in affinity groups, and how and when to disperse. Activists of all demographics and backgrounds must be encouraged to feel entitled to participate in planning and carrying out militant actions. In addition, when conditions are not opportune for confrontation, radicals must not pressure themselves to do anything rash, but rather save themselves for better opportunities.

DURING the lulls between mass actions, decentralized, autonomous actions can serve to keep activists' skills sharp and to continue the struggle on other fronts. As they did during the 1990's, small-scale local actions can give activists the practice they need to be comfortable acting in more challenging mass action scenarios; they also connect activists to one other, building experienced, dangerous groups linked to broader communities. To this purpose, the best forms of autonomous action are the ones that, rather than striking the most grievous material blows, bring in new participants and build solidarity between different circles so that militant activity may take place more widely.

ONE of the most important challenges of the coming years, during which we can be sure police repression of all forms of resistance will continue and perhaps increase, will be to develop ways to act socially and publicly yet with the element of surprise. Without this capability, participatory militant action will become impossible except once or twice a year at mass actions, and it will be impossible to spread militant tactics in our local communities. To this end, we have to cultivate sites of social interaction and channels of communication that are accessible to all but the authorities: these can include local communities bonded by potlucks and other face-to-face contact, cultural milieus such as politicized music scenes, and connections between committed activists and formerly apolitical social circles. In these, we can get

to know and trust one another, and stage assaults on the capitalist nightmare from unexpected directions.

THE preceding analysis offers three successful prototypes for autonomous yet participatory action. The first is the model employed by the activists who carried out the G8 solidarity action before the Really Really Free Market in Raleigh, North Carolina, in which a small, clandestine group acts to augment the efforts of an open, accessible group; this is perfect for carrying out complicated, high-risk plans, but offers little opportunity for new people to be brought in and gain experience. The second is the model employed by the activists who conceived the protest at the Governor's Mansion in Maine, in which a core group takes advantage of a social setting to invite a larger number of people to help plan and participate in an action without revealing the most sensitive details of the target; this is a less secure, more participatory model, offering roles for those not yet sure enough of themselves to organize their own major actions, but still limiting participation to an in-group. The third is the model employed by the activists who instigated the march in Adams Morgan after the Presidential Inauguration in Washington, DC, in which a participatory action is initiated by a small group within a larger mass; this offers the greatest number the opportunity to witness or participate in an

action, even an extremely confrontational one, but it also can endanger participants, especially as collective planning is impossible. Hopefully, over the years to come, many more activists will make use of and expand on these prototypes, refining and combining them in the process.

It may be some time before the next period of intense struggle. While it sometimes seemed during the months immediately preceding and following the election that the country was slipping towards civil war, the atmosphere now is somewhat more subdued, as liberals lick their wounds and radicals adjust to the post-war, post-election context. This is not necessarily a bad thing; the anarchist community is not yet ready for an all-out war to the death with the rulers of the world. Let's make use of this interval to put down firmer foundations and develop new skills. When the next opportunities arrive to take on the powers that be, let's be

ready, our communities strong and closely linked, our courage and confidence in each other tried and true.

*WERE a reading list to accompany this analysis, it would include "Hot Town, Summer in the City: Anarchist Analysis of the 2004 RNC Protests" by Alexander Trocchi, CrimethInc. International News Agent Provocateur, and "FROM DC TO IRAQ: WITH OCCUPATION COMES RESISTANCE—What happened in Adams Morgan on January 20; a report, analysis, and response to criticism," by the Circle A Brigade, both of which can be located on the internet by means of [www.google.com](http://www.google.com). Texts about the actions in Maine and Raleigh, North Carolina can be found in issues of the Earth First! Journal and the Asheville Global Report.*

# EVERY ENGAGEMENT A VICTORY!

## FROM AN INTERNET POST FOLLOWING THE ADAMS MORGAN MARCH ON THE DAY OF THE INAUGURATION

I was with my younger sister and her boyfriend at the Punk Rock Counter-Inaugural Ball and we all went there with full intention to participate in any revolutionary action that might take place that night. Imagine our enthusiasm when we learned of the march they were organizing after the show. It was amazing.

ALTHOUGH the three of us got arrested and were (with many others) victims of police misconduct created by Bush's fascist police state, we are grateful to have been a part of the movement that night and have no regrets.

OUT of all the negative things that day, almost entirely due to the power-crazed police, the most important positive aspect for us was the amazing feeling of unity amongst protestors... especially at the Adams Morgan march. I was deeply moved by the solidarity of the people and the courageous direct action taken by protestors that night. It was an experience that will change my outlook and approach within my own tactics of activism.

IN response to all the criticism of the protest march that's been voiced, I understand some critics' concerns, but also disagree with the negative views of this march. Defenses of the direct, militant action that night have already been written, so I'll leave my opinion in agreement with those. I do, however, want to say that I believe we need the activist youth to be more involved in many tactics of resistance. Militant action is one tactic that must be respected and valued as an important part of this movement just as much as controlled protests. It's been too easy for the oppressive powers that be to turn their heads and continue doing as they wish, destroying anything in their path. Acts such as the Adams Morgan march, although criticized by some, can cause enough disruption to force our cause to be heard. This is a time of urgency and not a time to follow quietly.

BLESSED Be all the warriors on the streets that day with whom I marched proudly.

"I revolt, therefore we are."  
"But if we are, farewell revolt."

# THE ART OF POLITICS

*Politics is the art of detachment. Purportedly, it is at once separate from every other sphere of activity and yet qualified to govern all of them. Politics begins where daily experience, individual interests, passion and poetry and camaraderie—in short, everything that makes human life meaningful, everything that can inform people as to how to make decisions in their best interest—leave off. Nothing that truly matters—neither the waitress's ennui nor the bureaucrat's insomnia—can be addressed in the political arena, though decisions made in that arena have repercussions in every other.*

## POLITICS IS THE ART OF EXCLUSION

Because politics must remain separate from actual human life, from everything that could give it teeth and a heartbeat, the role of professionals in politics is indisputable—the most that can be done, obviously, is to replace them from time to time. These professionals may be elected officials, or they may be more carefully disguised as "local activists" and "community organizers." Either way, the systems they administer are far too complicated for anyone outside the political class to comprehend; conversely, anyone who succeeds in learning the inner workings of these systems inevitably winds up as a member of the political class himself.

## POLITICS IS THE ART OF SEGREGATION

It is the specialization that lies at the root of all specialization and division of labor in modern society: if decisions regarding society as a whole can only be made by a small elite, what use is it for anyone else to understand or undertake anything beyond playing his specific role in this society? Once people accept their lot as peons in the belly of a great leviathan in whose actions they can have no say, they have little incentive to seek to know or find common cause with the others that make up that leviathan.

## POLITICS IS THE ART OF REPRESENTATION

It rests on the premise of the inactivity of all but the political class. If everyone acted for herself, it would be pure anarchy—besides, people aren't used to thinking or acting for themselves nowadays, are they? Thus it happens that people can only participate in the decisions that affect their lives from the sidelines, as spectators, cheering for one champion or another, and picking those champions as arbitrarily as people make all inconsequential decisions. In delegating

their power to answer social problems, people give up the ability to establish what the questions are in the first place: for one can only learn what one's interests are in the course of making decisions oneself. Some reformers hawk pipe dreams of more participatory systems of representation, but a world in which people act for themselves and thus need no representatives—that is unthinkable.

## POLITICS IS THE ART OF MEDIATION

Just as the Pope interprets the will of God, the scientist explains the edicts of Mother Nature, and the professor passes on the lessons of History, the political professional mediates between people and their own power, which thus comes to appear disembodied and alien to them. Furthermore, in representing people in the political arena, the politician becomes qualified to represent them to themselves: whatever he believes must be what they believe, whatever he does must be what they want—otherwise, how did he get into power? Similarly, the interactions between individuals outside the strictly political realm come to be mediated: when people relate to one another, it is not as unique beings, but as roles within an established order. As in organized religion, where there are no relationships between humans but only between believers, so in politics it is not individuals who come together, but citizens, party members, ideologues. Between every person and every other, and between all persons and the structure of the society they comprise, there are filters that thwart all but a few standard forms of communication and interaction. Politics thrives wherever the program of an organization supplants the needs and wants of individuals.

## POLITICS IS THE ART OF ASSIMILATION

Politics teaches you to think in terms of majorities, to judge right and wrong according to public opinion rather than ac-

ording to your own conscience. At best, the one thus educated must persuade himself and others that, although it may not seem to be the case, the vast majority of people want—or would want!—the same ends he does; at worst, and more often, this education leaves all dissidents feeling powerless in the face of the deluded mass. In losing election after election and campaign after campaign, the one who seeks to sway the majority learns how small and ineffectual he is, how little he can accomplish—without even having to hazard the experiment of acting himself! If you can't beat them, join them, he inevitably concludes, whether concession by concession or in one grand gesture of nihilistic capitulation. The most unlikely coalitions form, and struggle to outmaneuver one another in the race to gobble up enough constituents to form a majority. Those who cannot find a mass to join render themselves insignificant—for what can one human being do, in the face of so many?

## POLITICS IS THE ART OF ABSTRACTION

So that power can most precisely be delegated to the professionals that represent constituencies, the individual characteristics and interests of broad swaths of people are summarized in gross generalizations. People even rush to make abstractions of themselves—for the simpler the label, the more brute force can presumably be mustered behind it. Widely divergent specific desires are lumped together and reduced to their lowest common denominators in general platforms, and thus individuals are reduced to masses. Politicians represent people, and woe to those who refuse administration; abstractions represent demographics, and woe to those who defy classification!

## POLITICS IS THE ART OF DISTRACTION

In a volatile society, it is a pressure valve, offering a constructive activity for those whose dissent might otherwise take destructive forms, so that their efforts to contest the status quo only serve to recreate it. For the dissident, it is a wild goose chase that wastes all the energy and brilliant ideas he has to offer, confining him to meaningless arguments with those who should be his comrades-in-arms, to dialogue with those with whom he cannot ever be dangerous, and to undertakings that are as trivial as they are quixotic.

## POLITICS IS THE ART OF DEFERMENT

Its solutions are always around the corner, but never arrive. As everyone knows, not least the politician, the problems we face can only be solved collectively—and we will do so, all together, but tomorrow, when everyone is ready. In the meantime, each individual is asked to behave herself and wait, "just like everyone else" is doing—in short, to give up all her strengths and opportunities, to paralyze herself voluntarily so she can be represented, with all that entails. In politics, the adventure of changing the world is transformed into the tedium of waiting for it to change. Anyone who wants to act immediately, despite the shortcomings of the current context and the limitations inherent in any specific

action, is always looked on with suspicion: if she is not an agent provocateur, the argument goes, her enemies can certainly use her as one.

*But only if she resolves "I myself, right here, right now" can she then make a common cause with others that is not a space of mutual renunciation in which all are free to control one another but not to act for themselves. The dignity of acting for the sake of abiding by one's conscience, suspending all fear of consequences, the joy that is sufficient unto itself, without need of tomorrows to return interest on the investment: only these can carry us into a world in which our eyes will no longer be fixed constantly on the hands of the clock.*



Majority-Building in a Democracy

## POLITICS IS THE ART OF CALCULATION

In politics, one no longer has friends, but allies; one no longer has relationships, but associations; one's community becomes a pool from which to draw potential foot soldiers to be deployed and manipulated like chess pieces. It is necessary to know how things stand, to choose one's investments carefully, to weigh and measure every possibility—to assess every opportunity and categorize every individual and group, just as one's enemies do. In strategically appraising what one has, one gains everything but the readiness to lay it on the line and risk losing it.

## POLITICS IS THE ART OF ACCOMMODATION

However radical the change one awaits, one must still survive somehow as one waits for the world to change, and in surviving—as we all know—one makes compromises. Sooner or later, the most intractable rebel must form some kind of alliance with the powers that be: I won't bother you, if you don't bother me. Common sense, a perennial partisan of survival, can always come up with good reasons for making oneself agreeable: there are some compromises that are not so bad, it turns out, and is not the first duty of the revolutionary to live to fight another day? Always resigning oneself to settling for the lesser evil, little by little one accepts evil itself as inescapable. Anyone who contrarily wants to have nothing to do with evils at all must be an adventurer—or an aristocrat.

## POLITICS IS THE ART OF COOPTION

One of the most effective ways to divert desire for real change into more politics-as-usual is to portray a political professional as subversive, or—better yet—to transform a subversive into a political professional. Not all politicians campaign for office—some even campaign against it. Likewise, certain philosophers make quite a comfortable living decrying the hands that feed them. Reality—they know this well, and this is all they know about it—is always more complex than any single action could address. They strive to develop a theory that accounts for the totality of social ills, so they will be totally absolved of the responsibility to do anything about them.

## POLITICS IS THE ART OF CONTROL

Once compromises have been made, once the social contract has been signed, tear gas and plastic bullets are no longer necessary to keep people in line. People will keep themselves in line, waiting at the mall and movie theater, sitting in traffic on the way to work, paying their rent and taxes and obeying every rule and regulation—and if some starry-eyed rebels will not, then their own fellow radicals will see to it that they do, for nothing is more precious than the good name of radicalism. If anyone does something rash, others hurry to deny that anyone of their persuasion would actually do such a thing, and to reeducate those from their own ranks who might furtively approve. Nothing is more terrifying than the specter of a single human being who will not play along with the collective madness—for if such a thing is possible for one, what does that say about everyone else? Every unique, self-determined action is a spark that shoots beyond the confines of both the status quo and abstract critiques thereof, threatening both, not to mention those who uphold them.

## POLITICS IS THE ART OF REPRESSION

Repression of anyone who does not accept the limitations of her social role, who wants to change things on the basis of her own desires. Repression of anyone who longs to be done with passivity, deliberation, and delegation, and to set fire to those who insist upon them and nothing else. Repression of anyone who does not want to let her precious self be supplanted by any organization or immobilized by any program. Repression of anyone who wants to have unmediated relationships with others and feels that this is only possible through the tearing down of barriers, both social and physical. Repression of anyone who does not have a “we” on which to swear. Repression of anyone who disrupts the precious compromises of those who wait patiently. Repression of anyone who gives of herself without hope of compensation—of anyone who defends her companions with love and resoluteness—of anyone who refuses to accommodate herself to the consolation prizes offered those who tried once and failed. Repression of anyone who neither wants to govern nor to control—of anyone who wants to live and act immediately, not tomorrow or the day after tomorrow—of anyone who wants to transform life into a fascinating adventure.

## POLITICS IS NOT AN ART AT ALL

It is the **opposite** of art: it is the obliteration of **creativity** and **spontaneity**, the reduction of human relations to a network of interlocking **chains**.

Likewise, any **art** which is to be worthy of the name—the **art** of living, for example—must be the opposite of **politics**: it must draw people **together**, put them in touch with their **hidden strengths**, enable them to do what they **think is right** without **fearing** what the neighbors will think or calculating **what's in it for them**.

# FORGET TERRORISM

Here's one of those rare stories that gets the same spin from both the corporate and the independent media: there was a brief window of time between November 1989 and September 2001 when the most fundamental conflict in the world was between power and people. Up until the Berlin wall fell<sup>1</sup>, it had been between capitalism and communism; now, as everyone knows,

it's between terrorism and so-called democracy. But for that brief, exhilarating period, the primary dichotomy in more and more people's minds was between hierarchy and domination on the one hand and autonomy, liberty, and cooperation on the other.

Everywhere across the planet, people were starting to organize themselves, testing their hands at self-directed activities and pushing back when state and corporate interests tried to interfere. As summits of the economic elite were shut down, local collectives assembled, and global networks of resistance linked up, it began to feel like the future was up for grabs. But no one on either side of the barricades had factored in the unsettled accounts U.S. foreign policy had wrought in the third world, and everything changed the day terrorists, directed by a former employee of the C.I.A., brought those chickens home to roost in New York City.

Everyone knows the unutterable tragedy that occurred that morning, when thousands of human beings lost their lives in an act of cold-blooded violence. But another tragedy, a stranger, subtler one, compounded the first: the tragedy that occurs in this society when a large number of people have the misfortune of losing their lives live on international television.

An interesting side effect of the events of September 11 was that television news ratings shot through the roof. *Everyone* was glued to the television: and all conversations, in every city, state, and nation, were about New York City. Suddenly—because what one thinks about *is* one's reality—New York City, and more specifically the attack and deaths, were the *epicenter* of reality, and the zones radiating outward from it were less and less real. The most a man in Iowa could hope for was to have a family member in the towers, so he could be connected by blood to the things that mattered. That, of course, is an insensitive

overstatement—but let's not deny that some of us who didn't have such a relative felt a twinge of secret, perhaps subconscious jealousy of those who did, who could speak with such anguish and outrage about the one and only subject on anyone's mind.

In the same way that serial killers and serial dramas, disaster movies and real disasters command attention, so did New York City: and everyone outside the city was paralyzed, looking on from a distance, wondering what would happen next as one does in a movie theater. We were all powerless, our sense of agency gone at the most

urgent of times. Those of us who opposed corporate media and otherwise refused to be complicit in our own passivity still stared at the screen with everyone else; those who did not have such an analysis watched and accepted the conclusions of the talking heads as if they were their own. Later, doing as they were told, they raised a flag that was not their own, either.

So-called “activists” were among the ones *most* paralyzed, comparatively speaking. Those who had shared a sense that they could change the world now froze up as if hypnotized. This was certainly convenient for the powers that be, who scripted the coverage and spin of the tragedy—but why did this happen?

If you want to disable people, make them feel insignificant. Feeling insignificant paralyzes; without morale and momentum, all the power in the world—remember, that power is made up of the assembled powers of all individuals, it is not some scepter wielded from above—can only be applied accidentally, according to the dictates of the few whose sense of entitlement is reinforced by their titles and television exposure. Feelings of insignificance render insignificant; desperation to be “where the action is” replaces the ability to decide for oneself *what* the action should be.

The underlying message of the news, the implication hammered deeper home with every replay of the towers collapsing, was that whatever we little people did, world history, and therefore real life, was out of our hands. The trivial little games activists and communities had been playing were irrelevant; no one would pay attention any longer, let alone join in. This was not necessarily true, of



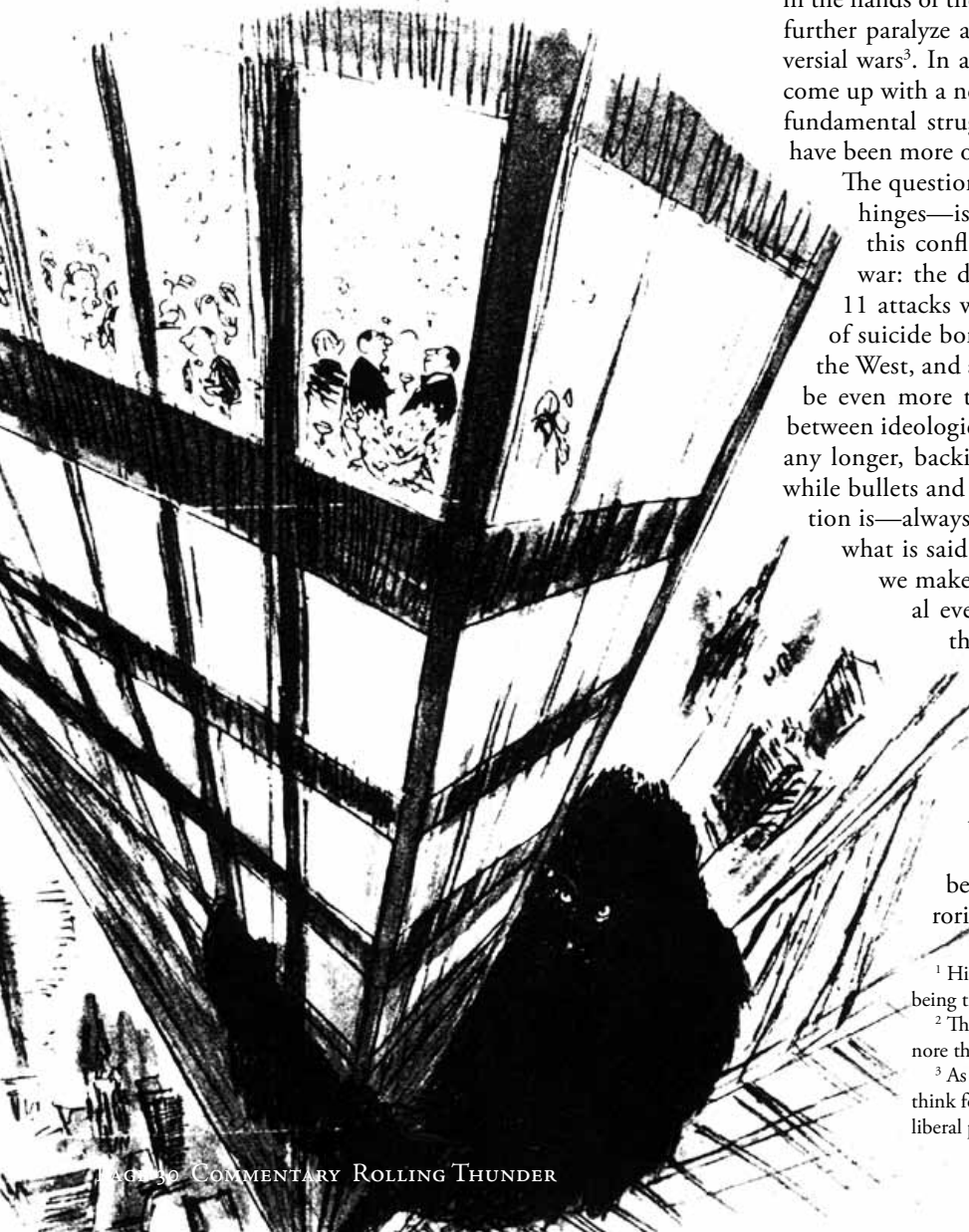
course. But it was news because it was on the news, and because it was news it made itself true<sup>2</sup>.

Ironically, this displacement of meaning—this centering of attention upon New York City as the global nucleus of meaning itself—was exactly what had outraged and baited the terrorists. But striking back at the heart of the empire with the same violence they had learned from it, they simply fed the beast—for whether you suffer it or apply it, terrorism is the ultimate spectator sport, and spectatorship can only consolidate power in the hands of the ones who direct the spotlight.

Those towers were not just a locus of financial power, but even more so of iconographic power—the most valuable currency in this information age. How is that kind of power gathered and reproduced? In the same way financial capital is gathered and reproduced: moguls centralize and monopolize it by impoverishing others of the sense that their life has meaning, thus forcing them to buy in to their mass-produced meanings. For example: people in small town America watch television instead of talking with each other, just as indigenous peoples outside the U.S. seek sweatshop employment, because it seems to be the only game

*“Frankly, I never dreamed the World Trade Center would get finished so quickly and without incident.”*

—comic from the June 3, 1972 issue of *The New Yorker*.



in town. This isn't natural—for the mass-manufactured alternatives to appear desirable, those television watchers have to have lost the intimate connections and ongoing projects that would have brought them together off their couches, just as the natives have to have had their traditional lifeways destroyed by conquistadors. Disneyland is as fun as Des Moines is dull, just as Michael Jordan is as rich as a Nike sweatshop worker is poor—these are not coincidences. Economic exploitation and media domination are essentially the same process, carried out on different levels.

So in terms of the war for sense of self that has gone on between us and mass media for generations now, September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 saw an act of superlative terrorism carried out against every one of us: not just in the hijacking and crashing of the planes, but in the way the event was used to hijack and crash the budding sense that we could determine reality for ourselves. This consolidated power in the hands of the U.S. government, among others, who used it to further paralyze and distract people by starting a series of controversial wars<sup>3</sup>. In a time when the hierarchical elite was anxious to come up with a new false dichotomy to distract everyone from the fundamental struggle between power and people, nothing could have been more opportune.

The question, now—the ultimate question, on which all life hinges—is how we can once more reframe the terms of this conflict. It is not a question merely of peace versus war: the decade of “peace” that led up to the September 11 attacks was sufficiently bloody to persuade a generation of suicide bombers that it was worth dying to get revenge on the West, and a new peace under the current conditions would be even more treacherous. Nor can we cast this as a conflict between ideologies: we cannot afford to be armchair quarterbacks any longer, backing our favored teams or themes against others while bullets and bombs rain randomly into the stands. The question is—always is, no matter who is dying or killing, no matter what is said on television—what we can do ourselves, what we make of our lives, how each of us interacts with global events in our daily decisions. Our opponents are those who would hinder our efforts and obscure this question for their own ends, who would rather rule over a world of passive spectators wracked by terror and war than take a place among equals acting to correct the injustices that provide justifications for politicians and terrorists alike.

Everyone knows, if it were up to us there would be no more wars, no more exploitation, no more terrorism. *It is up to us.*

<sup>1</sup> History is rife with ironic coincidences, not the least of which being that the Berlin wall fell on 11/9.

<sup>2</sup> This shows how much we'll have to learn about being able to ignore the media, if we are to build a sustainable liberation movement.

<sup>3</sup> As Hitler said, if you want to keep soldiers from stopping to think for themselves, keep your armies marching—that goes for liberal protesters as well as army recruits.

***A person who has a sense that her life is meaningful and her destiny is in her hands is in fundamental ways more alive than a person who does not. In that sense, on September 11, terrorists used airplanes to kill thousands of people, and politicians and media used the event to kill a little bit of everyone who survived.***



by  
Holly Hock

To speak of **deschooling** is to speak in favor of *doing*—self-directed, purposeful, meaningful things—and against *education*—learning cut off from active life and carried on under pressure of bribe and threat, greed and fear. It is to speak about people doing things, and doing them better, and the conditions under which this can be possible; about some of the ways in which, given those conditions, other people may be able to help us to do things better, and vice versa; and about the reasons why these conditions do not exist within compulsory, coercive, competitive schools or even so-called alternative learning institutions.

## performer and performance

Your average student of music thinks of music as a thing to *learn*, not a thing to *do*. But despite academies and conservatories, methodologies and method books, pedagogies and pedagogues and millions of rapped knuckles, the active verb in relation to the word *music* is still “to play.” You *play* music. You can also *make* music. Playing and making are the essential elements of being a musician. Yet instead of playing and making, the student *practices* or *works on*. If you practice, you aren’t really doing it. You are always in preparation for when you’re really going to do it. Well, when are you really going to do it? At a lesson for your teacher? For an adjudicator in an exam or a judge in a competition? For parents or friends? Once you’ve really done it and your parent, teacher, or judge lets you know whether you’ve succeeded in making music or not, are you ever going to really do it again?

In a product-oriented society, performance (recording) and performer (persona) become the most important features of music, crucial because they are so eminently marketable. The only real music is the stuff that passes the ultimate test of commodification. When you “perform” at a lesson or on request for relations and you haven’t been practicing and doing the work you know you should have been doing and you fail to

perform up to everyone’s expectations—real or imagined, including your own—you feel bad. You do not feel like a musician. You may feel like lying. You may dislike yourself and feel guilty. You may resent your teacher and parents for putting you through all of it. You may feel all these things even more intensely if you were the one who *wanted* the lessons in the first place! Whatever you feel, you certainly won’t feel very musical.

Enforced regimens cannot protect young people from the many failures and tragedies adults have lived through. Music can only be enjoyed on its own terms. Focus on performance initiates a complex of feelings: frustration at doing poorly, resentment that it takes so much work to be “good,” confusion about music not being any fun at all. Ultimately, the student may resist practicing altogether. All this counters a more authentic purpose of playing music: to be “a more well-rounded person,” to acquire another form of expression, for fun. Outside pressure of this sort is antithetical to learning and living.

What most people call “education” entails the assumption that learning is an activity separate from the rest of life, that is done best when one is not doing anything else and best of all where nothing else is done—in learning places especially constructed for learning alone. Most use the term “education” as if it referred to some kind of *treatment*. Even “self-education” can reflect this:

it can be seen as a self-administered treatment. But it is utter nonsense to say that people need to be taught how to learn or how to think. We are born knowing how to do so. We are born with the inclination to play, and in doing so do not live a moment without learning.

## the origins of compulsory schooling

The structure of 20<sup>th</sup> century schooling in the United States was conceived in 1806, when Napoleon’s amateur soldiers beat the professional soldiers of Prussia at the battle of Jena. When your business is selling soldiers, losing a battle like that is serious. Almost immediately afterwards, a German philosopher named Fichte delivered his famous “Address to the German Nation,” which became one of the most influential documents in modern history. In effect, he told the Prussian people that the party was over, that the nation would have to shape up through a new utopian institution of forced schooling in which everyone would learn to take orders.

Thus compulsory schooling arrived in the world, at the end of a state bayonet. Modern forced schooling started in Prussia in 1819, with a clear vision of what centralized schools could deliver: obedient soldiers to the army, obedient workers to the

mines, well subordinated civil servants to the government, well subordinated clerks to industry, and citizens who thought alike about major issues. Thirty-three years after the fateful invention of the centralized learning institution, the US adopted the Prussian style of schooling as its own.

## education as industry

Compulsory education is still meeting our superpower society’s need to train citizens for subservience. In addition, education now prepares people for careers in various industries that Fichte or Mann couldn’t have imagined in their time. The biggest surprise of all is that education has itself become an industry. In a progressively mechanized world, in which self-checkout at the grocery store and e-ticket computer check-in at the airport are replacing the very jobs that once kept citizens busily integrated into society, what can be done with all the surplus workers except to postpone endlessly their entry into the workforce?

It is said that today’s high school graduates can be sure that, if they are to have jobs at all, they will perform tasks of which we cannot yet even conceive. In the limbo between the known and the unknown, there is education. Teachers and administrators can always be employed when other jobs are scarce, and those taught to believe they won’t be ready to live life until they’ve been properly prepared form a ready mass of consumers. Would-be employees spend progressively more and more time competing with one another for an upper hand, an extra point, a longer list of credentials. This is an effective way to divert attention from the impending doom of unemployment, and a ready explanation for why some never get the dream jobs they thought awaited them—they just didn’t study enough.

Once upon a time, only the rich and powerful sent their children to school. In today’s credit-based economy, in which everyone is expected to be middle class and most must live beyond their means to maintain this illusion, the education industry has made a killing with a new form of protection racket. In order to be equipped for employment of all but the worst kinds, people must pay thousands or tens of thousands to go to schools that teach few of the skills the job

market actually requires. This traps them in debt for decades, forcing them to go on to sell themselves wherever the economy will have them—it’s a highly sophisticated form of indentured servitude! Is there really no more “educational,” let alone worthwhile, way to spend that much money? And would so many students, fresh out of college and desperate to live freely for once, immediately seek employment if they didn’t have such crippling debts to pay off?

## dropouts and deschoolers

Most people born with a parent or two find themselves in the smallest and most immediate socializing institution, a family. But to the government, this most basic institution is almost entirely undependable and un-surveillable. Schools and daycare systems, in complementary compulsory and voluntary models, ensure that children absorb mass values. Accordingly, a wide variety of families, interested in self-governance for any number of reasons, plan ahead to deschool.

In pop culture, these homeschooling and nonschooling families are represented as hippies or extremist freaks. We are told that many of them are rich and white. Rarely do we see information about homeschooling families from demographics that are marginalized by society. This may be because poor people and people of color are almost entirely ignored by the media. On the flip side, it may also be because many of these families prefer to remain anonymous: many Black parents fear that if school authorities discover how readily and willingly they’ll remove their children from school, they will design laws to force them to bring their kids back. Any homeschooler may view institutionalized education as a form of slavery. Many Black homeschoolers have cause to fear the government will enact truancy laws, like the fugitive slave laws, that will have a more serious effect upon marginalized families than upon more privileged ones. And while it is impossible to gauge, it also may be true that, because of greater access to tools, time, and a feeling of being entitled to bend rules, wealthier and whiter families are more prevalent in the formal homeschooling world.

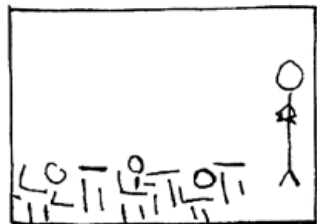
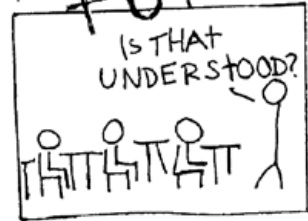
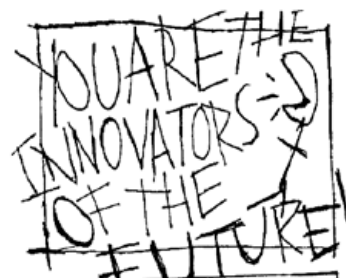
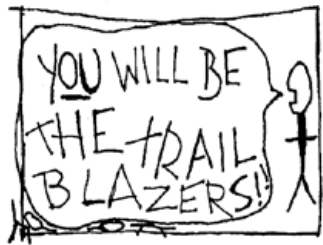
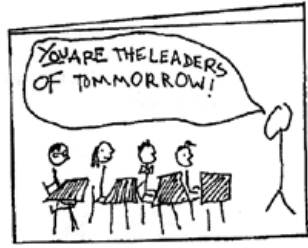
Of course, many of the unschoolers

out there are isolated in their principles not only from the system they refuse but from their parents as well. For the sake of deschooling, we should work to rid our minds of the prejudices that would have us view those who drop out of educational treatment as “failures” or “delinquents,” strays who must be caught and brought back into the fold. When we hear these things about dropouts, we hear them from the point of view of the dogcatchers. Let us view dropouts instead as wise refuseniks, conscientious objectors to a stifling and dehumanizing process. Many students whose caretakers defined them as dropouts have since redefined themselves as successful escapees from a useless educational career.

In the USA, the vast majority of young people who drop out before graduation are Latino and Black. By the time they leave they have been attacked in both soul and body. Understandably, they refuse further “care” after suffering through intensive remedial programs that imply that they are unable to succeed within the system or to make it into society at large by any route approved of by their teachers. In schools that teach them nothing about themselves, they have had to learn to fake almost anything. Many have come to see school as a world-wide soul-shredder that junks the majority and hardens an elite to govern the others. This is the self-consciousness of the truant to which we all may aspire. Let us remove the stigma currently attached to educational underconsumers.

## the misadventures of teachers in the temple of doom

Most teachers are generous, intelligent, creative people. Some are very talented or knowledgeable in their fields and would be great mentors or friends outside the constraints of school. Many have given up chances to make lots of money because they believe in teaching even though it pays poorly. Especially if they are men, they sometimes endure years of being hassled by their families—“why don’t you find a *real* career?” Many teachers are terrific *people*. But the role they are forced to play in school keeps them from behaving as real people



in interactions with certain other real people, that is to say, students. Their talent and energy is drained by the task of constantly telling people what to do. As instructors, these good people scrape their sides against concrete barriers as they take the bureaucratic twists and turns any school requires them to. This is the nature of the fundamental restraints of institutional schooling.

When you have a knowledgeable, funny, or wise teacher, listening to that person weave stories and lectures can be delightful—assuming, that is, that she feels “allowed” by the administration to be herself and say what she truly knows and thinks. Unfortunately, this is seldom the case, since most education officials have to worry about offending any of the parents who might not re-elect them, and therefore strive to keep their teachers as mute and mousy as possible. Nearly all those employed in a school live in fear of their superiors, because their superiors live in fear of their voting constituency. Therefore, all the interesting ideas get censored down to the very lowest common denominator. The teacher can’t say, “Wait a minute. What’s fueling this so-called war on drugs?” because Johnny’s father, outraged, might call the principal to protest that “a teacher, of all people!” is encouraging drug use. Johnny’s father may in fact have serious doubts of his own about the war on drugs, but he isn’t likely to accuse the administration of brainwashing, either, lest others brand him an unfit parent—and a big ship like the Educational Curriculum isn’t easy to bring around.

Some of the brightest and most radically inclined people you could ever meet become either teachers or professors within this bureaucratic mud. School is one of the few socially ascribed places for “free thinkers” to do their thing. Now that the soil has been poisoned and cemented over and almost all people randomly deposited into vehicles, offices, prisons, and hotels, to speak of friendship, god and godlessness, or joint suffering is to be an academic dreamer.

What would happen if, instead of becoming academics who train other would-be academics, we thoughtful folks sought out our true peers and enacted our natural influence in more immediate ways? While opposing all pleas for any new form of institutionalized haven, this writer for one dreams of niches, free spaces, and squatted social centers. She hopes for plotting tents for those who gather to take on a project or a specific thought together, those who have met through common desire for self-governance and have renounced all integration into the “system.”

## rethinking discipline, safety, certification, public spaces, child labor, and thinking itself

Let us rethink discipline. One of the worst things about this sort of arbitrary authority is the way it makes us lose our trust in the natural authority of people who know what they’re doing and could share their wisdom with us. When they make you obey the cruel and unreasonable teacher, they steal your desire to learn from the kind and reasonable wise person. When they tell you to be sure to pick up after yourselves in the cafeteria, they steal your own natural sense of courtesy. Imagine a room full of screaming people: truly, it is much *easier* to allow them to quiet themselves than to forcibly quiet them. Today’s schools insist on the latter and thus strip people of the ability to be quiet and attentive on their own.

Let us reconsider safety. Safety is always a dominating concern for everyone hanging out with especially young people. But the way to promote safety is to help kids become stronger, not weaker. Whether you are a parent or not, consider that responsibility encourages strength, while surveillance and control ensure weakness.

Let us not discriminate against the uncertified. If we must assess competence for a given task, let us assess it as directly as we can, and not conflate competence with the length of time spent sitting in educational institutions. Those of us who have spent a lot of time in those institutions can do our part to deflate the value of educational currency by refusing to boast of our own “official” educational credentials. Strike these from your résumé; demand that others judge you by your actual talents and accomplishments, as you would judge others.

Let us frequent libraries, cooperatives, museums, theatres, and other voluntary, less coercive community institutions. Where they are inaccessible, let us work to make them accessible. Let us create more spaces in our communities where young, old, and those in between can get together to pursue un-programmed activities of all sorts. Let us end the policy of shunting young and old into separate institutions “for their own good.”

Let us spit on *exploitative* labor of all kinds, not child labor, the prohibition of which currently denies many forms of meaningful par-

ticipation to the young. This will help reveal for what it is age discrimination, which mandates that young people be taught *about* the world before they are allowed to learn *from* it by participating *in* it.

Let us learn to think again, and make spaces that encourage it! Book culture depends upon stable companions and spaces in which they can come together, such as coffee shops and periodicals for writers and readers. Today both books and dialogue itself are opposed by competing media. The screen dissolves the text. The picture and its caption triumph. Silent and sustained attention is constantly interrupted by programmed noises. Specialized school subjects and the school bells dividing them into regular fifty-minute intervals interrupt the thoughts of any individual attempting to think critically inside the school. Our ability to carry a sustained thought is under attack from movies and TV, from the noise, speed, and information density that prevail. Institutions that cater to the lowest common denominator, that aim to prepare students for the insane world that exists—these cannot do anything but smother the ability to think and feel freely.

## trusting relationships with one another and the young

We all have observed ongoing conservative culture wars over “family values.” “Family values,” of course, are about kids: precious, obedient, little spittin’ images of upstanding agreeable citizens. People wary of change often fear that the young, the heart of the nuclear family, are potential disruptions. This suspicion is well-founded. Young people, as anyone who takes them seriously can attest, often demonstrate an ability to draw attention to the political dimensions underlying everyday life—to the dubious pretences by which authorities, often including parental authorities, establish themselves. Without censure, with the room to be confidently inquisitive and direct, young ones can discern the fundamentals of social relations by unearthing the root—that is, radical—details which betray the reality of those relations, reminding us of the hidden roots of power on which authority rests in the USA. Spying that loose edge, they may just pry it

back to ask: Why? Why do my sneakers say “Made in Pakistan”? Why are the sidewalks in this part of town crumbling? Why are we supposed to go to school?

Check your motives as you interact with those you assume yourself to know more than. The educator sometimes undertakes the education of the child with such zeal because a jealousy of the child’s purity lies at the base of his drive to make this other person more like himself. Likewise, he may be spurred on by a resentment of the x-ray glasses and bravery that aid children in calling out incongruence and injustice.

Because children are all too often seen not as individuals but as objects, as tofu for soaking up whatever marinade they are placed in, they have been used by people with all sorts of motives as testing grounds for a myriad of half-baked solutions to social problems. “Proper child rearing” techniques have been presented as the means to end poverty, crime, urban violence, and general disorder, among other scourges. The child is taught proper social values, attitudes, and work habits to this end; but if she forgets or refuses her teaching, she is shown that as an individual, she is the problem, not the social system responsible for both her lessons and the social problems against which she is supposedly being inoculated.

If we agree that children are good at learning, let our attitude and dealings with young people bear that out. Let us resist the temptation to become educators, to rub the noses of the young in our greater experience by unthinkingly adopting the roles of teacher, helper, instructor. Let us trust people to figure things out for themselves *unless* they specifically ask for our help. As it turns out, they ask frequently. People whose curiosity has not been deadened by education are bubbling with questions. The nature of the toxicity inherent in education is precisely that so much of the teaching that goes on is unwelcome.

Furthermore, in support of not only young people but *all* people, we would do well to nurture more accessible everyday places where knowledge and tools are not locked up in institutions or hoarded as closely guarded secrets. It’s easy enough to offer, without imposition, to share our skills with others. Take on an apprentice. Hang a shingle outside your home describing what you do. Let your friends and neighbors know that you are making such an offer to any serious and committed person.

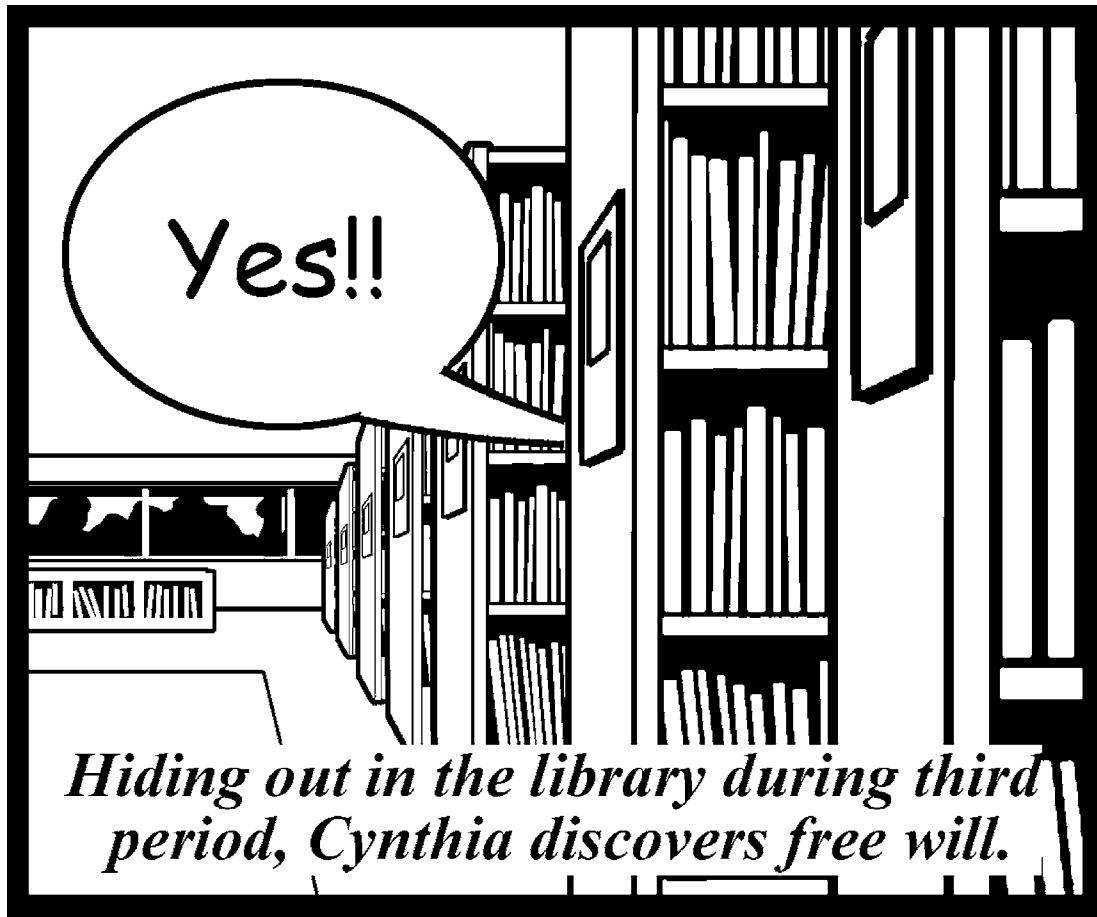
## living cannot be institutionalized

When we enter an institution, whether we do so willingly or by force, we often believe we can extract the good things it has to offer and leave the bad ones behind. “However,” as one Lakota man famously said about schooling, “at least when we went *in* we knew we were Indians. We come *out* half red and half white.” Compromise with institutional influence is usually a fool’s bargain.

If you are unwilling to institutionalize your mind and heart within the limitations of school, consider also a rejection of hospitals, classic love relationships, transportation norms, working jobs. Accompany your second look at schools with a second look at all things, all of the time. Let us not cede the responsibilities we have to one another to institutions. More and more of us consider it reasonable and virtuous to evade being diagnosed, cured, educated, socialized, informed, entertained, housed, married, counseled, certified, promoted, or protected according to the needs instilled in us by our professional guardians. In the USA, more and more people are finding that the freedom to drop out of any of our modern systems is sacred to them.

## for dropouts with financial access to so-called higher education

Though many of us who are hooked on public institutions find ourselves needing and attempting to escape entirely from their grasp, you might find you have the inspiration or delusion it takes to live creatively within the belly of the beast. Truly, we all find ourselves living in some chamber of that belly some of the time, regardless of our life decisions. If you are a young person whose parents have enough, and they expect you to go to college on their dollar and earn the credentials to open doors locked to less privileged people, think of clever ways to apply this privilege. Obtain the conventional training to become an MD so as to do transitioning surgeries or electrolysis for low income transgendered people. Go to law school so you can represent people in court who have refused institutionalization and been charged with crimes for it. Many a marginalized subculture would benefit from



being instituted in modern society. Of course, learning itself is not made compulsory by law. Instead, as is typical in consumer society, it is subtly enforced by other tricks such as making people believe that they are learning something from television programs, or compelling people to attend employee trainings, or getting people to pay huge amounts of money in order to be taught how to have better sex, how to be more sensitive, how to know more about the vitamins they need, how to play games, how to breastfeed, and so on.

What could be if we were to act as fresh waking people every day? Step out of bed to live every moment of our lives according to our own self-determination? Eating as we're hungry, knowing

free or inexpensive access to the institutional educational training of someone who can do some of the tricky things that are strictly regulated in this society—helping fit someone for a prosthetic limb, to name another example.

But should you be interested in receiving such an education, beware. Like Frodo and the ring, to put an institutional tool in your hand temporarily, even if with the goal in mind of destroying its power, is to risk falling victim to its allure and misguided principles.

Also, consider other ways to use your access to higher education. Maybe you could take your folks' money for school and channel it to another person for whom college is otherwise utterly inaccessible, who does not wish to or cannot as easily interact with the world without proving credentials. Depending on the relationship you have with your parents and what honesty means to you, consider forging your diploma or building a dummy college website to show your high grades to your folks using an official-looking internet password and fake student ID number. On the off chance that your parents support your analysis or respect your divergent viewpoints as something other

than an assault on them, ask if their money could be used to fund a project you have in mind: for example, to cut a giant check to CrimethInc. to pay for the printing of a brilliant book you are writing<sup>1</sup>.

## learning not to learn, not learning to learn

If we are to think seriously about deschooling our entire lives, we would do well to develop the habit of setting a question mark beside all discourse on people's "educational needs" and supposed need for a "preparation for life," and reflect instead on the historical context of these ideas. Let us doubt not only the notion that schooling is a desirable means, but also that education is a desirable end. The alternative to schooling is not some other type of educational agency, nor the integration of educational opportunities into every aspect of life, but ways of living that foster a different attitude toward tools.

Educational function is already emigrating from schools into other sites (on-the-job training, anyone?), and, increasingly, other forms of compulsory learning are

how to track down answers, not fearing intimidation from superiors, holding no contempt for the younger, experiencing no anxiety or feelings of inferiority around the older, suffering rarely from boredom, rarely looking to others for approval or critique, being better able to concentrate and carry a sustained thought? This talk of "lifelong learning" and "learning needs" has thoroughly polluted not only schools but our whole lives with the stench of education. Potent living consists, as it always did, of a patient and steadfast search for truth, and in the unfolding of capacities that are good and beautiful in themselves. It takes place in a thoughtful shaping of our surroundings, in conversation, in hospitality. Whoever loves such living will not sacrifice the present to an endlessly postponed future.

<sup>1</sup>This suggestion of the author's seems as good an opportunity as any to put to rest one of the various pernicious rumors about the publishing wing of the CrimethInc. ex-Workers' Collective, namely that the collective members who operate it are rich brats who draw on their bourgeois parents' coffers to fund projects. In fact, this is not so, though said brats have been forced to *borrow* money from their relatives before to keep books in circulation, and do encourage other brats to send them large quantities of their parents' wealth, should they be middle or upper class, along with—please, and soon!—brilliant manuscripts.



Last summer was full of adventures: cooking in outdoor kitchens, building tripods, planning actions, sleeping in treehouses in the middle of NYC. I traveled up the east coast, coming to a new city every week. In the process, I fell for my traveling partner's partner. As a local organizer who had participated in several collective projects that involved facilitated meetings and complex protocol, I'd thought I already knew all there was to know about process; but now, deeply immersed in the beginning of my first polyamory love triangle, I discovered it could extend to a whole new level. There were long conversations to work out simple questions like who would sleep with whom each night, and ongoing efforts to keep each other aware of all our feelings about every issue. It was often an arduous process, but consequently, I developed a very open and expressive relationship with my new partner, and that felt healthy and good.

At the beginning of a tumultuous time for my new triangle, the three of us and the others with whom we were traveling biked to a party in the city we were temporarily calling home. By the end of the night, I couldn't balance well enough to get back on my too-tall bike. I was drunk. Too drunk. Throughout the night, like many others at the party, I flirted with and kissed lots of people. My new partner was watching me, a little put off by my behavior.

At first, I had been hesitant and cautious about how our new relationship would affect my relations with my traveling partner; but earlier that day, I had decided that if we were going to try this relationship, I should open up and be really vulnerable with my new romantic partner. I had decided that I was ready to sleep with him and had been excitedly awaiting the appropriate time to share this decision with him. Towards the end of the night at the party I kept approaching my partner and asking him to sleep with me when we got back to the house that night. I was excited to tell him that I was ready to do something that he had been wanting. I think he just kept telling me that I was being a drunk, but as a drunk, I kept insisting that I was sober enough to know what I wanted and that I wanted to fuck him. I was being persistent. I felt like he wasn't being clear with me, but I think I was just too drunk to understand no.

The next day, I wasn't thinking about that interaction; I didn't really remember it. I had come home and crashed out alone on my friend's empty bed, and we all spent the morning getting ready for a busy day ahead. But that afternoon, his other partner, my traveling partner, accused me of sexually assaulting him the night before. She told me that I wouldn't stop asking him to sleep with me even though he kept saying no, that I kept hitting on him, and that I made him feel unsafe. Perhaps her account of the situation was colored by the jealousies and insecurities that would later play out between us, but because I

<sup>1</sup> In retrospect, the most problematic aspect of this interaction was that she defined my partner's experience for him. Regardless of a person's motivations, it is never appropriate to call someone out as a sexual assaulter without the explicit consent of the other person involved.

couldn't even remember the night before, I was in no position to dispute it<sup>1</sup>. I spent the day terrified of myself, asking, "Could I be a sexual assaulter? I'm a survivor of sexual assault. How could I assault someone?" and, more importantly, agonizing: "I really care about this person. I would never want to make him feel threatened."

Finally, after a very scary day inside my head, I got to talk with him. He told me about what had happened the night before and said he did not consider it sexual assault. He said he had been annoyed with me, but that was the extent of it, and everything was okay between us. But everything was not okay. Even if what happened wasn't sexual assault, I had clearly made poor choices and disregarded how he felt, mistakes I consider inexcusable. Perhaps I didn't make him feel unsafe, but I am 5'2" and he is 6'2" and much stronger than me. What if he had been drunkenly, persistently hitting on me all night, despite my discouragement? Would I have felt unsafe? Should my disrespectful behavior be tolerated any more because I am small and arguably less intimidating?

Defining sexual assault is difficult. As in all aspects of relationships, there are few absolutes. Every relationship can only be defined and mediated by the people that comprise it; what is comfortable and safe for people in one relationship may not work for people in another. Accordingly, it is up to the survivor alone to name an experience as being sexual assault or not. However, some actions are unacceptable, regardless of whether they are labeled sexual assault. As we struggle to develop relationships free of hierarchy and power, we must also develop a language with which to discuss all of the spaces—complicated and unclear as they may be—in which we act without respect for others.

**sexual assault - a sexual interaction in which a person knowingly crosses another's boundary: for instance, doing something that someone has said no to, or trying to do something that someone has said makes him or her uncomfortable.**

Most of us grew up fully immersed in this profit-driven culture, in which most public relationships—whether economic, political, or personal—follow a model of dominance and submission in which one party leads and the other follows. Inundated with media representations of these relationships, we unconsciously mimic those dynamics in our personal lives, developing "skills" for acquiring power and protecting ourselves in our own relationships. As radicals, we understand that the connections we have with one another are fundamental to the revolutionary poten-

tial of our actions. Consequently, we work to build self-reliant communities and develop emotionally sustaining relationships, by nurturing our ability to act and communicate honestly and unlearning our destructive behaviors. This is difficult, and we often revert to old habits and make mistakes. As individuals and as communities, we must create supportive, forgiving environments in which we can embrace our own shortcomings and errors and those of others in the spirit of a genuine desire to continue reconstructing ourselves. We need to equip ourselves and our communities with the tools to deal with the personal conflicts and complicated situations that inevitably arise as an integral part of the process of developing radical relationships.

To this end, we need a more extensive and sophisticated language with which to address violations of personal boundaries and work out how these can be discouraged. The discussion about how to cope with sexual assault within radical communities is constantly evolving, and fortunately, at least in some circles, it is finally beginning to be carried on in the open. Much can be taken from this discussion and applied to the ways other types of conflicts are addressed; but at the same time, there is much that needs to be reworked. We would do well to reconsider the current language available for addressing these issues: what the terms mean, what purposes they serve effectively, what their shortcomings are.

**coercion - the use of force or manipulation to pressure people into doing, accepting, or agreeing to things against their wishes. coercion can include passive-aggressive behavior, attempts to induce guilt, persistent questioning, and threats, but it is not limited to these forms.**

In our relationships, we often set boundaries and sometimes even ask each other for consent. In most relationships, these boundaries are unspoken, assumed: *I will not sit on my friend's partner's lap. I will only hug this friend for hello and goodbye.* In romantic relationships, we tend to define these boundaries more explicitly with our partners: *I will not have unprotected sex. It is not okay for my partner to kiss me in front of my parents.* In relationships of all kinds, from platonic to sexual, we can cross others' boundaries and hurt them or make them uncomfortable. This happens frequently, especially in relationships in which boundaries are only implicit.

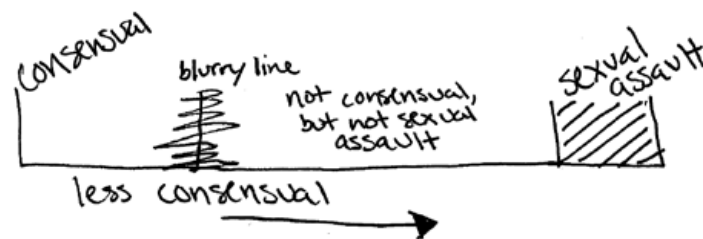
Sexual assault is an intense manifestation of this violation of boundaries. When a sexual assault occurs, the one who crosses the boundary is labeled the perpetrator and the one whose boundary has been crossed is called the survivor, a more empowering term for victim. This is forceful terminology, and it can be really useful for assisting the survivor in naming and processing an experience. Simply having language with which to break the silence imposed by such a difficult experience can be a powerful thing. This language is also useful for dealing with those who are unwilling to be held accountable for their actions, who refuse to talk about and work through their issues. Being labeled a perpetrator of sexual assault carries a heavy weight; naming an act sexual assault means that the

matter will be taken seriously and, hopefully, addressed by all who hear about it. In this way, the labeling of the perpetrator can pick up where self-initiated dialogue leaves off.

**boundary - the line that describes what someone wants or is comfortable with. this may be predetermined or developing, and is subject to change without a clear or logical reason.**

However, beyond these specific situations, the perpetrator/survivor language has many limitations. There is a wide spectrum of interactions that are unhealthy and non-consensual, but the term sexual assault describes only a narrow range of that spectrum<sup>2</sup>. Imagine if we could plot our interactions on a line from the most consensual to the least. The ones that are completely consensual, in which no boundaries are crossed, would occupy a small space on one side, while those interactions labeled sexual assault would occupy a small space on the other; somewhere in the middle, between these extremes, there would still be a whole range of interactions in which boundaries are crossed to varying extents. As it stands, the language used specifically to describe sexual assault is not sufficient for describing those interactions that fall somewhere in the middle.

The language of perpetrator and survivor can also promote a false sense that sexual assault is the only form of boundary violation worth addressing. Describing sexual assault and the survivors and perpetrators that experience sexual assault as distinct from other, presumably "normal," experiences of sexuality misrepresents any experience not labeled sexual assault as free of coercion. On the contrary, in our authoritarian society, domination infects everything, resulting in even our most intimate and cherished relationships being tainted with subtle—or sometimes not so subtle—unequal power dynamics. A division between "sexual assault" and "everything else" lets everyone off the hook who has not been labeled a sexual assaulter; it thus focuses attention away from the ways we all can stand to improve our relationships and our sensitivity to one another.



One of the most problematic consequences of our lack of appropriate language is that people are often reluctant to address more subtle or complicated experiences of boundary violations at all. The perpetrator/survivor language is so serious that in less dramatic cases—for example, in situations that are not violent or physically forceful—the survivor may even wonder if what he or she is feeling legitimately constitutes a serious problem worth exploring and addressing. If a person chooses not to use the language of sexual assault to describe a violation of his or her boundaries, does that mean it is not important? Many people are understandably hesitant to accuse loved ones of sexual assault or label them perpetrators because of the stigma attached to these terms and the drama that often ensues when they are used. This should not mean that non-consensual interactions go unaddressed.

It also seems to be the case that, as much as the perpetrator/survivor language is useful when dialogue is impossible, it can also halt dialogue where it might otherwise be possible. This language creates categorizations of people rather than descriptions of their behavior, reducing an individual to an action. As such, it tends to put people on the defensive, which often makes it harder for them to receive criticism<sup>3</sup>. The definitive implications and accusatory tone of this language can precipitate a situation in which, instead of focusing on reconciling differing experiences of reality, people on opposing sides struggle to prove that their interpretation of reality is the "true" one. Once this dynamic is in effect, the discussion is no longer about people working through their problems and trying to understand and respect each other's unique experiences, but an investigation about "objective" reality in which all parties stand trial. No one should ever be forced to defend what he or she feels, least of all someone who has survived a violation of his or her boundaries. Regardless of "what really happened," a person's experience is his or hers alone and deserves to be validated as such. To decide which reality is "the truth," we must give value to one person and not the other: this is validation on the scarcity model. When conflicts arise surrounding a question of sexual assault, communities are often forced to take sides, making the matter into a popularity contest; likewise, individuals can feel required to support one person at the other's expense.

**consent - consent is conventionally understood to mean permission, but this conception can be misleading. here, it is used to describe the process by which people learn to understand each other's desires and comfort levels so they can interact respectfully and considerately. a situation must be free of all forms of coercion for one person to receive genuine consent from another; likewise, if one person asks for something and the other says they are not comfortable with it, the interaction can still be consensual as long as both people respect each other's wishes.**

If we could develop a way of addressing these situations that focused on promoting communication and understanding rather than establishing who is in the wrong, it might make it easier for those who commit boundary violations to hear and learn from criticism and less stressful for those whose boundaries are crossed to address these instances. Whenever a person feels that his or her desires have not been respected, regardless of whether or not a court of law would find there to be sufficient evidence to substantiate charges of sexual assault, all those involved in the situation need to hold themselves accountable for the ways they have not communicated with or respected each other and work out how to make sure it never happens again.

We also need a language that can account for situations in which it is not clear who is the perpetrator and who is the survivor. Identifying one person as a perpetrator may not make sense if both or all of the people involved in the interaction both crossed another person's boundaries and had their own boundaries crossed. The language we currently have available to describe these situations creates

a false division of the world between perpetrators and survivors, when—just as with oppressors and those who are oppressed—most people experience both sides of the dichotomy at one time or another. Such a binary sets up one class of people as entirely in the right and one as entirely in the wrong, as if one always bears all accountability and the other has no responsibility or no way to make their relationships more consensual. In extreme cases, this is indeed the case, but we also need to be able to address all the other cases, in which both parties could stand to improve their communication skills and sensitivity.

We need a new way to conceptualize and communicate about our interactions, one that takes into account all of our different boundaries—sexual, romantic, and platonic—and the ways they can be crossed. Practicing consent and respecting others' boundaries is important both in sexual relationships and in every other aspect of our lives: in organizing together, in living collectively, in planning direct actions securely. Non-hierarchical, consensual relationships are the substance of anarchy, and we need to prioritize seeking and promoting consent in all our interactions.

As every experience is unique, we should use language specific to each one, rather than attempting to force all our experiences into abstract categories; we can do so by describing each individually: as a deliberate boundary violation, for example, or as a decision in which consent was ambiguous. We can do much to break down the stigma and shame surrounding the issue of sexual assault by opening up dialogue about non-consensual interactions of all kinds. In developing our communication skills about our abuse and abuser histories, our sexual histories, our desires, we can create the spaces to begin to talk about the grey areas of consent. We need to foster a culture that takes into account the fact that, despite how desperately we want to be good for the people we love, we sometimes make mistakes, fail to be truthful, and cross boundaries. We need to support both survivors and perpetrators: not to condone non-consensual actions, but because we all need to rid ourselves of the ill effects of living in a hierarchical, capitalist society, and to do so, we must work together.

To broach these questions is not to deny that there is such a thing as sexual assault, nor to defend it as acceptable behavior. On the contrary, it is to demand that we acknowledge that we live in a rape culture: a culture in which sexual assault is pervasive, as are the forces and dynamics that promote it. Sexual assault is a part of all of us who have grown up in this society; we cannot ignore it, or pretend that because we ourselves have been assaulted or because we work to live anarchy in all aspects of our lives that we are not capable of sexual assault. The only way to rid our lives of sexual assault is to open the issue up. This means we must make it safe enough to come out as an assaulter, so that each of us is able to address, openly, honestly, and without fear, everything from the most minor acts of inconsideration to the most serious boundary violations. We are all survivors; we are all perpetrators.

<sup>3</sup> It is important for both the perpetrator and the survivor to deal with their actions and experiences in supportive environments. If the survivor is unable or unwilling to work with the perpetrator, some manifestation of community still should. Sexual assault and other forms of unhealthy relationship dynamics are community issues, and must be dealt with accordingly. Hopefully, all the individuals involved can receive support from a variety of sources.

Before my summer travels, although I had spent a lot of time thinking about and working on making my relationships reflect my anarchist ideals, I had only recently learned the uses of the subcultural catchphrase “consent.” While becoming acquainted with this new term, I met a fabulous new friend. When we first met, we spent only a few intense days together, but the time I shared with this new friend made that word, consent, more meaningful to me than any workshop or article ever could. They consider consent a fundamental part of all of their relationships, and with them, I saw how consent could be enacted daily with friends and lovers.

At first, it was strange that they checked in with me so frequently about all the little ways we were physical with one another. Throughout both our casual and intimate conversations, they would ask for my permission before rubbing my shoulders, holding my hand, or resting their head on my lap. Other times, they would touch me lightly, then ask, “Is this okay?” before proceeding. I began to think that they had a difficulty being physically close and consequently were especially conscientious about others’ personal space, but they always seemed comfortable with the closeness I initiated—even when I forgot to ask for explicit permission before touching them. They also didn’t seem offended or surprised that it was not easy for me to reciprocate the verbal consent they offered me. I tried to be conscious of how we were interacting and to vocalize my desires before moving into their space or touching them, but I’ve always had a hard time being verbal. As I had only heard the word consent used in reference to sexual relationships, I began to ponder their intentions. I kept thinking to myself, “Does my new friend have a crush on me? Do they want something more intimate than friendship?”

However, as I got used to my friend’s style of establishing consent, I recognized that it was part of their personality and indicative of the way they tried to interact with everyone. As I realized this, my feelings about their questions changed. I stopped trying to read into their questions to see if they indicated unspoken interests, and started to appreciate that they were asking how I felt. I felt so respected. It made me feel how deeply my friend cared about me that they wanted to know how I felt about everything, and it made me feel comfortable with them very quickly.

*Feedback and discussion are welcome: [redefiningconsent@yahoo.com](mailto:redefiningconsent@yahoo.com)*



## Some questions about consent. Think about it!

*(from the awesome zine, see no speak no hear no)*

Have you ever talked about consent with your partners or friends?

Do you know people or have you been with people who define consent differently than you do?

Have you ever been unsure about whether or not the person you were being sexual with wanted to be doing what you were doing? Did you talk about it? Did you ignore it in hopes that it would change? Did you continue what you were doing because it was pleasurable to you and you didn't want to deal with what the other person was experiencing? Did you continue because you didn't want to second guess the other person? How do you feel about the choices you made?

Do you think it is the other person's responsibility to say something if he or she isn't into what you're doing?

Are you clear about your intentions?

Have you ever tried to talk someone into doing something about which he or she showed hesitancy?

How might someone express that what is happening is not okay?

Do you only respond to verbal signs, or are you sensitive to other signs?

Do you think it is possible to misinterpret silence for consent?

Have you ever asked someone what kinds of signs you should look for if he or she has a hard time verbalizing when something feels wrong?

Do you think consent can be erotic?

Do you check in as things progress, or do you assume the original consent means everything is okay?

Do you think about people's abuse histories?

Do you ever get yourself into situations that give you an excuse for touching people you think would say no if you asked? Examples might include dancing, getting drunk around them, falling asleep next to them.

Do you make people feel they are not “fun” or “liberated” if they don't want to try certain sexual things?

Do you ever try to make bargains? (i.e., “If you let me \_\_\_\_, I'll \_\_\_\_ for you.”)

Have you ever used jealousy as a means of control?

Do you think it's okay to initiate something sexual with someone who is asleep?

How do you react if someone becomes uncomfortable with what you're doing, or if he or she doesn't want to do something? Do you get defensive? Do you feel guilty? Does the other person end up having to take care of you and reassure you, or are you able to step back and listen, to hear and support the other person and take responsibility for your actions?

In telling your side of the story, do you attempt to change the way the other person views a situation?

Do you ever talk about sex and consent and abuse when you are not in bed?

# BE CAREFUL WITH EACH OTHER



# SO YOU CAN BE DANGEROUS TOGETHER

# REPORT FROM THE FIELD: *where sugar comes from*

*This is the first in a series of eyewitness accounts, one of which will run in each issue, in which our subversive agents will infiltrate the internal workings of capitalist society (which, let's face it, most of us have to occupy and even operate all too often anyway) in order to report on them, à la Upton Sinclair's The Jungle, and offer insight into what might be done to destabilize them.*

So here's the deal. Every fall I work in this beet sugar factory in western Minnesota. A whole lot of the sugar that goes into all kinds of processed food comes from sugar beets, and a whole lot of those sugar beets come from western Minnesota. The county the factory is in is dead flat, except for the Minnesota River valley, and it contains exactly three things: corn, soybeans, and sugar beets as far as the eye can see. It's completely rural,

but it's also every bit as unnatural as Los Angeles or Disneyland.

Every year in September the beet farmers start pulling their crops. They pull them out of the ground with a combine, load them onto a semi truck, and drive them down to the plant. It takes the plant until spring to process the whole harvest, so they have to store the beets outside in seven gigantic piles, and they have to hire seasonal workers to run the machines that unload the trucks. By the end of the har-

vest season each one of the piles is bigger than a football field, and up to thirty feet tall. It's one whole hell of a lot of beets.

It's good money. The farmers pull beets all day and night, unless it's too hot, or too cold, or too wet. Seasonal workers—beet pilers—work twelve hours a day, every day, as long as the farmers are pulling. This amounts to eighty-four hours a week if the weather cooperates, and the overtime adds up quick. Anything over eight

hours a day or forty a week is time and a half, and Sunday is double time. If I live extremely frugally, I can make enough money there to fund my activities for the better part of the rest of the year.

The town is exactly like every other agricultural town of its size. There is a bar, a diner, a hardware store, two gas stations, a post office, a library, and a police station. The faces behind the counters almost never change from year to year. The tallest building is the grain silo, and the town ends abruptly where the beet fields begin at the edge of the last family's yard. If you walk the railroad tracks two miles east you'll get to the factory. The whole place is ordinary in every way, except that once a year it is crawling with beet pilers.

There are three kinds of people that pile beets: The Locals, the Latinos, and The Kids. Western Minnesota was stolen from its original inhabitants in the nineteenth century, and has been populated almost exclusively by white people of Scandinavian heritage ever since. Recently, however, a lot of Hispanic folks have moved up there looking for work. There is a sizable Latino minority in both the town and the factory. And then there are the kids. It's a strange phenomenon, but every fall the town is overrun with wild looking young people from Somewhere Else with dogs and facial tattoos who work beets because the money's good and they don't ask many questions. I am one of them.

There really isn't anywhere in town to accommodate all of us in any conventional sense, so almost every year we end up staying

somewhere different.

There used to be a flea-bag motel down the road that would rent to beet pilers, but they got shut down for copious code violations. Last year about forty of us occupied an abandoned farm just past the outskirts of town. It was sort of like a band of gypsies descending on a medieval village. I was a little worried that babies were going to start turning up missing, and that the townspeople were going to come after us with pitchforks.

One year the weather was terrible. Nobody was working or getting paid, and nearly everyone was camped out at the bar for days on end, getting ferociously drunk and terrorizing the town. Eventually the law got involved. But the hell-raising proved to be a surprisingly effective strategy. The next year the company tried really hard to work us no matter how bad the weather got, presumably just to keep us off the streets.

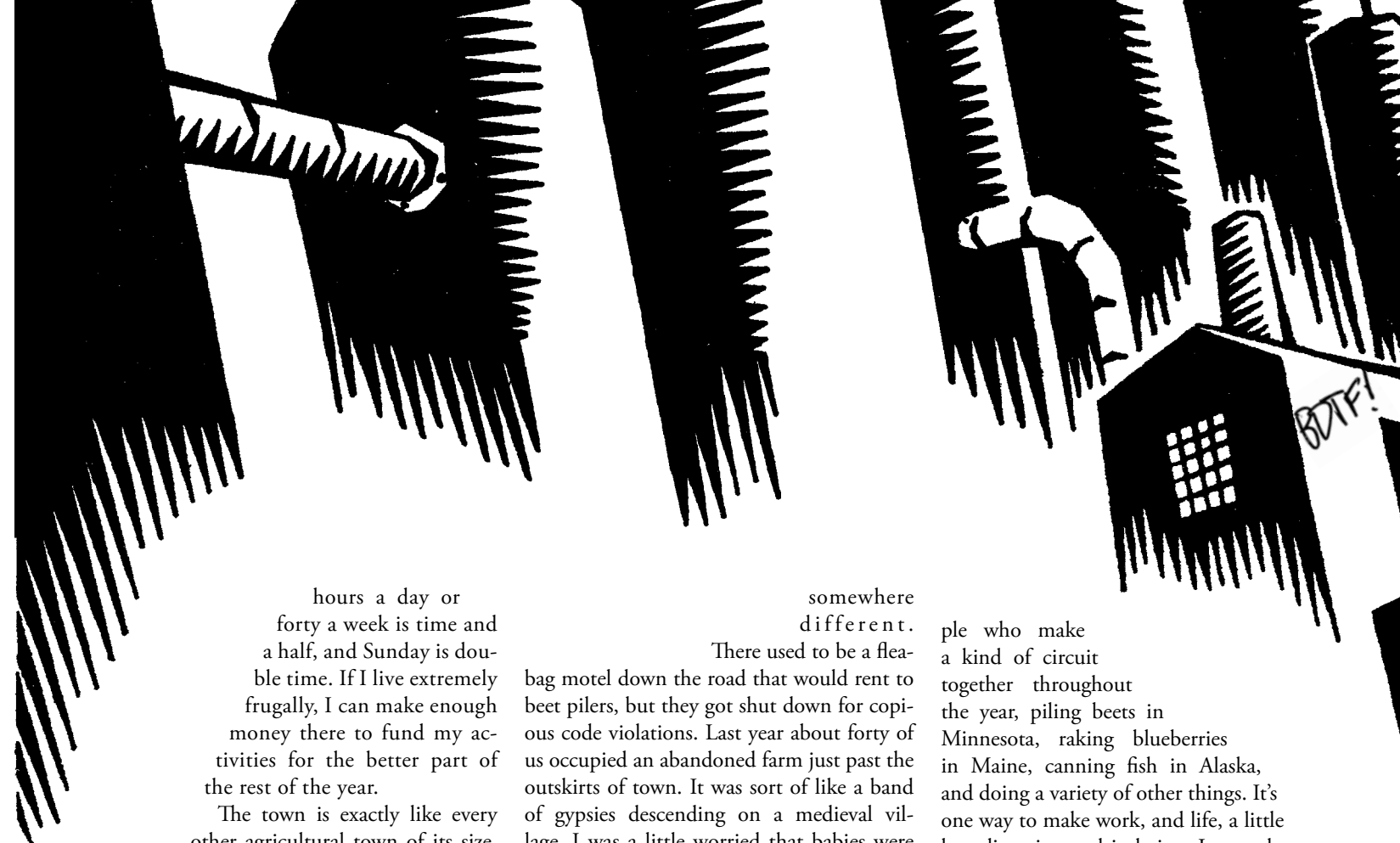
Another time the bartender went down to the farm to hang out with us after work. She rolled up on a grim horde of beet pilers, solemnly skinning and eating a puppy around the camp fire. She was understandably horrified by this, even after someone explained that the puppy had not been murdered. It had been killed accidentally by one of the larger dogs, and the person who was responsible for it had decided that this was the most respectful way to deal with its death. She always seemed a little wary of us after that.

Working beets really is a positive experience in a lot of ways, though. There is a real camaraderie and a kind of solidarity that can develop out of living and working and eating and sleeping collectively with a group of people under trying conditions. There are peo-

ple who make a kind of circuit together throughout the year, piling beets in Minnesota, raking blueberries in Maine, canning fish in Alaska, and doing a variety of other things. It's one way to make work, and life, a little less alienating and isolating. It can also suck pretty badly. The extreme drunkenness and perpetual drug abuse can get to be a bit much, and sleeping on a pile of straw in a barn for six weeks without any running water or electricity while working eighty-four hours a week in the freezing cold will really put you in the mood to not take any shit from anyone.

The work is really easy. A well-trained orangutan could run a beet piler. You press the same buttons and pull the same levers over and over and over. It's mostly just really loud and monotonous and cold. It's also fairly dangerous. You have to keep an eye on all the tweaked out truckers so they don't run you over, and make sure not to fall in the machine. Somebody gets killed on a beet pile somewhere in Minnesota or North Dakota almost every year.

The inside of the factory is even crazier. There are unfathomable mazes of incomprehensible machines, catwalks and conveyor belts to nowhere, and ancient engines caked with a foot of beet pulp. There is the deafening racket of a thousand endlessly grinding gears, an entire floor which is always about a hundred and thirty degrees, and a place called The Pit where no supervisor will ever go. The whole place is completely inhuman, and there are no shortages of ways to hide, get maimed, or die.



# BANDIT!

I work outside on the pilers

unless the weather is bad, but sometimes I do work inside the factory. Here's a story. One day I clock in and the bossman gives me a great big squeegee. He takes me to a particular pipe deep in the bowels of the factory which has sprung an enormous leak and is spraying massive amounts of half processed syrup everywhere. "Mop up this juice," he says, and then leaves, never to be seen again. So for twelve hours the pipe runneth over, and I push the lake of juice—which never gets any smaller—down a drain. The drain feeds into a sump pump, which then pumps right back into the pipe! While meditating on the unbelievable absurdity of this task I watched a couple of guys with a backhoe spend half the day digging a big hole in the ground, take lunch, and spend the rest of the day filling it back in. I started thinking that maybe everyone there was doing that on some level: The welders cut slabs of steel in half, take lunch, and weld them back together; the mechanics disassemble engines, take lunch, and put them back together; and the whole place is actually a giant meth lab or a loss leader for the Mafia. There's the method to the madness of production for you.

The factory is supposed to be owned cooperatively by the farmers, but the evil agribusiness giant Cargill has its hands in the management of it. There was a month-long lockout last summer when the union overwhelmingly rejected a contract that would have left workers with fewer benefits and higher health insurance costs. The lockout was wildly unpopular, and was eventually resolved, but the town and the factory are

behind the times in a lot of ways. I have no doubt that the next few years will see more attempts to bust the union, and more of the downsizing, automation, and outsourcing that have already decimated most of the decent paying industrial jobs in the rest of the country. The beet plant will be an interesting arena of struggle when this does inevitably happen. There is certainly the possibility there for profound alliances to be born out of necessity amongst workers of a diverse set of racial and cultural backgrounds.

The beet harvest works pretty well for me, and I keep going back, but I sure am glad to get the hell gone the minute I'm done. As soon as I get there it feels like I never left, and it only ever takes about a week or so before I start having dreams about beets again. I can't quite imagine how hard it must be to stomach working there every day for years on end. I do know that the company had to start making full time workers clock in by scanning their retinas because so many people were scamming the timecards.

Last year someone started writing "BDTF!" everywhere. (Burn Down the Factory! Remember that Fifteen song?) It started turning up on the pilers, in the factory, in town, scrawled in the dust on the sides of cars in all manner of different handwriting styles. Maybe it was just the kids who were doing it, but maybe not.

Make no mistake about it: Sugar is evil. It's addictive, it rots your teeth out, and it's largely responsible for an epidemic of diabetes amongst poor people in this country. The process by which it is produced wastes a staggering amount of water, is tremendously destructive environmentally, and is also just viscerally really gross. You can't have your cake and eat it, too. If you want that sugar you have to accept that huge amounts of land will be used to grow the beets, that an enormous amount of pesticides and fertilizers will be used on that land, that there will be a sacrifice zone somewhere on a totally denuded moonscape piece of earth where the factory will go, that some folks will spend the best years

of their lives inside that factory, and that a mountain of fossil fuels will be burned to power it. You also have to accept that some doped up crust punk is probably going to poop in the beet pile. In my opinion it's just not worth it.

When I first started working at the plant I swore I would never eat anything with beet sugar in it again. Later I started thinking about where cane sugar must come from, or corn syrup, or any kind of processed food, period. It all comes from some factory, somewhere. It's sobering to realize that the whole way that food is produced and distributed in our civilization is completely deranged and destructive. The problem is a whole lot bigger than almost anyone cares to admit.

There are a lot of good people—including myself—whose livelihoods are dependent on that factory, others like it, and on all sorts of other messed up jobs. I wholeheartedly support workers' efforts to better their lot within the confines of industrial capitalism, but I'll be honest, ultimately I'd like to see the beet plant wiped off the face of the fucking earth. I want to give the land a chance to recover, and I want to be part of a society where that would be possible. I know that's not going to happen without some truly revolutionary change.

Sometimes I will be sitting up in the booth running the piler, looking through the clouds of dust at the pillars of smoke and steam rising out of the factory, and it will hit me right in the chest: two hundred years ago this was tallgrass prairie, teeming with buffalo, and here I am like every other white person, trying to make a buck off of this land. I don't exactly feel guilty about it; I am trapped in this heartless economy just like so many others, and I have to make some compromises if I am going to have any resources to fight it with. If I am going to make those kinds of compromises, though, I do feel a very grave responsibility to follow through on that commitment to fight. I'm willing to bet that I'm not the only one who feels that way.

P.S. Please let me take this opportunity to assure the gentle reader that I played no part in the puppy skinning. Thank you very much.

HOW ONE CRIMETHINC. EX-WORKER RENOUNCED HIS ANTI-WORK WAYS TO BECOME A WHITE COLLAR WORKER, AND MADE OUT LIKE A BANDIT

## NOW THAT'S AN OCCUPATION! THE WORKPLACE AS THE NEW FRONTIER OF THE SQUATTING MOVEMENT



Our story takes place a couple years ago, in a small city perhaps not unlike your own. Thanks to the extensive and arguably excessive circulation of CrimethInc. literature, along with the occasional salvo of a Bob Black essay, a small but thriving community of jobless anarchists had developed in my hometown. However, all of us had—this is the most polite way I can think of to put this—problems.

Not dangerous problems, such as heroin usage. Not health problems, such as malnutrition or horrible diseases—no one even had particularly bad acne. There was not much in the way of so-called cosmetic problems such as balding among us, either, although body odor tended to cause some difficulties when it came to interacting with employed society. And contrary the claims of the Atkins Diet, it appeared that subsiding purely on bagels and other forms of high carbohydrate bread resulted in one becoming moderately skinny but definitely not undernourished, and even gave one a certain rebellious sex appeal like James Dean or Ben Reitman. Perhaps someone should publish the "Dr. CrimethInc. Guide to Losing Weight Through Unemployment Diet" for our morbidly obese North American countrymen and women.

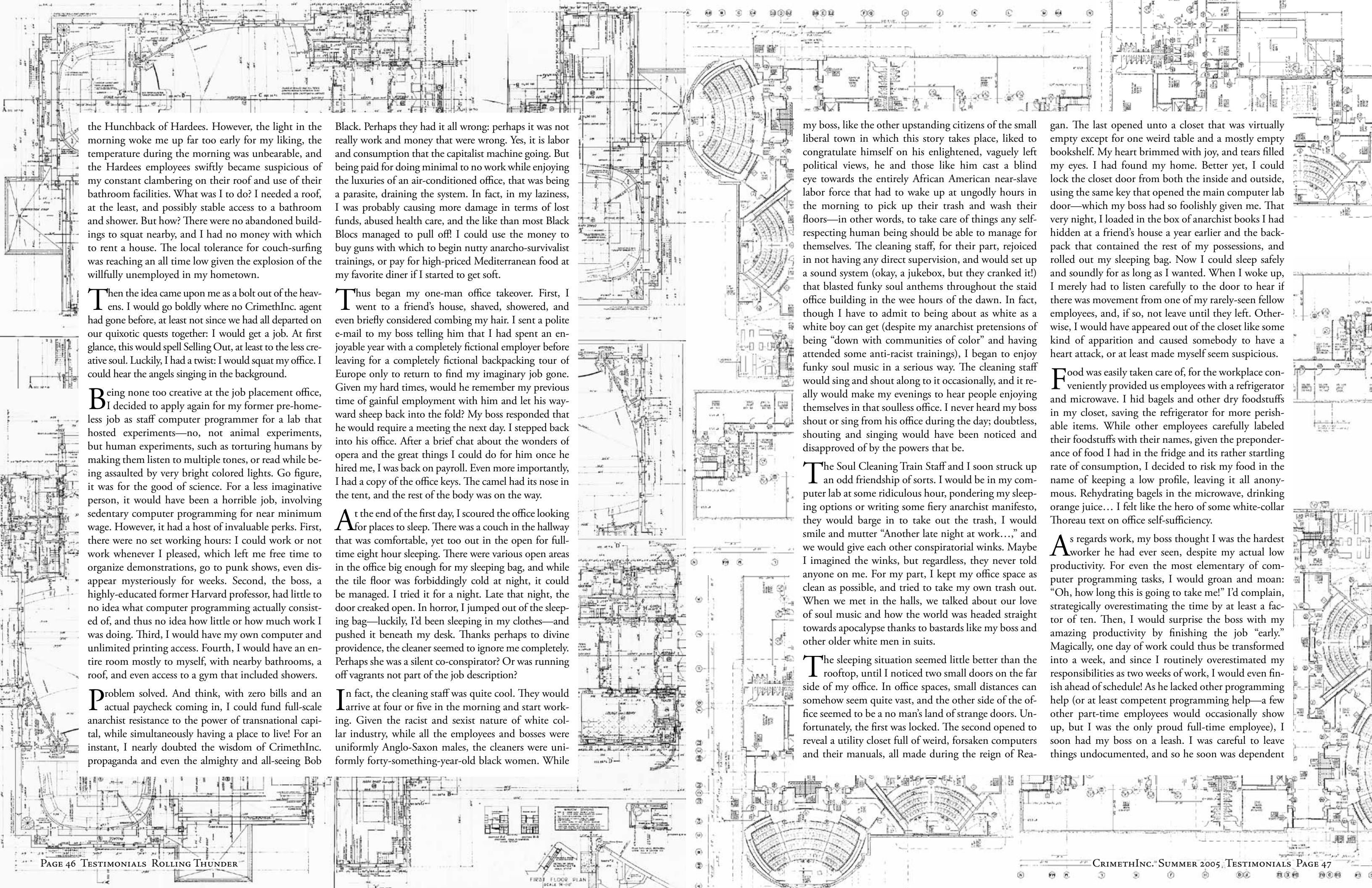
One problem plaguing the recently unemployed seemed to be the question of what to do with all the free time. While a few stalwarts used their newfound free time to start small anti-capitalist enterprises such as literature distributions and t-shirt silk-screening centers, many of the younger generation that jumped on the anti-work bandwagon seemed to be convinced that they had nothing better to do than use what little money they could gather to drink themselves to death. I myself, perennial busybody that I am, had absolutely no free time for this, engaged as I was in organizing demonstrations, inciting riots, and traveling extensively in my efforts to nudge along the collapse of global capitalism. After about a year of fighting cops, being beaten up, eating bagels, hopping trains, eating bagels, posting on anarchist websites from godforsaken libraries, hopping trains, fighting cops, and repeat ad infinitum, I was dead tired. Perhaps I should be made of sterner stuff, but when my trainhopping companion informed me that

we were dangerously close to being mistaken for normal hobos rather than the bloodthirsty anarchist revolutionaries we actually were, the realization came to me: in my moment of weakness, I wanted to live somewhere. Preferably my hometown. I wanted a home, a room where I could store my backpack of meager possessions. A place to lay my head at night that wasn't a bush.

This was the other problem dogging even the most productive of unemployed anarchists: where to live. After all, sleeping in bushes can actually make one a less productive citizen, especially if said bushes are nowhere near the library, anarchist infoshop, or useful dumpsters. Now, a few of my unemployed anarchist friends had solved this problem by living with their significant others—a questionable practice at best, from a feminist perspective. Woe unto me, anyway, for I had no romantic partner, and I felt abusing any one bed or couch for too long was morally suspect, even if mutually rapturous sex was involved. The closest thing I had to a girlfriend or boyfriend was an individual who was also unemployed and living in a rather precarious situation in an attic about an hour from my hometown. My former gene pool of local anarcho-activists, given my disappearance under mysterious circumstances and my haggard appearance upon my return, seemed to think I had just escaped from the mental health asylum and judged me nearly beyond the pale of social contact, much less sexual contact. Lacking a reasonable place to live, my most recent abode—my old car—having been recently stolen and the anarchist collective house at which I'd once lived having just been bulldozed due to lack of rent-paying, I was truly at a loss. Some of my old friends were getting organized to buy their dream collective house, at which rent would factor a few hundred dollars—far more than I could ever afford. I felt even more desperate and deranged than I ever had before. I had no money nor any conceivable way of earning any besides begging, and I was too proud to beg.

Luckily, a fellow crusty traveler suggested that I try the roof of the local Hardees, a terrible fast food restaurant only a few blocks from my previously rented house. I climbed up the ladder and promptly set up shop. For several days I was undisturbed as





the Hunchback of Hardees. However, the light in the morning woke me up far too early for my liking, and the temperature during the morning was unbearable, and the Hardees employees swiftly became suspicious of my constant clambering on their roof and use of their bathroom facilities. What was I to do? I needed a roof, at the least, and possibly stable access to a bathroom and shower. But how? There were no abandoned buildings to squat nearby, and I had no money with which to rent a house. The local tolerance for couch-surfing was reaching an all time low given the explosion of the willfully unemployed in my hometown.

Then the idea came upon me as a bolt out of the heavens. I would go boldly where no CrimethInc. agent had gone before, at least not since we had all departed on our quixotic quests together: I would get a job. At first glance, this would spell Selling Out, at least to the less creative soul. Luckily, I had a twist: I would squat my office. I could hear the angels singing in the background.

Being none too creative at the job placement office, I decided to apply again for my former pre-homeless job as staff computer programmer for a lab that hosted experiments—no, not animal experiments, but human experiments, such as torturing humans by making them listen to multiple tones, or read while being assaulted by very bright colored lights. Go figure, it was for the good of science. For a less imaginative person, it would have been a horrible job, involving sedentary computer programming for near minimum wage. However, it had a host of invaluable perks. First, there were no set working hours: I could work or not work whenever I pleased, which left me free time to organize demonstrations, go to punk shows, even disappear mysteriously for weeks. Second, the boss, a highly-educated former Harvard professor, had little to no idea what computer programming actually consisted of, and thus no idea how little or how much work I was doing. Third, I would have my own computer and unlimited printing access. Fourth, I would have an entire room mostly to myself, with nearby bathrooms, a roof, and even access to a gym that included showers.

Problem solved. And think, with zero bills and an actual paycheck coming in, I could fund full-scale anarchist resistance to the power of transnational capital, while simultaneously having a place to live! For an instant, I nearly doubted the wisdom of CrimethInc. propaganda and even the almighty and all-seeing Bob

Black. Perhaps they had it all wrong: perhaps it was not really work and money that were wrong. Yes, it is labor and consumption that the capitalist machine going. But being paid for doing minimal to no work while enjoying the luxuries of an air-conditioned office, that was being a parasite, draining the system. In fact, in my laziness, I was probably causing more damage in terms of lost funds, abused health care, and the like than most Black Blocs managed to pull off! I could use the money to buy guns with which to begin nutty anarcho-survivalist trainings, or pay for high-priced Mediterranean food at my favorite diner if I started to get soft.

Thus began my one-man office takeover. First, I went to a friend's house, shaved, showered, and even briefly considered combing my hair. I sent a polite e-mail to my boss telling him that I had spent an enjoyable year with a completely fictional employer before leaving for a completely fictional backpacking tour of Europe only to return to find my imaginary job gone. Given my hard times, would he remember my previous time of gainful employment with him and let his wayward sheep back into the fold? My boss responded that he would require a meeting the next day. I stepped back into his office. After a brief chat about the wonders of opera and the great things I could do for him once he hired me, I was back on payroll. Even more importantly, I had a copy of the office keys. The camel had its nose in the tent, and the rest of the body was on the way.

At the end of the first day, I scoured the office looking for places to sleep. There was a couch in the hallway that was comfortable, yet too out in the open for full-time eight hour sleeping. There were various open areas in the office big enough for my sleeping bag, and while the tile floor was forbiddingly cold at night, it could be managed. I tried it for a night. Late that night, the door creaked open. In horror, I jumped out of the sleeping bag—luckily, I'd been sleeping in my clothes—and pushed it beneath my desk. Thanks perhaps to divine providence, the cleaner seemed to ignore me completely. Perhaps she was a silent co-conspirator? Or was running off vagrants not part of the job description?

In fact, the cleaning staff was quite cool. They would arrive at four or five in the morning and start working. Given the racist and sexist nature of white collar industry, while all the employees and bosses were uniformly Anglo-Saxon males, the cleaners were uniformly forty-something-year-old black women. While

my boss, like the other upstanding citizens of the small liberal town in which this story takes place, liked to congratulate himself on his enlightened, vaguely left political views, he and those like him cast a blind eye towards the entirely African American near-slave labor force that had to wake up at ungodly hours in the morning to pick up their trash and wash their floors—in other words, to take care of things any self-respecting human being should be able to manage for themselves. The cleaning staff, for their part, rejoiced in not having any direct supervision, and would set up a sound system (okay, a jukebox, but they cranked it!) that blasted funky soul anthems throughout the staid office building in the wee hours of the dawn. In fact, though I have to admit to being about as white as a white boy can get (despite my anarchist pretensions of being “down with communities of color” and having attended some anti-racist trainings), I began to enjoy funky soul music in a serious way. The cleaning staff would sing and shout along to it occasionally, and it really would make my evenings to hear people enjoying themselves in that soulless office. I never heard my boss shout or sing from his office during the day; doubtless, shouting and singing would have been noticed and disapproved of by the powers that be.

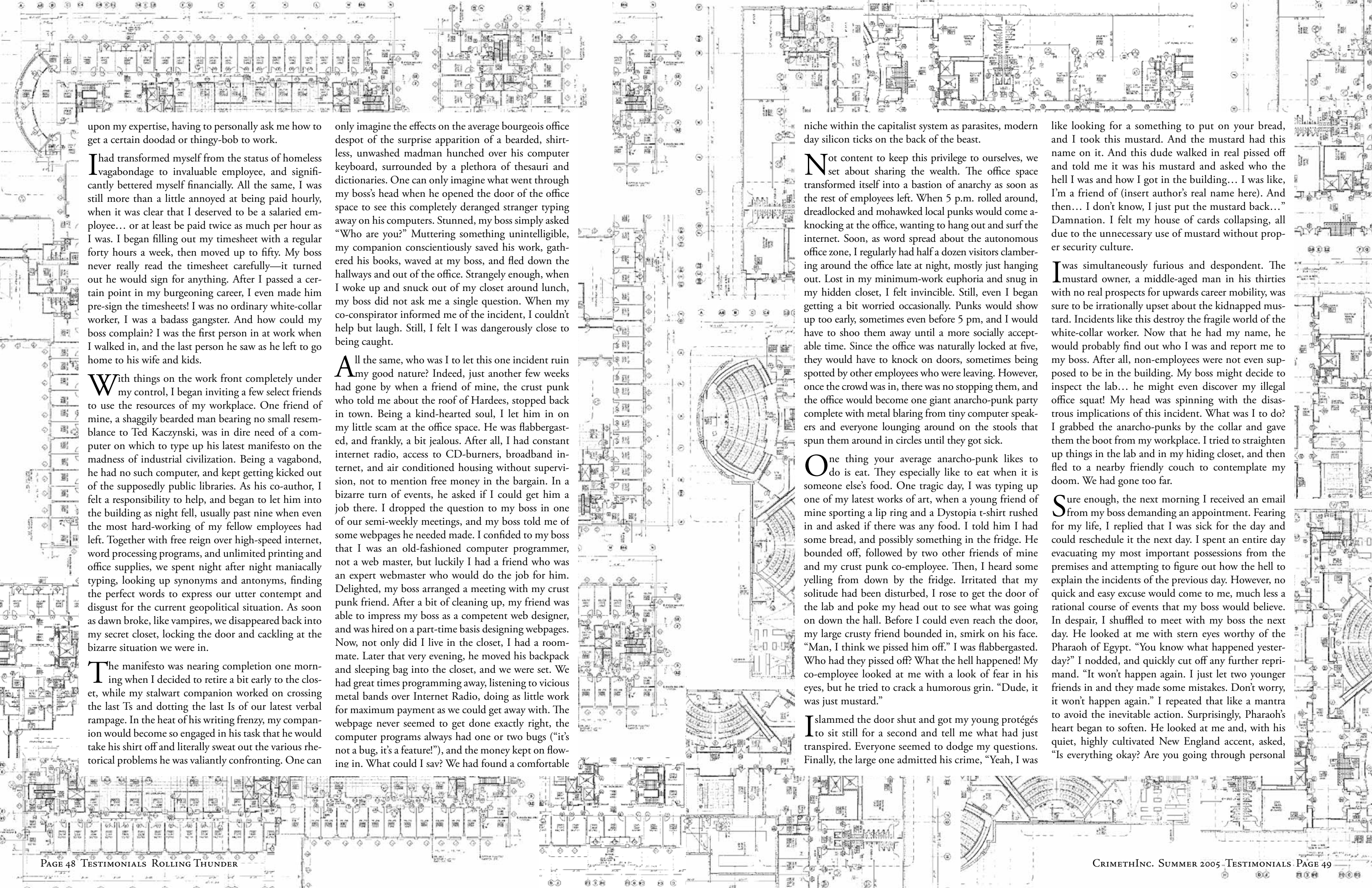
The Soul Cleaning Train Staff and I soon struck up an odd friendship of sorts. I would be in my computer lab at some ridiculous hour, pondering my sleeping options or writing some fiery anarchist manifesto, they would barge in to take out the trash, I would smile and mutter “Another late night at work...,” and we would give each other conspiratorial winks. Maybe I imagined the winks, but regardless, they never told anyone on me. For my part, I kept my office space as clean as possible, and tried to take my own trash out. When we met in the halls, we talked about our love of soul music and how the world was headed straight towards apocalypse thanks to bastards like my boss and other older white men in suits.

The sleeping situation seemed little better than the rooftop, until I noticed two small doors on the far side of my office. In office spaces, small distances can somehow seem quite vast, and the other side of the office seemed to be a no man's land of strange doors. Unfortunately, the first was locked. The second opened to reveal a utility closet full of weird, forsaken computers and their manuals, all made during the reign of Rea-

gan. The last opened unto a closet that was virtually empty except for one weird table and a mostly empty bookshelf. My heart brimmed with joy, and tears filled my eyes. I had found my home. Better yet, I could lock the closet door from both the inside and outside, using the same key that opened the main computer lab door—which my boss had so foolishly given me. That very night, I loaded in the box of anarchist books I had hidden at a friend's house a year earlier and the backpack that contained the rest of my possessions, and rolled out my sleeping bag. Now I could sleep safely and soundly for as long as I wanted. When I woke up, I merely had to listen carefully to the door to hear if there was movement from one of my rarely-seen fellow employees, and, if so, not leave until they left. Otherwise, I would have appeared out of the closet like some kind of apparition and caused somebody to have a heart attack, or at least made myself seem suspicious.

Food was easily taken care of, for the workplace conveniently provided us employees with a refrigerator and microwave. I hid bagels and other dry foodstuffs in my closet, saving the refrigerator for more perishable items. While other employees carefully labeled their foodstuffs with their names, given the preponderance of food I had in the fridge and its rather startling rate of consumption, I decided to risk my food in the name of keeping a low profile, leaving it all anonymous. Rehydrating bagels in the microwave, drinking orange juice... I felt like the hero of some white-collar Thoreau text on office self-sufficiency.

As regards work, my boss thought I was the hardest worker he had ever seen, despite my actual low productivity. For even the most elementary of computer programming tasks, I would groan and moan: “Oh, how long this is going to take me!” I'd complain, strategically overestimating the time by at least a factor of ten. Then, I would surprise the boss with my amazing productivity by finishing the job “early.” Magically, one day of work could thus be transformed into a week, and since I routinely overestimated my responsibilities as two weeks of work, I would even finish ahead of schedule! As he lacked other programming help (or at least competent programming help—a few other part-time employees would occasionally show up, but I was the only proud full-time employee), I soon had my boss on a leash. I was careful to leave things undocumented, and so he soon was dependent

Detailed architectural floor plan of a building, showing various rooms, corridors, and structural elements. The drawing is in black ink on a white background, with fine lines and labels throughout.

upon my expertise, having to personally ask me how to get a certain doodad or thingy-bob to work.

I had transformed myself from the status of homeless vagabondage to invaluable employee, and significantly bettered myself financially. All the same, I was still more than a little annoyed at being paid hourly, when it was clear that I deserved to be a salaried employee... or at least be paid twice as much per hour as I was. I began filling out my timesheet with a regular forty hours a week, then moved up to fifty. My boss never really read the timesheet carefully—it turned out he would sign for anything. After I passed a certain point in my burgeoning career, I even made him pre-sign the timesheets! I was no ordinary white-collar worker, I was a badass gangster. And how could my boss complain? I was the first person in at work when I walked in, and the last person he saw as he left to go home to his wife and kids.

With things on the work front completely under my control, I began inviting a few select friends to use the resources of my workplace. One friend of mine, a shaggily bearded man bearing no small resemblance to Ted Kaczynski, was in dire need of a computer on which to type up his latest manifesto on the madness of industrial civilization. Being a vagabond, he had no such computer, and kept getting kicked out of the supposedly public libraries. As his co-author, I felt a responsibility to help, and began to let him into the building as night fell, usually past nine when even the most hard-working of my fellow employees had left. Together with free reign over high-speed internet, word processing programs, and unlimited printing and office supplies, we spent night after night maniacally typing, looking up synonyms and antonyms, finding the perfect words to express our utter contempt and disgust for the current geopolitical situation. As soon as dawn broke, like vampires, we disappeared back into my secret closet, locking the door and cackling at the bizarre situation we were in.

The manifesto was nearing completion one morning when I decided to retire a bit early to the closet, while my stalwart companion worked on crossing the last Ts and dotting the last Is of our latest verbal rampage. In the heat of his writing frenzy, my companion would become so engaged in his task that he would take his shirt off and literally sweat out the various rhetorical problems he was valiantly confronting. One can

only imagine the effects on the average bourgeois office despot of the surprise apparition of a bearded, shirtless, unwashed madman hunched over his computer keyboard, surrounded by a plethora of thesauri and dictionaries. One can only imagine what went through my boss's head when he opened the door of the office space to see this completely deranged stranger typing away on his computers. Stunned, my boss simply asked "Who are you?" Muttering something unintelligible, my companion conscientiously saved his work, gathered his books, waved at my boss, and fled down the hallways and out of the office. Strangely enough, when I woke up and snuck out of my closet around lunch, my boss did not ask me a single question. When my co-conspirator informed me of the incident, I couldn't help but laugh. Still, I felt I was dangerously close to being caught.

All the same, who was I to let this one incident ruin my good nature? Indeed, just another few weeks had gone by when a friend of mine, the crust punk who told me about the roof of Hardees, stopped back in town. Being a kind-hearted soul, I let him in on my little scam at the office space. He was flabbergasted, and frankly, a bit jealous. After all, I had constant internet radio, access to CD-burners, broadband internet, and air conditioned housing without supervision, not to mention free money in the bargain. In a bizarre turn of events, he asked if I could get him a job there. I dropped the question to my boss in one of our semi-weekly meetings, and my boss told me of some webpages he needed made. I confided to my boss that I was an old-fashioned computer programmer, not a web master, but luckily I had a friend who was an expert webmaster who would do the job for him. Delighted, my boss arranged a meeting with my crust punk friend. After a bit of cleaning up, my friend was able to impress my boss as a competent web designer, and was hired on a part-time basis designing webpages. Now, not only did I live in the closet, I had a roommate. Later that very evening, he moved his backpack and sleeping bag into the closet, and we were set. We had great times programming away, listening to vicious metal bands over Internet Radio, doing as little work for maximum payment as we could get away with. The webpage never seemed to get done exactly right, the computer programs always had one or two bugs ("it's not a bug, it's a feature!"), and the money kept on flowing in. What could I say? We had found a comfortable

niche within the capitalist system as parasites, modern day silicon ticks on the back of the beast.

Not content to keep this privilege to ourselves, we set about sharing the wealth. The office space transformed itself into a bastion of anarchy as soon as the rest of employees left. When 5 p.m. rolled around, dreadlocked and mohawked local punks would come a-knocking at the office, wanting to hang out and surf the internet. Soon, as word spread about the autonomous office zone, I regularly had half a dozen visitors clambering around the office late at night, mostly just hanging out. Lost in my minimum-work euphoria and snug in my hidden closet, I felt invincible. Still, even I began getting a bit worried occasionally. Punks would show up too early, sometimes even before 5 pm, and I would have to shoo them away until a more socially acceptable time. Since the office was naturally locked at five, they would have to knock on doors, sometimes being spotted by other employees who were leaving. However, once the crowd was in, there was no stopping them, and the office would become one giant anarcho-punk party complete with metal blaring from tiny computer speakers and everyone lounging around on the stools that spun them around in circles until they got sick.

One thing your average anarcho-punk likes to do is eat. They especially like to eat when it is someone else's food. One tragic day, I was typing up one of my latest works of art, when a young friend of mine sporting a lip ring and a Dystopia t-shirt rushed in and asked if there was any food. I told him I had some bread, and possibly something in the fridge. He bounded off, followed by two other friends of mine and my crust punk co-employee. Then, I heard some yelling from down by the fridge. Irritated that my solitude had been disturbed, I rose to get the door of the lab and poke my head out to see what was going on down the hall. Before I could even reach the door, my large crusty friend bounded in, smirk on his face. "Man, I think we pissed him off." I was flabbergasted. Who had they pissed off? What the hell happened! My co-employee looked at me with a look of fear in his eyes, but he tried to crack a humorous grin. "Dude, it was just mustard."

I slammed the door shut and got my young protégés to sit still for a second and tell me what had just transpired. Everyone seemed to dodge my questions. Finally, the large one admitted his crime, "Yeah, I was

like looking for a something to put on your bread, and I took this mustard. And the mustard had this name on it. And this dude walked in real pissed off and told me it was his mustard and asked who the hell I was and how I got in the building... I was like, I'm a friend of (insert author's real name here). And then... I don't know, I just put the mustard back..." Damnation. I felt my house of cards collapsing, all due to the unnecessary use of mustard without proper security culture.

I was simultaneously furious and despondent. The mustard owner, a middle-aged man in his thirties with no real prospects for upwards career mobility, was sure to be irrationally upset about the kidnapped mustard. Incidents like this destroy the fragile world of the white-collar worker. Now that he had my name, he would probably find out who I was and report me to my boss. After all, non-employees were not even supposed to be in the building. My boss might decide to inspect the lab... he might even discover my illegal office squat! My head was spinning with the disastrous implications of this incident. What was I to do? I grabbed the anarcho-punks by the collar and gave them the boot from my workplace. I tried to straighten up things in the lab and in my hiding closet, and then fled to a nearby friendly couch to contemplate my doom. We had gone too far.

Sure enough, the next morning I received an email from my boss demanding an appointment. Fearing for my life, I replied that I was sick for the day and could reschedule it the next day. I spent an entire day evacuating my most important possessions from the premises and attempting to figure out how the hell to explain the incidents of the previous day. However, no quick and easy excuse would come to me, much less a rational course of events that my boss would believe. In despair, I shuffled to meet with my boss the next day. He looked at me with stern eyes worthy of the Pharaoh of Egypt. "You know what happened yesterday?" I nodded, and quickly cut off any further reprimand. "It won't happen again. I just let two younger friends in and they made some mistakes. Don't worry, it won't happen again." I repeated that like a mantra to avoid the inevitable action. Surprisingly, Pharaoh's heart began to soften. He looked at me and, with his quiet, highly cultivated New England accent, asked, "Is everything okay? Are you going through personal



# WHAT I DO FOR A LIVING



*... or How I Came to Be a Victim of Molotov Cocktail Friendly Fire and Lived to Tell the Tale*

**An eyewitness report on the anti-E.U. protests in Salonika, Greece, summer of 2003—and more than that, a testimonial of the amazing possibilities of a life of active resistance.**

People often ask me what I do for a living. I reply I spend much of my life fleeing cops and government agents across international borders, and they usually don't believe me. While Hollywood would have us believe all secret agents work for some government or other, there are spread throughout the world secret agents like myself in the employ not of any government but of anarchy. Fleeing cops over international borders comes with the job description.

I had decided to protest the European Summit in Salonika, Greece during the summer of 2003, and chose without proper ecological foresight to take a cheap jet into Athens. While it would have been preferable to hitch-hike, I just didn't have time in between missions. After all, timing is everything, and showing up late to a battle with the cops is bad style.

A dirt-encrusted, ragged anarchist such as myself would only attract suspicion at the airport. After spending a few dollars at the local thrift shop for a pair of slacks and borrowing a large frilly white shirt from a friend, I was ready to go undercover as a ridiculous-looking tourist. I found a razor and shaved the night before, since beards are a universal sign of ill-repute in many civilized countries. My long hair, being associated with hippies and the female species in general, was put under control in a small pony tail. A mild-mannered artist with a small ponytail and fluffy white-shirt—I was no riot-prone madman, I was a bohemian tourist!

The Greek government, like those of many countries with unstable economies, loves pale-skinned bohemian tourists. Since I was flying in only a few days before a giant protest that might cause heightened bag-searching at the airport, and had reason to fear my name would come up in some database of anarchists, I carefully ransacked my possessions. Nothing even possibly suspect was allowed in my bags except a black bandanna, carefully hidden in a black sock. In an emergency, I could claim I was a mountain climber, as they often wear bandannas.

Much to my relief, the Greek government smiled upon me and waved me in without even a complimentary search<sup>1</sup>. Maneuvering around Greece was no easy task, given my complete inability to speak Greek or even read the language except for the few letters I remembered from basic math. I ended up scamming the Greek train from Athens to Salonika with a shoeless Italian fellow

<sup>1</sup> In this author's experience, the United States is actually the worse place for airport searches, especially after the events on September 11<sup>th</sup>. I have been searched "randomly" every time there, despite having been arrested at a protest only once in that country. Luckily, the minions of creeping fascism at the airport are completely incompetent. Once I by accident left a package of photos, which included photos of burning American flags and black-clad German anarchists fighting the cops, in my pack. When this pack was searched, my heart dropped. Luckily, the cop took a look only at the first few pictures of myself pretending to have sex with statues in public places in Amsterdam. When the representative of the Department of Homeland Security gave me a strange stare as he began to search through my photos, I explained I was a "rock 'n roller" and how those photos were "embarrassing, but we rock 'n rollers are wild and crazy guys." So he left the photos alone. He then saw a button on my jacket that said "Extreme Noise Terror," which really worried him. When I explained it was a record label that in no way was connected to international terrorism, he let me go with a smile. I was smiling too!

problems?" Well, you could phrase it that way. Personal problems. You could also phrase it that I was a mad anti-capitalist revolutionary subverting the entire phenomenon of wage labor in order to seize both a place to live and funds for the day when I would cut off the head of my boss. Ah, better think of a more polite way of phrasing it.

Well, I am going through some hard times right now. You know, ever since September 11<sup>th</sup> and the stock market collapse everything has been more expensive, and both my own and my family's saving were in the tech stock market..." I paused despairingly. Still, my boss looked at me with an air of concern. "You know I can't tolerate what happened yesterday. I'm sorry about your situation and your family, and you can work extra hours if needs be. Get some rest." With that, I was left off the hook.

Tough times were ahead at the office-squat. My friends were officially banned. The crust punk officemate soon made a fatal mistake as well. He got out of the closet one morning without listening properly for activity, interrupting a co-worker who had come in early that morning. Thinking that his gig was up, he didn't even bother to meet with the boss and just stopped all work on his never-concluded webpage. He mysteriously left, leaving finishing up the webpage in my lap and the boss extremely confused. I still slept in my hidden closet, and my presence continued to remain hidden, yet I felt ill at ease, as if it were not my home anymore. Formerly, though it had been a mere office, I had felt that it was yet my goddamn office, a personal fiefdom over which I reigned supreme. Now I was under siege by the dark forces of respectability and deserted by my allies. Inquisitive officemates watched my moves. I kept my closet locked at all times. My food had to be carefully labeled. Even my working-hours reports, which had previously been monuments to the power of exaggeration, were scaled back in an attempt to be less blatant about my abuse. The office had become a cold and unpleasantly well-lit place that lacked human warmth. I felt the winds a-changing. As I could no longer abuse my office with dignity, a change of space was beckoning. I moved all my stuff out to the closet of a sympathetic friend. A committed office-squatter should know when to quit one gig and go triumphantly forward unto the next promised land of free coffee and all-night printing.

Fondly, I sent my boss an email noting that, with "kind regards and regret," I was going to move onto "greater opportunities elsewhere." He and I had one last meeting. He actually seemed quite sad to see me go, and suggested that I use his name as a reference in further job applications. With misty eyes, I left his office, the office keys still jingling in my hands. Never leave the office keys behind. Always keep them—you never know when you might have to get back in.

A few short months later, I was the proud recipient of a new job as a webmaster and teacher of computer literacy courses—and, better yet, the keeper of a secret access code that gave me all-night access to my new office space right off the main street of town. While the closet space there was definitely not nearly as luxurious as it had been at my previous abode, the place had a wonderful high-tech free coffee machine.

One night, I slipped in with some fellow CrimethInc. agents, and got wired on endless cups of coffee. Every sane person had left the office at 7 p.m., and we had the place to ourselves: we were modern-day gremlins and fairies seizing the means of production while our enemies slept. In one room, the grizzled and shirtless comrade told of above was finishing some editing for our new paper, *Hunter/Gatherer*, sweating once again as he jumped deep into the heart of another writing project. I began—in my very own office—inocently typing up my notes for a new piece for *Inside Front*, while sipping the complementary coffee. Dreadlocks swinging, another friend sprawled back in the cushy chair of the Head Boss himself, getting up occasionally to pace around and read aloud excerpts from the fledging piece that was to become *Fighting For Our Lives*.

In the morning, as if by magic, the anarchists had disappeared from the office, leaving no trace. But don't assume that just because you don't see us, we're not there! Leave soy milk and vegan cookies out for us, dear office despots, if you don't want to displease the spirits—remember, we're everywhere, laying our plots while you sleep.

*The author currently divides his time between a treetop platform in a forest occupation and a lovely office closet occupation overseas. Fuck the law, squat the world!*

thief. When I asked him where I should buy a ticket he told me to “jump on.” My suspicions were confirmed when he grabbed my arm and made me walk briskly away whenever a conductor made his appearance. After spending most of the night running through different parts of the train without rest, I finally arrived in Salonika. Disembarking the train, and still dressed in outrageous frills, I was accosted by local Greek communists. After humoring them for a while to discover their purpose and political persuasion (“What do you mean there’s a protest in town? I’m in Salonika to visit the beach—but what do you think of the United States and European Union?”), I realized I had fallen in with the wrong company of Greeks. Slightly off the cuff, I mentioned that I was trying to find the anarchists. With a look of shock and surprise, the communists warned me that all anarchists were actually government agents sent to disrupt their orderly protest. Luckily, out of the corner of my eye I spotted a gaggle of long-haired Greeks in what appeared to be heavy metal t-shirts in the distance. Following them carefully, always staying at least a block behind just in case they ended up being unfriendly, I came to what was self-evidently an occupied University building. I could tell it was “occupied,” for a giant black and red banner, visible for blocks, flew over the building proclaiming Aristotle University the headquarters of the Anti-Authoritarian Movement Salonika.

I walked through the front door and, to my surprise, into a strange anarchist paradise, complete with free food, dancing, and Molotov cocktail manufacturing. Apparently in Greece there is a long tradition of revolt in the universities, and the anarchists and communists normally seize the University before large protests. By “seize” is meant that the anarchists announce to the administrators of the university that they will either hand over all the keys to the buildings to them and disband classes, or the anarchists will take the buildings by force. The administration consents, hoping to minimize the damage caused by the anarchist



takeover. Then the anarchists literally kick out the classes and administration, and for a period of time the university is a temporary autonomous zone, complete with beautiful graffiti, self-organized free (or nearly so) cafeterias, teach-ins, and giant beer-guzzling rock concerts at night. In Greece, it is technically illegal for cops to enter the Universities, thus making it the perfect base for anarchist resistance<sup>2</sup>. As I was regarded with suspicion due to my white frilly shirt, I quickly switched to a more suave

<sup>2</sup> This is because the original CIA-backed dictatorship that ruled Greece was overthrown as a result of unrest at the universities. Students occupied the National Polytechnic University of Athens, broadcasting via clandestine radio a call for the people to rise up against the tyranny. In November 1973, the dictatorship sent in the military to slaughter the students. According to local legend, soldiers went back to the Universities and left guilt-ridden notes on the bodies of the students begging for forgiveness. The army revolted and the dictatorship fell.

black outfit to assuage the Greek anarchists that I indeed fitted the stylistic conventions of anarchism<sup>3</sup>.

As I wandered about this anarchist utopia, a strange Greek man handed me an ice-cream cone. Surprised, I asked him where he got it and he pointed into a building. Running in, I saw a festive Santa Claus-like figure in a balaclava jump through the door, a huge bag of liberated ice-cream with him, and throw the sugary treats to the hungry masses with gusto. The anarchists had discovered the university cafeteria. I enjoyed munching on free food, and within hours I had discovered a hardy band of European companions I had known previously from other anti-war and anti-globalization protests. Together, we formed an affinity group: myself, a crusty Belgian hobo, a street-fighting Irish bloke, and his tough French lover. We thought up a few calls for regrouping, wrote the legal number on our bodies, ran around acquiring water and some strange anti-tear gas mixture being made by the medics. We also spent a good deal of time trying to find some of our Greek friends who we had organized with on other occasions, in order to get the inside scoop on what was going on. Our plans were still fuzzy, but the basic goal was obvious: maximum damage to capital.

The Greek anarchists were divided into two main tactical camps: attack the cops or destroy the city. I only wished our tactical debates were of such a nature in my hometown! Not surprisingly, the anarchists from Salonika felt that the locals of the city would be more on their side if the cops were attacked and the police station burned to the ground, while the out-of-town anarchists felt it was simpler just to unleash havoc, letting the entire city be the target.

In between arguments and fisticuffs with each other, the anarchists managed to get a convoy of buses together to transport us all to the hotel in Chalkidiki where the European Union was hiding from us. They had been terrified of confronting us in Salonika, so they had fled to a hotel resort in a small town a few hours away. Of course, we followed them. The moment we arrived in Chalkidiki, the march

straight towards the hotel began, and I wondered to myself what we were going to do if we actually did managed to overcome the cops and storm the hotel—bring the disembodied heads of Blair and Berlusconi out on stakes?

With the chant of the day being “We will avenge you Carlo Giuliani!”, the Greek anarchists carried out a full frontal assault upon the police, who had positioned themselves strategically uphill. Counterintuitive though it is, in a confusing situation often the best, if not safest, place to be is the front lines, so you can get a

<sup>3</sup> Anarchists dressing in all black is more of a North American and West European style. The best Greek outfit was a sleeveless t-shirt that showed off their well-toned cop-beating muscles. The most popular sleeveless t-shirt had a giant circle-A and what appeared to be some gun-toting peshmerga warrior in the middle. My lanky physique ruled out all wearing of sleeveless t-shirts, lest the cops not take me seriously in the heat of combat.

clear visual grasp of what is going on around you. I ran towards the front, and soon was embroiled in a clash with baton-wielding Greek cops. The batons were barely used before tear gas was employed. The cops threw stones (strange, but true!) and mammoth amounts of tear gas onto us from their position in the hill. Since I do not own a pair of glasses and suffer from bad eyesight, I had foolishly worn one contact into battle, and quickly removed it as soon as the tear gas hit to avoid risking damage to my eye. The Greek cops countered with a charge of their own, and, partially blinded by tear gas and my lack of contacts, I saw the front lines around me breaking away from those behind us.

Seeing little chance of regrouping safely with the rest of the anarchists, I ran down another side road with about two dozen others, including most of my affinity group. Greek police positioned in the hills above came running after us in hot pursuit. While almost blind, I could see the ground in front of me and knew that my modus operandi should be to run constantly: sitting still would result in either being pelted by tear gas or tackled by a cop. Since I had no idea where I was going, I followed the few fleeing anarchists in front of me. As usual, I trusted my instincts. When a split in our path presented to option to either take the high road on a hill above or to return to the main road, I stayed on the high road; some erstwhile anarchists who took the low road found themselves ambushed by cops who were waiting for them below. Pumping with adrenaline, we made it off the hills and back into the outskirts of the town of Chalkidiki, where the masses of civilians and peaceful communists mulling around provided enough cover for us to blend back into the crowd. We could see the rest of the Black Bloc being engaged in a slow retreat to the beach by the cops. Deciding not to risk being stuck between the Greek police and the sea, I ran down to meet the Bloc and tried to convince them that an orderly retreat to the buses might be the best idea, and given the dynamics of the situation, that is exactly what happened. The Bloc managed an orderly retreat back to the buses without arrests, and one by one got on. Still nearly blind, I swore that I would find a gas mask before the second round of protests in Salonika the next day.

The next afternoon, in hopes of vengeance, the anarchists decided on a full-scale march into Salonika to confront the authorities. If the cops were going to prevent us from demonstrating at the actual EU Summit in Halniki, we would take our demands to the heart of the city. The hostile factions of “organized to attack cops” anarchists and “burn the city down” anarchists caused continual frustrations in planning, since they squatted separate buildings and had different meetings. In a gesture of unity, representatives of the more organized anarchists came to their less organizers sisters and brothers and offered to march as a unified Bloc. Of course, no one paid much attention, but that’s how things go the night before a demonstration.

Speaking only garbled Greek mixed with such fine English phrases as “maximum destruction to capital!”, I did what I could to help in the dangerous situation. Ideological bickering should never get in the way of direct action—you don’t see the cops bickering! As the

night wore on, my mind went to more immediate matters. I realized that I was lacking a gas mask, and begged anyone and everyone for an extra gas mask. One anarchist, in a gesture of sympathy, handed me a giant motorcycle helmet. While I originally regarded the gift as useless, seeing as it would prevent massive head wounds but not help me see or breathe, the giant helmet proved to be the key to my success. When you are a six foot tall anarchist walking around the night before a protest with a huge black biker element, people know



you are ready for business. The gifts started rolling in—a beautiful woman handed me a huge cop-beating stick disguised cleverly as a flag by means of the smallest strip of black and red cloth imaginable. Once I had a giant black bicycle helmet on and a massive club to brandish, the rest of the anarchists could not help but look upon me with respect, and finally one gingerly gave me a gas mask on the condition that I promised to be on the front line. No problem. This turn of events astonished my Irish friend, who never found a giant black biker helmet, and so was left without any gear. My brave Belgian friend refused on general principle any defensive preparations except a bottle of the highly alcoholic Greek ouzo. We spent the rest of the day running to the medic space to get more of their anti-tear gas lotion, soaking our bandannas in vinegar, and generally steeling our nerves for the coming battle. As the time of the action approached, a very sensible late afternoon hour, I found myself with butterflies in my stomach, curiously similar to the feeling one has before admitting to a crush. Although we had only had a few hours of sleep, energy was in the air, free feta cheese sandwiches was being distributed, and our barbarian horde was preparing for war.

The more organized anarchists started calling, occasionally through megaphones, for people to assemble in front of the University. Perhaps two or three hundred us did, black flags raised high. We formed an impromptu barricade around ourselves by linking our flag poles. I moved towards the front, and, worried about our relative lack of numbers, joined in beginning the march. We marched a block, took a turn, and within minutes saw a line of Greek cops, batons and shields in hand, waiting for us. Instead of forcing a confrontation, we simply turned down a side street, wisely placing the large banner and a few

even larger club-wielding anarchists in front of the police to serve as a barricade and obscure their vision. As we turned down the street, we saw behind us a giant horde of hundreds of our black-clad comrades, who with proper anarchist lack of organization had apparently started marching later than we had. All ideological and tactical bickering aside, both “cop-attacking organizational anarchists” and the “chaotic city-destroying anarchists” joined forces into one raging Black Bloc. The cops chose not to confront us, and we soon marched into what appeared to be a well-off corporate part of town. Within seconds, the sound of breaking windows filled the air. With glee, every corporate window was broken, and Molotov cocktails were thrown inside, making a funeral pyre of every foul corporate establishment unfortunate enough to be in our path. An American fast food chain had foreseen



that they were going to suffer this fate, and had blocked their windows with huge metallic wall. However, some well-prepared anarchists had brought hammers and picks, and within minutes a hole had been made in the wall, and then one came up and smashed a hole in the window that was visible through the hole. Another anarchist came and threw a few Molotov cocktails inside, and my eyes were blessed with the sight of cash registers in flames.

Caught up in the moment, I attacked a corporate camping store, and, after taking out its windows with my flag-cum-cop-beating club, I left my affinity group to begin looting the store. Grabbing a black utility belt, I began going for the backpacks when I felt the distinct sensation of heat about my legs. I looked down—my pants were on fire! I was the victim of Molotov cocktail friendly fire! “Damn it, I’m in here—just wait a second!” I yelled, and did the classic stop, drop, and roll—and the fire was out, although my pants were singed. I ran out of the store, and as soon as I was out it burst into flames behind me. The Greek anarchists apologized, saying that they didn’t know I was in there. Apparently, the whole concept of looting just hasn’t occurred to Greek anarchists, who prefer to burn stores to the ground—a possibly healthier sentiment. With smiles and handshakes, we proceeded to attack the next store.

In our two or three blocks of rampage, the Bloc had become very loose, and the cops decided to attempt to come through the side streets and attack us. Lines of cops appeared both in front and behind us and began pelting us with tear gas canisters. The whole place was transformed into war zone, with canisters whizzing through the air and anarchists running to the front lines to toss Molotov cocktails at the cops. While cops are usually good at maintaining a position once they obtain it, they tend to flee in the face of a steady onslaught of Molotov cocktails. Feeling responsible on account of the equipment that had been so generously donated to me, I put myself in a

line of anarchists who were standing between the Molotov cocktail tossers and the police. The police massed their forces and, shields raised, began to rush the lines. Luckily, we managed to swipe our clubs down on them, and held our positions. Slowly but surely we started making our way towards a city square, and it appeared that, although weakened by excessive tear-gassing and beatings, we were going to continue to the police station itself. In the constant barrage of tear gas I had basically been blinded, and another anarchist replaced me in the line as I pulled out a bottle of tear gas ointment, removed my helmet, and yelled for help to flush my eyes. My French friend had been keeping an eye on me and helped me flush my eyes. Recovering, we began calling out our secret word for our affinity group to regroup. We materialized out of the teeming, fighting hordes, all beaten, bruised, and tear-gassed, but together. Out of nowhere, I felt the crack of a baton upon my shoulder blades.

A line of cops had just swooped in, shooting pepper-spray everywhere. The front line crumbled, and within an instant I yelled for everyone to fall back. My Belgian friend grabbed me and we moved backwards, and when we looked up we were behind a line of cops. Taking stock of the situation, we guessed that the cops were too busy pepper-spraying the people in front of them to notice us, so we ran as far from them as we could, only to run into a colorful communist march. Looking for cover from the cops, we dived into their march, and the communists took

offense: several burly Greek men pulled us out, so as not to let our violence disrupt their march. Cursing their treacherous nature, I decided against walking around dressed like an anarcho-stormtrooper: I ducked behind a bush and took off my helmet and gas mask, tossed my club, and took off my black overcoat to reveal my precious white frilly shirt. Satisfied, I left the shrubbery looking more or less like the communists, and jumped into their march.

We noticed that in the madness of the last few minutes we had lost our Irish comrade, probably when the cops attacked with pepper-spray. Was he arrested? Hurt? On the other side of the line of cops? My personal take was that going after him was probably a lost cause, and that we should stay together as the situation was degenerating rapidly and not in our favor. However, with true nobility my French comrade declared that she couldn’t live with herself if she left her Irish lover behind, and that she was going after him. I told her she was crazy, which she was. All the same, we agreed to meet back up at the University, and she left us—and with admirable courage, still dressed in full Black Bloc regalia, walked right back up to the line of police... and right through them, back into the fray. I have noticed that occasionally during protests doing things that are completely and utterly insane results in the cops just ignoring your illogical actions.

We began attempting to maneuver around the police and sneak back to join the Bloc, figuring that the fight was still on. It soon became clear that the police clearly had the upper hand, as scattered Bloc affinity groups came running down alleys, screaming that the cops were closing in and they had barely escaped, that the Bloc was scattered and that everyone should regroup at the University. This seemed to be a sensible idea, so we slowly made our way back. But as we got closer, it became clear that the cops had surrounded the University, not letting anyone in. We asked various Greek students

to go talk to the cops for us, so we could keep a safe distance and still find out what was going on. The students reported back to us that heads of the University were going to authorize the cops entry into the University so they could begin busting heads. In this confusing situation, we felt the best thing to do was to hide somewhere safe and check on the situation periodically. We were walking down the street when we saw a young black-clad man with classic metal hair drinking a beer on a table outside a café—and with a twenty-four pack near his feet! We asked if we could join him, and we all sat down at the small table to drink a beer and contemplate the events of the day.

Which is when a line of cops suddenly marched around the corner. They marched right up to our table, and within a second we were surrounded by cops. I cursed alcohol beneath my breath as the cops began questioning our newfound friend in Greek. I slowly pushed my backpack that contained my incriminating gas mask and club away from me, but the cops had noticed. They demanded to search all of our bags. Within minutes, they had found my gas mask. They removed it from the backpack and stomped on it with their boots, smashing it into bits within minutes. To my shock, they took their clubs out and began pounding my shins as my friends looked on in horror. I was sure I was doomed. I began claiming that I was just a friendly peaceful media reporter from the “Social Forum,” and began waving my American passport at them. They kept beating me, and I finally fell to my knees<sup>4</sup>. Then they regrouped into a little line, yelled some obscenities at us in Greek, and marched onwards. I timidly looked up, shocked that I wasn’t in a Greek jail, and unable to feel my legs.

I managed to wobble to my feet and my beer-drinking Greek friend explained that the cops had been very angry at me when they had discovered the gas mask, and as they had not arrested me we should move before they changed their minds. Throwing the rest of my incriminating gear over at high wall into a church and noting the location, we started strolling innocently down a street. When we saw cops in front of us, we moved to the other side of the street. Suspicious, the cops ran across the street and forced us to the ground. Under intense questioning, we expressed nothing but the greatest confusion about the violence at the protests (“This is nothing like protests where I’m from!”) and the behavior of the cops (“We’re just here for the Social Forum, why are you searching us?”). Apparently we managed to keep our stories relatively coherent, because the cops eventually let us go with apologies for their aggressive behavior. As soon as we turned the corner, the process repeated itself. Finally, we made it to an intersection near the entrance of the University, where a large group of bystanders and anarchists had gathered. We saw our Irish friend. We ran to him and quickly explained that it would be in his best interest to drop all of his Black Bloc gear; he immediately put his black bandanna in a bush. Within a seconds, a bald and skinny man with a tie-die shirt flew up on a motorcycle, and yelled at all of us to fall on the ground. My Irish comrade demanded to see his ID. Opening a ridiculous fanny-pack, the cop pointed a handgun hidden inside his unfashionable accoutrement. “You want to see my ID?” he raged, “this is my ID!”

We were all on the ground and the undercover cop summoned several other cops to watch us. He had seen our Irish friend throw his stuff into the bush, and he kept questioning us regarding what we threw in the bush. We were honest—just a bandanna. The cops must have thought we had Molotov cocktails stashed in the bushes, and as they came out disappointed at only finding a bandanna, they were determined to cart us all off to jail. Luckily, various Greek legal observers surrounded the police and, now that the cops knew they were being watched, they let us go. Enraged, our Belgian friend decided, slightly drunkenly, that it was time for a full frontal charge to get back into the University. We attempted to dissuade him, but he was determined to go right through the front gate of the University, and if no one had the courage to follow him, he was going to go himself. Always one to preserve my own skin against something I judged simply irrational, after long deliberation we split the affinity group up and promised to regroup inside the University—if we could make it, and the cops didn’t seize it. The romantic Irishman, hearing that his lover had crossed police lines looking for him, decided to go in search of her, while the Belgian madman set out to launch his one-man dash through the police line. My newfound Greek beer buddy and I decided to play it safe and scout the perimeter in attempt to find a weak spot.

After an hour of searching, we found a mysterious gravel road that looked like it might go into the University. As we started walking down it, we noticed several large Greek men, probably undercover



cops, tailing us. Instead of running, we both agreed direct confrontation would be best. Before they surrounded us and asked us for our identification, we ran up to them and asked for directions to the University. Stunned, the men fumbled about at our brazen move and told us we were going the wrong way. The men then turned around, convinced of our harmlessness. We waved good-bye and pretended to walk away, and waited as soon as they left the horizon, and ran down the gravel path... where we heard the sound of amazing Greek folk

<sup>4</sup> An Eastern European friend of mine has commented that often the police in Eastern European countries aren’t interested in actually arresting you, just making you prostrate yourself before them, so I should have just fallen to my knees as soon as the beating began.

music. We peered through a window—and there they were, Greek protesters drunkenly partying! I walked through the front door into a courtyard where several Greeks grabbed me by the arms and forced me to dance, stomping my feet about in rhythm, as wizened old men sang in soulful voices of revolutions past and the fall of the U.S.-backed dictatorship in Greece. “We drove the Persian Empire to the seas. We drove the Ottoman Empire to the seas. We have driven the Nazis to the seas. We have driven our own dictators to the seas. We shall drive the corporate man to the seas!”

Despite the rousing rhetoric, we had found ourselves in the midst of the extreme-left of the Communists. My Greek friend convinced me that they weren't that bad, and after helping ourselves to some food they had left lying about, we inquired as to how to get to the “anarchist” part of the University. The communists warned us that while they had legally paid for their space at the University, the anarchists had seized theirs, and thus the University officials were going to let the cops invade their space soon. However, they did point us to the direction of a secret tunnel that led to that part of the University. Under the cover of darkness, we walked down a path, through what appeared to be an underground causeway—where two black-clad women were walking the other direction! Apparently they were going out, but they assured us we were on the right path. Our nervousness



allayed, we arrived in the middle of our Aristotle University, Salonika's own anarchist utopia. Within minutes my Greek friends were greeting us with feta cheese sandwiches, asking us about our adventures during the day and our opinions about the action. They consistently berated themselves for their lack of success, although I attempted to remind them that engaging the cops in hand to hand combat and even burning down a few stores would count as a major victory in Britain, a fact that did not console them. After much debate, they decided that the anarchist forces were too scattered to regroup and everyone should evacuate the University, although the rumors of any cop invasion were simply outrageously false. My French comrade also found me, and after a great hug inquired as to the fate of her Irish lover, who was still on the outside of the University—so she left looking for him. Love is nothing if not irrational. Strangely enough, my suicidal Belgian comrade also appeared, yet he has never explained to this day exactly how he got through the lines of riot cops.

My next goal was to get to Istanbul, but in talking with a Turkish anarchist I found out the next train didn't leave till the early morning of the following day. I decided to stay up all night in the University. Eventually my brave French and Irish comrades appeared, reunited, and bid farewell as they were returning to Eire. After all the sensible anarchists fled out of the University, it was just me and my Belgian comrade, sitting around the fire in the unlikely company of a Ukrainian anarchist who was, after a good deal of heroin use, swinging a large machete dangerously close to us. One anarchist, a hippie primitivist from Eugene, and a strange beatnik from Maine gave us company, along with three very drunk, if humorous, Greeks, who kept doing impersonations of American stand-up comedians and reminding us that “peace is the answer,” although “November 17<sup>th</sup> are still our heroes!”<sup>5</sup> Then we smelled burning—someone had lit the University on fire!

My Belgian friend pointed to the direction the scent of fire came from—and I saw a line of several dozen men, wearing motorcycle helmets and armed with clubs, marching in lockstep at us. My instincts were to run, but as I turned my head to the only escape route—there were another few dozen men in motorcycle helmets with clubs marching at us! We were clearly doomed. Who were these men, other anarchists? Cops? Undercover cops? Confused, I told everyone to just lay still and play drunk so that they wouldn't notice us—this took some convincing

for the heroin-addled Ukrainian, who was determined to engage all of them in mortal combat with his machete. The two columns marched in front of us, and then met—and we weren't sure what was going to happen next. It was reminiscent of the meetings of two gangs in Westside story—it looked like there was going to be a fight. Instead, they marched through each other, formed one large square formation, turned around, and looked straight at us. My heart dropped. A huge Greek man, three times as wide as me across, whispered in my ear that he was terrified. Luckily, one of the more together Greeks ran over to talk to them before they proceeded to beat us silly. He ran back, saying that they were Stalinists, angry that someone had set the University on fire, and with consent of the police were going to beat up any anarchist found still roving the University. Luckily, my Greek friend explained that since we were all

drunken pacifists, the Stalinists would let us live this time. As the night went on, more and more people passed out till finally it was just me and the humongous Greek guy. The Belgian was nervous on account of his extreme girth—undercover cops tend to be larger than most anarchists—and warned me not to talk to him. As the sun rose, a Turkish anarchist appeared who was also taking the bus to Istanbul. Scared that we might get picked up by vengeful cops, the local Greeks offered to escort us to the Train station, while the humongous fellow who had stayed up all night with me decided to stay behind. Utterly exhausted, we went to the streets, where the Greeks grabbed us and threw us on a bus. One of them, who had earlier remarked about that he did not personally throw Molotov cocktails, told me that not paying on the bus was his way of fighting back. I agreed it was perhaps, at least over the long run, also effective.

<sup>5</sup> November 17<sup>th</sup> is an authoritarian terrorist group once quite active in Greece.

When we got to the train station, my Belgian friend, after considerable soul-searching, decided to finally split the affinity group up completely, as he was going to Belgrade. The over-the-top American hippies from Maine and Eugene decided to go to what was going to be the first Turkish Rainbow gathering, and our comic Greek friends hugged us and left. Just as I was giving the Belgian the final goodbye hug, out of the corner of my eye the humongous Greek sporting a grizzly beard, appeared. My Belgian friend whispered in my ear, “I'm sure he's a cop... gotta run,” leaving me alone with one Turkish woman, two American hippies, and a probable undercover cop more than twice my size. I smiled and hugged the undercover cop, asking how he was doing, what his name was, where he was from. He said he was from Larissa and was taking the train back. He smiled at me, but this time with the hint of a threat. He quickly quizzed me on where I was from, what I was doing in town, and so on. After telling him I was from London and in town for the Social Forum, and giving his a thoroughly false name, he asked where I was going. Athens, I told him, another bald-faced lie. He seemed confused. Why was I at the train going to Istanbul? I responded to wish my American friends goodbye. Curiously, he never left to get the train to Larissa—instead, he stood right next to me, waiting for the train to Istanbul appear. Just as it rolled up, I jumped on board. He grabbed me by the shoulder—and I told him that I was just carrying some luggage on board for my American friends, that I would be back out to talk to him in a second before catching my supposed train to Athens. He leaned over my shoulder, and whispered in my ear: “Were you with the anarchist Black Bloc?” I looked at him, smiled, and lied through my teeth: “No, of course not, I'm a pacifist!” Then I went inside the train, dropped my backpack off with my confused Turkish comrade, grabbed a change of clothes, ran into the bathroom, and hid. I nearly swooned when the train started moving. My hippie friends, mistaking me for the kindly pacifist I had been presenting myself as for the last twelve hours, thought I had lost my mind. However, as we approached the border between Greece and Turkey, I felt a foreboding sense of doom fall upon me. The Greek police or worse could be waiting for me at the border, and the undercover cop saw me getting on a one-way train to Istanbul.

The train finally stopped, and the border between Greece and Turkey was a completely militarized zone, with hordes of surly Greek soldiers guarding the world's olive oil supply against a potential Turkish invasion. I slipped the border guards my passport and held my breath as the security guard started going through everyone's

bags. An elderly woman from an Eastern European country gave them so much trouble that border security barely glanced at my bag. As they continued to hassle people, I strategically walked on over to the Turkish anarchist and whispered to her my problem. She told me not to worry, and walked on over to two older men who were also hanging out at the border. Soon she was talking to them in Turkish, and I could only grab snippets of the conversation. However, within minutes I clearly got their drift; using the Turkish anarchist as an intermediary, they began quizzing me on my views towards Ameri-



can imperialism, fascist Greek border guards, and, in an off-handed manner, whether or not I was romantically involved with the Turkish anarchist, which caused both of us to blush a bit. Luckily, after vehemently declaring (and whispering, still being too close to the Greek police for my comfort) my hatred of the policies of my President and the Greek undercover police, the men revealed they were Turkish railworkers, and within minutes we were going to switch off the Greek train and onto the Turkish train to go to Istanbul.

After hours of nerve-racking fear, the Greek guard finally handed me my passport back, and my only sentence was to pay an outrageous fine to the Turkish government for the crime of being an American entering Turkey. This fine is vengeance for the American government's recent fining of Turks who were visiting the states. With a smile visible from beneath his handle-bar mustaches (apparently a universal sign of train workers from Appalachia to Ankara), a Turkish trainworker told us to jump in the engine cabin! The train started moving, and the railhands began regaling us with stories of how the railroad union is the mightiest Communist union in Turkey, and how no capitalist Turk or fascist Greek could possibly stop this train. Brewing herbal tea, they let me sit in one of the engineer's seats. Smiling at my Turkish anarchist friend, peering out at the starkly beautiful landscape of the Bosphorus rolling by in the twilight, at long last I drifted into the sleep of those that deserve their rest.

# INTERNATIONAL REPORT: FRANCE

neaux d'affichage ont été Des photos de pub détour

While the seeming ubiquity of the spectacle would persuade us that history is over for good, that that our destinies are sealed and we will live in this constant and static present forever, the stories we share in our underground networks of resistance suggest something wholly different. This is not meant to be an exhaustive French radical scene report—what we're interested in here is to share tactics and skills. Everyone wants to change the world, but often one doesn't know where to start; these are some points from which we've tried to start...

## Adbusting<sup>1</sup>: Paris Subway...

For some years now, small groups have been waging war against advertising all over the country; but in November of 2003, things took a totally different turn here. A call was made on the internet with a date and time; 300 people scattered throughout the Paris subway in groups of ten to thirty. Each group would go into a train, snatch all advertising in it, then get out at every station and *détourner*<sup>2</sup> every billboard. These massive, decentralized, and unexpected actions offered a high level of security while at the same time permitting high visibility. Communiqués were wheatpasted everywhere inviting people to join the war.

Three weeks later, at the second call, 700 people showed up and covered all the subway network with paint, marker scrawl, and posters. The police could not control the situation—there were too many people, and everyone was going on and off trains all over the town. Third call: one thousand people showed up, the police gave some fines (75 euros), but were totally helpless. All the media had to talk about it, and everyone started to do it on their own, call or not.

Metrobus, the company that owns all the billboards, estimated the damage at millions of Euros. What they did to stop the storm that seemed to get stronger and stronger every week was to sue the website on which the rendezvous was set. Yet even after the website was down, people would set rendezvouses on Indymedia or in their own collectives. Just as many people were involved, but now in smaller groups, even more invisible and unexpected.

As we all know, the motherfuckers never hesitate to hit under the belt when they feel they're losing the match. In January, they called back sixty-two people they had given fines the previous months and sued them for one million euros. The trial isn't over yet but it seems it should be more or less OK for them as public opinion ostensibly favors this spontaneous movement. Thanks to the incredible exposure, lots of huge benefit shows have already been organized all over the country. Right now, everyone continues with their "work," but in even more decentralized ways. You can't travel in trains without seeing altered billboards, and it feels good.

## ...And All Over The Country

Simultaneously, adbusting happened in almost every big town in the country, but with a slightly different tactic, due to the absence of subways. In our town, we made flyers with a place, date, and time and distributed them in infoshops, universities, radical movies, punk shows, and even to the institutionalized capitalist-apologist leftist groups (those we mock and diss all the time, yes, even them). In our rather small town we managed to gather 60 people for one night. We had stolen some bus maps, drew zones on them and distributed them to affinity groups. We also tried to mix more experienced and confident people with neophytes, and sent the least prepared groups to the safest areas. In one month we fucked 1200 "lollipops<sup>3</sup>."

We attacked them with spray-cans first, and then we managed to build our own tools<sup>4</sup> to open them, snatch the poster and spraypaint *inside* of them so that every time they would put a new poster we would just have to open it, snatch the new poster and the graffiti would still be there. Other people would take posters at home, *détourner* them in really creative ways, and replace them.

After every action, we would leave communiqués for every newspaper and local TV station. Soon they called us, and to our great surprise gave us some really good exposure without altering the content of our message. The "commando-terrorist" aspects of our operation were made less intimidating by the fact we called ourselves the Moutons Moutardes (Mustard Sheep, it doesn't make that much sense except we could make a good play on word with the mustard coming up our noses) and offered some really quixotic/stupid rhetoric mixed with serious politics. We even made TV interviews in really stupid masks! It was pretty cool when the sound guy told us he was really down with us and wanted to know more. The first TV report we got ended with a clip from an interview with a seventy year old woman: "They are right! In life you have to have a good moan!"

Eventually seven of us got caught by the police and spent thirteen hours in a really cold jail cell. But we managed to avoid huge legal troubles, and not pay the 5500 euros the lawyer demanded—as the judge, the coolest old man on earth, turned out to be down too! For punishment, we only had to work one day with the workers of the company—just enough to befriend them, learn that our tactics didn't actually give them any more work (liberal critics of direct action take note!), and pick up a few more techniques. One of us actually got away with a full uniform from the Decaux, company responsible for the "lollipops."



## About the Tactic

Beside the security that this tactic allowed, the greatest point in my opinion was that this decentralized approach pushed every participant to be responsible for her actions and above all to figure out by herself what she wanted to write, what she wanted to oppose. There was little room for ideology to take that back. Of course, all leftists groups tried to recuperate<sup>5</sup> the actions, blaming sexism in the ads or other details that would water down this assault against commodity culture and "the spectacle" itself and make it another limited criticism of the mere details of our total alienation. But on the contrary, all the questions that inspired opposition to advertising in the first place point the way to questions about the global workings of capitalist society itself<sup>6</sup>.

The terrain we chose for engagement offered great advantages, too. Although everyone has internalized advertising as a part of everyday life, everyone is in some way or another bored with it, too, everyone knows advertisers are lying and only want to sell them things. So attacking this aspect of capitalism did not alienate the average person; on the contrary, it drew a really sympathetic public

opinion. These actions were not made by black-masked anarchists or boring leftists, but by average people who wanted some fun. And when public opinion is favorable, chances are (in France, at any rate) the media will give it good exposure too. The media did not censor our critique even when we broadened it to every aspect of everyday life and the world.

Where do we go from here? The biggest accomplishment, in our opinion, was to create an event to which every radical or like-minded person could come and realize we could turn the town upside down in a couple of hours. In the process, we established links that enable us to spread the assault to many other aspects of capitalism, way beyond the critique of advertising. Since then, Olfactory Assaults (massive stink bomb attacks), Free Public Transport actions<sup>7</sup>, University Paralysis (matches and glue in locks), Mass A.T.M. Sabotage (attacks on automatic teller machines), debates, squatting and other direct actions have caught on, taken off, and transformed our environment. From a town where we always had the feeling nothing would nor could happen, we've created a community where every action gathers more people, more questions,

more debates, more ideas, more opportunities—a town where history seems to start to move again, where consensual helplessness has been undermined, where life can be touched and even grasped.

I actually intended to write about many more things happening in France: old Situationists who became peasants in the 1970's and came back in the forefront of radical critique in 2001 by destroying GMO fields and laboratories<sup>8</sup>, *L'APPEL* ("call"), an anonymous book that has been widely spread in the radical, autonomous, anarchist, and squat scenes that starts to define the shape of the invisible guerrilla to come<sup>9</sup>, Longo Maï, a 400 person fully-autonomous community, or how a handful of autonomous kids turned the European Social Forum into a riot with the liberals<sup>10</sup> and succeeded in presenting a fireworks display for the prisoners of Paris's biggest jails, who showed support by burning their sheets out of their windows when the usual spoilsports came to arrest everyone... but to cover all that would probably have taken a whole book.

For more information about what's going on in France, visit [www.crimepensee.com](http://www.crimepensee.com) or email [crimepensee@hushmail.com](mailto:crimepensee@hushmail.com).

## Appendix: Tearing Down the Walls at Nanterre University

For more than a year now, numerous French universities have been the scenes of assaults by anonymous groups. Cameras are smashed by hooded gangs, graffiti covers the walls, the debates of leftist would-be leaders are sabotaged, door locks are glued, and, most recently, a dean had his nose broken during a demonstration.

Nanterre University, the cradle of the upheavals of May '68, has a long tradition of uncontrollable students. In response to this ongoing threat to the imperial peace, devices to enforce pacification and control

have been applied over the past few years: now there are cameras and armed security guards everywhere, not to mention pressure on individuals viewed as political threats. Last year, the administration decided to build a wall to split the huge hall in which students used to hang out, so they could only circulate, not mingle. The wall immediately became a target for students' anger. In April, as hundreds of them gathered around the wall to protest the policy of security and control, a black-masked crew armed with battering rams managed to destroy it completely.

The wall was then rebuilt.

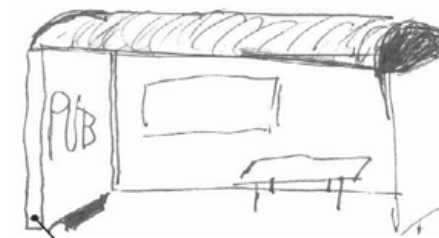
This year, graffiti announced that the students were still a little angry: "Pacification of behaviors = massification of fears," "citizen = cop," and even, "No to the assassination of Audeoud," Audeoud being the president of the University. For one month, an illegal weekly banquet was held in front of the wall.

Last Tuesday, a hooded gang managed to destroy the wall once again. Fifty hooded students attacked it with two forty-kilo home-made battering rams and two sledgehammers. This time, the security guards tried to intervene, but students foiled them by gathering around the deconstruction team as a protective buffer, despite the threats and violence from the guards. Push came to shove, chairs started to fly from the students' side of the lines, and a burly brawl broke out that left five security guards injured.

As soon as the wall was destroyed, smoke bombs filled the hall with smoke as the students fought their way out, leaving no prisoners. Outside of the building, fireworks exploded in the sky in celebration of their escape.



## Guide of opening bus shelters and advertising lollipops in aid of young generations



This is where you can access the opening-device: +/- 17mm diameter

If you look in that small hole you'll find a piece like this

The piece the way you'll see it if you steal it.

To open the lollipop you have to turn the piece counter-clockwise.. (fig 2 et 4)

To open the lollipop by yourself you just have to buy, steal or borrow a 16 mm diameter PVC tube in any hardware store. It is really cheap but get used really fast.

If the inside diameter is too small you can file it with scissors.

Tube from above.

before being filed:



after being filed:



Moutons Mouta@des Entertainment- <http://free.hostdepartment.com/a/antipub/>

If you want an iron tool that will last until the end of times (or capitalism), you just need to buy, steal or borrow a 14 mm diameter metal (1mm thick). Take your 30 cm long metal tube and slide it within the opening-device of the lollipop. Make sure it is fixed and won't move, then hit it with a hammer (fig5). The tube will take the exact shape of the piece after several hits (fig3). You can now open any bus stop billboard or lollipop. The safest technique is to open one with a PVC tube, steal the metal piece your tool has to get adjusted too and bring it so you can make many tools for your many friends.

Make sure you close the lollipop after each attack so that children won't have access to the electric system that light it by night.

Metal tool finished:

How your tool will look like: hexagonal masterpiece

From above

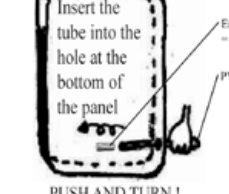
before the shaping.



after the shaping.

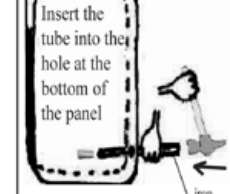


Insert the tube into the hole at the bottom of the panel



PUSH AND TURN!

Insert the tube into the hole at the bottom of the panel



Hit with big hammer blows

Moutons Mouta@des Entertainment- <http://free.hostdepartment.com/a/antipub/>



L'un des panneaux tagués dans la nuit de jeudi à vendredi (photo PN/Christian Cariat)

<sup>1</sup> The term adusting is used here only because we lack an appropriate translation for the French term "antipub." The authors of this report would like us to note that they hold the eponymous magazine in dismayed disdain, on the grounds that the editors purport to sell revolt in the form of shoes, to have invented an anti-logo logo, and to be attempting to destroy capitalism by becoming capitalists themselves.

<sup>2</sup> *Détourne*: To "make the invisible visible" by appropriating existing media and adjusting them to make clear their implications. Example: covering up the logo of a local Christian church on a billboard that reads "Is Your Life Working?" with paper that reads "Is Working Your Life? Break Free!"

<sup>3</sup> Lollipops: Dear editors, here in France we call those smaller underglass billboards by this name. I don't know how to call them in English, but these are the ones in the pictures I sent along. Decaux, the company that makes them, is expanding all over the world, so you have probably seen them in the USA too. If there's a specific word for them, please change it. [Editor's response: My dear French friends, I have no idea what a Lollipop is, and I doubt our domestic readers do, either, but that doesn't make it easy to figure out how to adjust your description, so it will have to rest as is.]

<sup>4</sup> Decaux, the company that owns almost every "lollipop" in France, is spreading all over the world (you can check if your town has been colonized yet at [www.jdecaux.com](http://www.jdecaux.com)). During recent visits to Belgium, Spain, and Holland, I could witness that our tool worked everywhere there too. So to open those lollipops by yourself you have two options...

Get a 30 cm long and 16 mm in diameter plastic tube (you get that in any hardware shop). On the side at the bottom of every lollipop, you'll find a small hole. Put the tube in it, push and it should grip to a circular cogged piece. Turn counter clockwise. The lollipop is

yours. If the tube doesn't grip because it's too tight, file it a bit and try again. The problem with this technique is that after 10 or 20 openings, the plastic is too used and doesn't grip anymore. So this is where the second option comes into play. Open one lollipop with a plastic tube, take away the piece you need to grip to open it and bring it back home. Then get the same size tube, but in metal this time. Put the tube on the piece and give small hits with a hammer for like 10 minutes. Slowly the metal tube will take the exact shape of the piece. Once you're done you have the perfect tool that will open ALL lollipops really easily. This explanation might sound a little bit complex, but once you understand how the whole thing works you'll realize it is extremely simple. Most bigger billboards can be opened with pliers.

<sup>5</sup> *Recuperate*: Hijack a radical action that implies a wide-ranging critique to make it serve the ends of single-issue reformist political party control.

<sup>6</sup> On that issue, when the reformists and capitalism-conciliating leftists tried to water down the action a little bit too much, a really mysterious group burned down some lollipops and declared: "We're less affected by the sexism and stupidity in advertising than by the world and the ideology it comes from and upholds. We don't believe that advertising could be acceptable if it wasn't sexist. By only spraypainting and snatching posters, we condemn ourselves to see them clean and effective again the next day. By burning them down, we send the direct and clear message that no conciliation can be made with such a society."

<sup>7</sup> Like in most towns, to validate your travel on public transport you have to put a card into a machine that swallows it and prints the hour and date of validation. In busses and subways there's one of these machines at every door. At a set time, small groups get in every bus they find, and discreetly put chewing gum or a bolt or peg with glue in every machine, and add a sticker reading

"Sabotage is fun and free. Just do it and public transport becomes fun and free for everyone too." Every group can also wheatpaste posters with more explanations on every bus stop. We've stressed doing really funny artwork so it doesn't scare people too much. Within one hour, you can really have a HUGE impact. If you've established good relationships with the local media like we did, you can even call them beforehand to let them know something is gonna happen. Send them a communiqué when you're done, and hopefully you'll have a coverage that might bring even more people to join you next time.

<sup>8</sup> If you can read French, we really encourage you to read René Riesel books published by "Edition de l'Encyclopédie des Nuisances," a group whose ideas could be defined as the perfect mix between those of the Situationist International and the Unabomber. Other great authors from l'Encyclopédie des Nuisances are Jaime Semprun (*Apology of the Algerian Insurrection* is translated into English) and Baudouin de Bodinat.

<sup>9</sup> Copies of APPEL are available for free through Crimepensée, of course.

<sup>10</sup> Contrary to some in the US, we can easily see that throughout French revolutionary history the "left wing" has always fucked everything up by creating a conciliation with capitalism that amounts to surrender. Every time radical demands have risen, the Left has managed to recuperate them and re-present them as totally inoffensive demands for more control over the details of our alienation. They pretend to be radical only in order to re-route radical desires to the ends of their reactionary control. Recent events proved this axiom true once again, when the left wing party showed up at this European Social Forum—although they were governing the country for 14 years, and fucked us up all that time! Fortunately, some people managed to get them out of the demonstration by means of homemade toxic smoke grenades and glass bottles picked from the trash.



# THE WOMAN REBEL

NO GODS NO MASTERS

VOL. I. JULY, 1914. NO. 5.

## TRAGEDY

Even if dynamite were to serve no other purpose than to call forth the spirit of revolutionary solidarity and loyalty, it would prove its great value. For this expression of solidarity and loyalty and of complete defiance to the morality of the masters, in a time of distress and defeat and death, is the most certain sign of that strength and courage which are the first essentials to victory. On July 4th, three revolutionists, Caron, Berg and Hanson, were killed by the explosion of dynamite—sacrificed because of their willingness to risk life for their convictions. This tragedy created a wonderful spirit of loyalty and solidarity among their comrades. It ought to have awakened the same spirit among all those who advocate the overthrow of the present system—at least among those agitators and leaders who urge direct and revolutionary tactics against the master class.

But instead we have witnessed a far greater tragedy than the death of our comrades. That event in itself bespoke courage, determination, conviction, a spirit of defiance—unfortunately, unusual qualities. The real tragedy has been the cowardice and the poisonous respectability expressed in the apologies of those adepts in that glib and oily art to speak and purpose not—those agitators and leaders who howl about solidarity among the workers, only to white-wash themselves with respectability when an episode occurs which actually offers an opportunity for the expression of such a spirit of solidarity. Instead of this expected defiance of conventional morality and standards, they have given nothing more than involved, shamefaced explanations and apologies actioned which do more to discredit the organizations they represent than any number of bombs or ill-advised acts of violence.

Explanations and apologies, like patriotism, are the cloaks of cowards, not the reactions of strong men.

It is time to learn to accept and exult in every act of revolt against oppression, to encourage and create in ourselves that spirit of rebellion which shall lead us to understand and look at the social situation without flinching or quavering or running to cover when any crisis arises. Not until we do create this spirit will the revolutionists ever be feared or even respected in America.

We are all talking revolution and direct action, solidarity and freedom. If we are not willing to back every word that we utter publicly by determined action, we will never accomplish anything except to render ourselves ridiculous.

Solidarity is a means, not an end. It will unite the working class against its oppressors not at a single catastrophe at some dim and distant future date, but only as we individually incorporate it. We must Live Solidarity, not merely talk it. Even if we disagree regarding the social value of the act of revolt, we must accept it and acclaim it for the spirit and the motive in back of it. Never repudiate or apologize for the comrade who, by an act of revolt has given the best evidence of loyalty to his class, of his SOLIDARITY.

If the so-called revolutionary labor movement must justify its actions at the bar of the very public opinion and morality that have created and sustained laws against labor, it is a wishywashy, milk-and-watery, weak-kneed movement at best. If it cannot accept as possible and inevitable and valuable among its ranks such men as Berg, Caron and Hanson—if, in short, it is not moving in the direction of REVOLUTION, it is time for us to build up a movement that is.

## A DEFENSE OF ASSASSINATION

HERBERT A. THORPE

It is generally agreed that lower forms of life must give place to higher types, and when the pioneer of civilization makes his way into the forest, he must of necessity destroy the man-killing animals living therein. Exterminating warfare is also waged against the savage members of the human race wherever they oppose the establishment of conditions necessary for the development of the more highly organized types. Of course, where improvement by instruction and subsequent co-operation is possible, this extreme of annihilation need not be practiced, but unless it can be shown that there is room enough on earth for both savage and civilized, the savage must go.

Having thus indicated the operation of the law of the survival of the fittest, it would seem that we should apply the same treatment accorded to wild animals and savages to those men in civilized countries whose natures still display traits characteristic of the tiger and wolf, and who, owing to the nature of our social fabric, are beyond the reach of correction.

It is immaterial whether such men are conscious or unconscious of their true natures and the effect of their actions on others. If their position in modern life is an entirely false one, as in the case of the czar or king, this is their misfortune, but, like the savage or wild animal, they should not be permitted to live upon or block the march of the many toward better conditions.

There is no difference, ethically, between killing a man instantly or slowly over-working or starving him to death, yet those are the conditions imposed upon millions of workers throughout the world to-day, owing to the brute of the employing and official classes, and their ability to control large armies of ignorant police and soldiers to intimidate the workers whenever a clash occurs between Capital and Labor.

Another weapon used by these undeveloped czars of industry, whose egoism runs riot, is to dictate to their legislative hirelings what laws shall be enacted, or, if any exist that balk their selfish desires, to coerce their judicial puppets so to interpret them as to nullify the beneficial effect sometimes intended.

The point I wish to bring out is this—that since the great mass of people are by force of circumstances unable to use the same weapons employed by the better educated and privileged class, this does not preclude the working class from using whatever other means of defense may be at its disposal, such as the strikes, boycott, sabotage or assassination.

The assassination of tyrants has been practiced throughout history in all parts of the world, and in regard to nihilism in Russia, Wendell Phillips has this to say: "Nihilism is the righteous and honorable resistance of a people crushed un-

# The Ghost of Propaganda Past: *The Woman Rebel*

*The Woman Rebel*, a publication analogous to anarchy-feminist papers of the past twenty years, ran for a short period ninety years ago, just long enough to make one lasting contribution to modern English—which we'll get to in the next paragraph. The editor, Margaret Sanger, took responsibility for most of the work surrounding its production and distribution, as many current 'zine editors do, while soliciting "all rebel women to contribute to its columns" and insisting that the paper would not "be the

champion of any 'ism.'" In its pages, one could find discussion of the plight of impoverished working women, biographies of such pioneer feminists as Mary Woolstonecraft (sic), poetry in praise of direct action (including the use of explosives), news from the I.W.W., antiwar articles (one bearing the familiar title "Blood and Oil"), critiques of marriage and consumerism, and texts from Helen Keller—who is still well known for being blind and deaf, but less so for being an outspoken critic of capitalism. The paper ran to seven issues before Sanger was forced to leave the United States to escape prosecution for publishing material prohibited under the Comstock laws.

Incidentally, *The Woman Rebel* was the venue in which the expression "birth control" was coined, and much of the repression the paper suffered was due to its frank discussion of contraception. Issue after issue emphasized the right of women to have control over their own bodies, in a time when mere discussion of this matter was forbidden. It's interesting to note that while contraception is now widely accepted as a bourgeois human right, our society seems to have suf-

fered a kind of amnesia as to who it was that fought to earn this right. Just as George W. Bush can disingenuously pay homage to the memory of Malcolm X, knowing full well that had the two been active contemporaneously he would have done everything in his power to silence such a powerful black organizer, consumers of the most reactionary walks of life can buy condoms or work eight hour days without troubling themselves with the thought that these typical features of everyday life were won by the blood and sweat of maniacal radicals.

Some of the stances taken in *The Woman Rebel* have remained controversial. We can only hope to live to see the day when dynamiting munitions factories provokes no more uproar than advising young women of their family planning options. So that none can write off our own politics as hysterical posturing without historical precedent, let us reprint here a text on direct action from *The Woman Rebel's* first issue, composed by Voltairine de Cleyre. In this passage, she outlines the means by which striking workers can ensure that they will be taken seriously by otherwise indifferent capitalists:

*"If it's a telegraph strike it means cutting wires and poles and getting fake scabs to spoil the instruments. If it is a steel rolling mill strike it means beating up the scabs, breaking the windows, setting the gauges wrong and ruining the expensive rollers together with tons and tons of material. If it's a miners' strike, it means destroying tracks, bridges, and blowing up mills. If it is a garment workers' strike it means having an unaccountable fire, getting a volley of stones through an apparently inaccessible window, or possibly a brickbat on the manufacturer's own head. If it is a streetcar strike it means tracks torn up barricaded with the contents of ash carts and slop carts with overturned wagons or stolen fences; it means smashed or incinerated cars and turned switches. If it is a system federation strike it means "dead" engines, wild engines, derailed freights and stalled trains. If it is the building trades strike, it means dynamited structures. And always everywhere, all the time fights between strike-breakers and scabs against strikers and strike sympathizers, between People and Police."*

## Biography in Brief: George Francis Train, "The Great American Crank"

Renowned while living as America's greatest eccentric, George Francis Train (1829-1904), entrepreneur and inventor, also sympathized with and supported some of

the most radical elements of his time. He led a life of extremism and adventure, never missing an opportunity for action or provocation.

Orphaned at four, Train initially rose to fame and fortune by revolutionizing some branches of the transportation industry and single-handedly inventing others. Along the way, he wrote and published some twenty-five books and pamphlets, invented the perforated stamp and the pencil with attached eraser, and founded the city of Omaha, Nebraska. His voyage around the world in eighty days, taken in 1870, inspired Jules Verne's novel on that theme. Train nearly failed to make it within his chosen time limit, on account of being imprisoned by the

French government after he joined in the Marseilles Commune uprising; the reactionary Verne left this out of the novel, deceitfully recasting his protagonist as a conservative, upstanding citizen.

An atheist from childhood, Train went on to become a vegetarian; he also funded Susan B. Anthony's feminist paper *Revolution*, declined presidency of a revolutionary republic offered him by Australian miners seeking independence from England, identified himself with the First International (the workers' congress at which Marx and Bakunin struggled over the question of state power and liberation), and went to jail for defending an advocate of free love against the notorious Puritan book-burner Antho-

ny Comstock. He later boasted that he had been imprisoned fifteen times without ever having committed a crime.

Train ran for president in 1872, then declared himself a candidate for dictator, promising to establish a "pure autocracy of love." Asked by a reporter if, as dictator, he would occupy the White House, he replied that he preferred to rule the universe from the park bench he regarded as his headquarters. By that time he had finally succeeded in the arduous task of using up all his wealth, and withdrew from public life for a period, insisting he would only interact with children and the squirrels with whom he shared the peanuts that were his principle food.

He returned to the spotlight in 1887, when the purported leaders of the Chicago anarchist movement were facing the death

penalty in a show trial following the explosion of a bomb in the midst of a company of police that was firing upon a crowd of civilians. Despite his efforts lecturing on the anarchists' behalf, not to mention the fact that there was no evidence connecting the defendants to the bombing, the city of Chicago executed four of them (and would have killed a fifth, too, had he not committed suicide in advance)—and, to add insult to infamy, banned Train's newspaper, *The Psycho-Anarchist*.

In 1890, Train again circumnavigated the globe ("I go round the world every twenty years, to let it know I am still alive"). In 1902, two years before his death, he published his autobiography.

Train's antics and adventures may seem without parallel, but he was only one out

of millions who lived and acted in those tumultuous times. We can learn easily enough of his exploits because he happened to be a millionaire, while the equally marvelous adventures of less wealthy individuals always go unheralded and unrecorded—unless they infringe on the interests of millionaires, that is. In being amused and inspired by the story of his life, we can aspire to similarly fantastic adventures of our own, without need of the false grandeur of fame. These are bound to come, anyway, in the course of our efforts to create a world in which none are wealthy and all are rich.

*-Much of this material was plagiarized from a piece in the excellent Haymarket Scrapbook, edited by Dave Roediger and Franklin Rosement, published in Chicago in 1986 and quite possibly languishing in the stacks of your local college library.*

Anarchy in the Ukraine!



# LENIN AND TROTSKY DISCUSS THEIR GOOD FRIEND MAKHNO



# THE SECRET LIVES OF CAB DRIVERS: Nestor Makhno

A true story for children

*This is the true story of the youth of an obscure cab driver called Nestor Makhno, who grew up out in the countryside on the eastern edge of Europe . . .*



**NESTOR  
МАХНО**

ИСТОРИЯ  
МАХНОВСКОГО ДВИЖЕНИЯ  
(THE CAB DRIVER)

Nestor was born into poverty in the small town of Gulyai-Pole in the southern Ukraine, under the reign of the Russian czar. His father died before he was a year old. Like most peasant children, he only attended a couple years of school before it was time for him to start working in the fields; as soon as he was old enough, he got a job at a factory, too.

Those were restless times in Russia and the Ukraine. A failed revolution had just taken place, and in its wake the czar's secret police were cracking down on political dissent of all kinds. Anarchism—the idea that government is inherently oppressive, that human beings should organize their lives together as equals without domination or submission—was popular in Russia, and young Nestor's friends were involved in an anarchist group. The secret police discovered its existence, and arrested many of them—they arrested Nestor as well, for good measure. At age eighteen, he was sentenced to life in prison, and sent away to a penitentiary far to the north, in Moscow.

Makhno spent the next decade of his life there, and contracted tuberculosis in the prison's notoriously harsh living conditions. While he was there, he decided he might as well learn about the subversive ideas he'd been accused of, and spent many hours studying anarchist literature under the tutelage of fellow prisoner Peter Arshinov, who was later to fight at his side in the Ukraine.

Then, in the spring of 1917 another revolution took place, and this one was successful—the czar was overthrown! The Russian nation was thrown into turmoil, and in this chaos many prisoners were set free. Makhno was one of these prisoners, and he immediately left Russia, going south to his homeland, the Ukraine.

Up in Russia, the new government was an unsteady coalition of different groups, all vying for control; but down in the Ukraine things hadn't changed much yet. Makhno was the only one to return to Gulyai-Pole out of everyone who had been taken away by the secret police, and he was welcomed with great expectations: now that the czar had fallen, all the townspeople who had been conservative before looked to radicals such as they presumed him to be for a sense of what was to come. Working from the books he had read in prison, Makhno began to organize unions among the peasants, and to call congresses among the workers so they could get used to making decisions themselves.

Later that year, another revolution took place throughout Russia and the Ukraine. In Russia, a party called the Bolsheviks, who

called themselves communists and claimed to represent the masses, seized control of the government; meanwhile, in the Ukraine, the process was more gradual and grass-roots: the peasants' unions and workers' councils took stock of all the land and property the aristocrats had, and redistributed it equally among the population. In both regions, the slogan was "all power to the soviets," for "soviet" is the Russian word for workers' collective. The landlords and bosses were not thrilled about this, but there was nothing they could do; the police and armies that had protected their property were gone.

Soon after the revolution up north, some Bolsheviks came south to the Ukraine, thinking it was theirs now that they had taken the place of the Russian government that had ruled it. Makhno welcomed them, as they were revolutionaries like himself, but they made him suspicious. There were even rumors that they were outlawing all opposing parties in Russia, just as the czar had.

During this whole time, Russia was also at war with Austria and Germany—this was the first world war, and it was the pressure of this war that had resulted in the czar's demise. The Bolsheviks were anxious to conclude this conflict, so they signed a peace treaty turning the Ukraine over to these countries. Before the Ukrainians could have any say in it, the countryside was filled with Austrian and German troops. These put a puppet government in place, and returned all the wealth and land to the control of the former landlords and owners. Peasants who had been active in the unions were arrested or killed; Makhno's home town of Gulyai-Pole was occupied by troops who burned down his mother's house and shot his crippled brother.

Makhno fled north, back to Moscow, where he'd been in prison, to see if the "revolutionaries" there knew what was going on in the land they'd given up. He was given an audience with a funny looking little bald man called Lenin. Lenin assured Makhno that the Bolsheviks were concerned about the fate of the peasants in the Ukraine, and also asked him how the peasants there interpreted the slogan "all power to the soviets." Makhno replied that they took it literally: they assumed the revolution meant they would have complete control of their lives. "Ah, you anarchists are so short-sighted," said Lenin, mysteriously. "You think about the future, but you don't understand how to be practical in the present."

Makhno concluded that the peasants in the occupied Ukraine would have to solve their own problems, and returned home,

sneaking over the border into his homeland. While he had been gone, other peasants had formed clandestine groups, and begun to fight the occupying troops by night. With his house burned down and his town patrolled by foreign soldiers, Makhno joined one of these groups.

Every few weeks they had to flee from one town to the next, as the spies of the secret police worked to track them down. Makhno's friends from the peasants' unions, which had now been made illegal, hid them and fed them. As time went on, more and more peasants came to join them in the underground, and more and more German and Austrian troops were sent to kill them. The insurgents staged a raid on Gulyai-Pole, Makhno's home town, and forced the soldiers out of it; but the next week, many more soldiers returned, and the rebels were driven into the forest. The soldiers followed, and for days Makhno and his companions hurried through the woods, the sound of marching troops behind them.

One evening, they heard the same sound ahead, and realized they were surrounded. They could not surrender to the German troops—they feared they would be killed—and they could not escape; Makhno proposed to the group that they try a surprise attack. This seemed like suicide, but no one had a better idea to try.

Most of the occupying troops were staying in a nearby town; there were over six hundred of them there, camped in the main square, and only one hundred peasants in Makhno's group. Makhno and a few others who were quick and had not yet been wounded snuck right into the heart of the town, and climbed up on a rooftop. From there, they opened fire on the army below. The soldiers didn't know where the shots were coming from, and panicked, assuming they were under attack from a much larger force; they fled, unorganized, and surrendered to the rest of the peasants, who were waiting for them at the edge of town. Suddenly Makhno was a hero!

The peasants killed the commanders of the soldiers and took their uniforms, then set the rest free, telling them to go back to their home countries and stop harassing Ukrainian peasants. Dressed in the commanders' uniforms, Makhno and his companions now traveled through the countryside, presenting themselves to the rich landlords as occupying generals. The landlords treated them to great feasts, thanking them for returning their wealth and power and crushing the peasants' revolt. At the end of each meal, Makhno and his friends revealed their true identities,

and seized the horses and guns of the landlords to arm the people.

Soon they had assembled an army of their own, a peasants' army. True to anarchist ideals, each brigade elected its own commanding officer, and each soldier designed his or her own uniform. Makhno became one of the generals in this volunteer army. Soon, other insurgent peasant groups came to join them; one of these was led by Maria Nikiforova, an anarchist guerrilla Makhno had long looked up to.

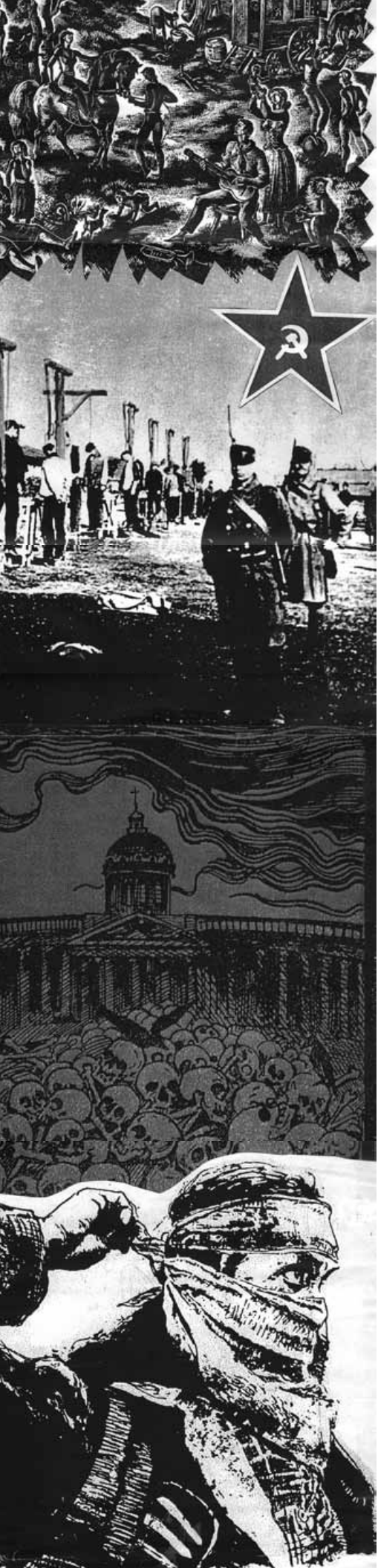
Together, these armies of peasants and anarchists returned to Gulyai-Pole, with the intention of liberating it from the Germans and Austrians for good. They attacked it by night, and all the local peasants joined with them in driving out the occupying troops; but the next day more troops returned, and the local peasants would not fight with them by daylight, for if they were recognized they would be killed by the foreign army as soon as it took over the town again. So Makhno and his friends were driven out of Gulyai-Pole until nightfall, when the locals came back to join them once more, and they were able to push back into the city. This happened every day and night for five days, until finally the occupying troops were exhausted and retreated.

From Gulyai-Pole, the insurgents moved on to Ekaterinoslav, the biggest city in the area, where the most Austrian and German troops were stationed. Makhno and his friends were completely outnumbered, as before, but once again he proposed a plan: at the beginning of the next day, when the train from the countryside entered the city to take all the poor migrant laborers to their jobs, Makhno and the others rode in on it, too, dressed as peasant workers, with their guns hidden under their clothes. Once again, his plan succeeded, and the occupying forces were taken by surprise, and surrendered!

The first thing Makhno and his companions did upon taking the city was go to the prison, set all the political prisoners free, and burn it to the ground. They expected a counterattack from the Austrians and Germans, but the world war had just ended with these nations in defeat, so they chose to pull their armies out of the Ukraine and cut their losses. The Ukraine was free!

Makhno and the other peasants got busy now putting their anarchist ideas into action. They went from city to city, and in each one they entered they announced that they were not there to take political control, but only to facilitate the passing of power and resources from the hands of the government





and the rich into the hands of the people. New farming collectives, worker's councils, community projects, and newspapers were organized, and a great congress began to meet every few months at which the problems that could not be solved locally were addressed. Police, prisons, and tax collectors were abolished, and replaced by cooperative systems; peasants, free from the constant pressure of laboring for their landlords, were able to focus on educating their children and enjoying life. They organized theaters and performing troupes; every night there were potluck feasts, followed by dancing and singing. At the third Ukrainian anarchist congress, delegates representing over two million people gathered. Makhno was able to relax, for a short period, and got married to the daughter of a former police official, a tough young woman who operated a machine gun on the battlefield at his side.

But the trouble was not over. In the south, the landlords and aristocrats who had lost their privileges gathered with the remains of their wealth, and hired an army of mercenaries to fight under one of the generals that had served under the czar. Meanwhile, from the north, the Bolsheviks, who now controlled all of Russia, wanted to have the Ukraine back now that the German and Austrian forces were gone. Bolshevik forces showed up saying that the Ukraine was a part of Russia, and that its workers should be organized under direction from Moscow. For them, "soviet" power meant the power of the government over all the workers it purported to represent. Rather than turning the land over to those who worked it, they built great factory farms and set up party members as the new bosses, and shipped the grain produced far away. Peasants in Bolshevik-controlled territories began to revolt again, and often the armies sent to suppress these revolts mutinied and joined them.

The tension was building between the people of the Ukraine and the Bolsheviks; but before it could explode, the aristocrats, who had fled when the czar fell, attacked from the south with a great army funded by Western nations. Makhno and his comrades gathered volunteers and formed a new army, and established a front blocking access to the Ukraine. They arranged a peace treaty with the Bolsheviks, on the grounds that both groups desired to protect the revolution, and held off the aristocrats' army for many months.

But the Bolsheviks, jealous of the independence that thrived in parts of the Ukraine, had other plans. Once Makhno and his friends had their hands full at the front, they declared the fourth Ukrainian anarchist

congress illegal, seeking to consolidate all power for their "revolutionary" government, and cut off all supplies to Makhno and his army. Then, they called a meeting of all the anarchist officers; fearing treachery, Makhno resigned his post, and didn't attend. This was fortunate, because the Bolsheviks arrested and executed all his friends who did. The aristocrats' armies seized this opportunity to push through the front and into the Ukraine, and without the insurgent armies to stop them, they drove the Bolshevik armies all the way back to Moscow. It looked like Russia and the Ukraine were going to return to the hands of the landlords and czarists.

The Ukraine was now occupied by the invaders, who reinstated the old landlords and bosses once again, and again slaughtered all the peasants and workers who had organized in their absence. Makhno gathered another army of volunteers from the peasant refugees and deserters from the retreating Bolshevik army, and initiated another guerrilla war. He became famous for the tactics of surprise his forces employed: once, for example, the peasants in what appeared to be a wedding procession suddenly produced guns from beneath their clothes and shot down the occupying soldiers who had gathered to jeer at them. Local peasants in every town would hide, feed, and inform the rebel forces; in times of need, the rebels could disappear into the fields, posing as peasant family members while the soldiers searched for them. Makhno's forces were always faster than the Bolshevik and aristocrat armies, because they could trade their tired horses for fresh ones in each farming village. All the same, they were badly outnumbered by the aristocrats' armies, and had to retreat slowly before them. The aristocrats split their forces in two, sending one army west after the Ukrainian anarchists and the other north to Moscow.

As Makhno's group moved through the countryside, more and more refugees joined them, until their army was accompanied by a wagon train of tens of thousands. Every day it was a struggle to stay ahead of the attackers; Makhno was often wounded in skirmishes with them, but seemed blessed with a good luck that protected him from death. For four months, the peasants retreated through the countryside, until they were trapped: the aristocrats' armies had encircled them, and there was no way out except to fight.

Once again, Makhno proposed a plan. He and the peasants with the fastest horses crept out under cover of darkness, and shortly before dawn the rest of the insurgent armies attacked the invaders' army from the

front. The battle raged all day, and by sundown it looked like the peasants were finally going to be defeated, when Makhno and his horsemen appeared on the other side of the battlefield, surprising the enemy generals in their camp and scattering their guards. The invading force broke up and fled, and the peasants took thousands of prisoners.

Now Makhno and the survivors advanced back across the Ukraine, liberating the towns and cities again, and opening and burning every prison. In one town, where the priest had turned over all anarchist peasants to the police of the occupying army, they took his robe and made it into a black flag to fly over their forces. The army laying siege to Moscow was forced to retreat, as their line of supplies from the south was cut off. Peace returned briefly to the Ukraine; a fifth Ukrainian anarchist congress took place, and people tried to get their lives back together.

But the aristocrats regathered their forces and staged one last great invasion. The Bolshevik armies were struggling again to resist this attack, so they approached Makhno, offering another peace treaty. No one in the Ukraine trusted the Bolsheviks anymore, but with the invaders attacking again they felt they had no choice but to cooperate with these so-called revolutionaries.

Makhno stayed home in Gulyai-Pole for this military campaign; he had many injuries to recover from, and was still suffering from the tuberculosis he'd developed in prison. He wasn't surprised to hear that his comrades defeated the invading armies once again, but he was surprised when the Bolsheviks turned their cannons upon the peasants the very next day; naively, Makhno had believed that the conflict between the anarchists and communists came down to philosophical differences, when in actuality the Bolsheviks wanted absolute power for themselves at any cost. The entire Ukrainian peasant army at the front was slaughtered, and Gulyai-Pole was surrounded by red Bolshevik troops closing in to kill Makhno and his companions. Thinking quickly, Makhno called his friends and neighbors together and gathered all the red cloth in their households. Soon, one of the Bolshevik brigades saw a troop approaching them, bearing red flags and singing the Russian communist anthem, the Internationale; they assumed it was another brigade returning victorious from the village, until suddenly Makhno and his fellow peasants pulled out the machine guns. The element of surprise gave them enough of an advantage to break through the lines and escape into the forest.

Now the final military struggle of Makhno's career began, between the Ukrainian peasants and the Bolshevik forces that sought to subjugate them once and for all. All the previous wars the Bolsheviks had been involved in were over, so they were able to bring their armies from every corner of the Soviet Union to chase down Makhno and the other insurgents. The anarchists hid in the villages, in disguise, gathering supplies and volunteers, while huge Bolshevik armies stomped across the countryside, looting and even burning entire towns they suspected of supporting the renegades. Over 200,000 peasants were killed, and just as many imprisoned or deported to Siberia; every non-Bolshevik organization and newspaper was outlawed and destroyed. With the help of the peasants, though, Makhno raised a new army and began to confront the Bolshevik invaders. They took back Gulyai-Pole, and took six thousand soldiers hostage; of these, two thousand joined Makhno's army, glad to be free of their communist oppressors, and the other four thousand were freed to return to their homelands. But many of the ones they set free were caught and killed or forced back into service by the next Bolshevik army, which drove the insurgents out of Gulyai-Pole and back into the woods.

After this struggle had been going on for four months, a bullet struck Makhno, entering his thigh and exiting his stomach. In this injured state, he still led every charge against the invaders, but he had to do so lying in a wagon. A few days later, his army was cornered at the coast by a Bolshevik army, and everyone with him was killed; he was the only survivor, smuggled away semiconscious in a peasant's cart. All the same, he continued fighting for five more months, until his fellow insurgents decided he needed to leave the country to get medical treatment for all his injuries.

He set out for the Romanian border, but spies tipped off the Bolsheviks that he was going there, and they sent an army to block the way. Fighting for days and nights on end, sometimes sneaking through the underbrush and other times forced to charge straight into enemy lines, he and his friends made their way forward. In one of these engagements, a bullet entered the back of his skull and came out his cheek; it was back in the wagon for Makhno. Despite this, they made it to the Romanian border, and escaped across the river from the pursuing armies. Of the tens of thousands who had fought at his side, only eighty seven crossed into Romania with him, including his wife Halyna. All the friends he had begun the struggle with, al-



most all his family and all the citizens of Gulyai-Pole, were now dead. He had been shot and stabbed over twenty times, was covered in scars, and still carried a bullet in his ankle, which surgery had failed to remove.

In Romania, the Ukrainians were put in prison for months—they were, after all, illegal immigrants—and then exiled to Poland, where they were also put in prison. Makhno's tuberculosis, which had troubled him his whole adult life, was getting worse. They were sent to trial, charged with being enemies of the Polish state, but acquitted for lack of evidence. Makhno's wife Halyna had given birth to a daughter during their incarceration, but before he could focus on

his new role as a father, he was arrested again, and put in quarantine—this time for having tuberculosis. Polish anarchists helped him to escape, and the Makhno family hid out in Poland until they finally crossed the border illegally into Germany. From there, they moved to Paris, where Makhno lived the rest of his life in poverty.

He never succeeded in learning French well, or getting a decent job. He worked for a little while as a cab driver, among other professions. Doubtless, some French petty accountant got a ride from him one night, and swore at his bad French: "These fucking immigrants, they can't even learn our language, they're good for nothing."

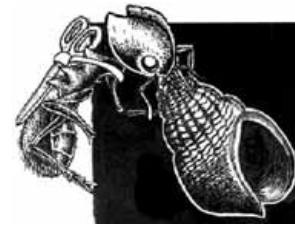
## Biographer's Postscript

I've received a ride from an immigrant cab driver or two myself. I wonder—could I have been the passenger of the former commander of the anarchist forces in Uganda? Could she have been the woman who asked me for change the other night?

For that matter, what about the rest of us, the cab drivers and cashiers who never got to have the adventures we long for, who never get to prove ourselves at the things we're really good at? In one of my former lives before I became an anarchist, I was a dishwasher. I make a pretty good anarchist, but I was a terrible dishwasher. I think constantly about my companions in that dishroom, fearing that some of them are still there, wondering what it will take for them to get out.

How about the almost two million people languishing in prison in this country today—when will the revolution come that gives them their lives back, and the chance to live for something that matters? Could we find wars of liberation of our own to fight in, to take our communities back from the forces that occupy them? Or are we to live our whole lives with the dubious consolation that such things are simply not possible, that they have never happened?

*Text originally developed for the voiceover accompanying a contestoria utilized by a barnstorming tour to teach children Ukrainian revolutionary history, summer of 2003. Although there is a dearth of evenhanded historical material available on Makhno and his times, readers are encouraged to begin with Voline's The Unknown Revolution and Peter Arshinov's History of the Makhnovist Movement.*



# PLAN COLOMBIA

A GRAPHIC DEPICTION COURTESY OF THE BEEHIVE COLLECTIVE

Broken up across the next few pages is a figurative depiction of "Plan Colombia," the U.S. policy in the Andean Region of South America. This illustration is the outcome of many discussions regarding colonialism, militarism, and resource extraction that took place between the Beehive Collective and organizers in Ecuador, Colombia, and the U.S. in the spring of 2002. The graphic portrays some of the ways in which the so-called "War on Drugs" and "War on Terrorism" function as a smokescreen for the interests of multinational corporations that connive to extract the rich biodiversity and natural resources of the Amazon and her peoples. The picture illustrates this story in order to help the viewer experience the different aspects of an extremely intricate and violent situation, and to give weight to the inspiring stories of hope, courage and struggle of those who experience it more directly.

There are three "layers" to this image: first, THE NIGHTMARE OF PLAN COLOMBIA, on the surface. Being covered up by this madness is the story of 500 YEARS OF RESISTANCE: the hope, struggle, and wisdom of the people and critters of this bioregion. On the margins, cutting away, are THE LEAFCUTTER ANTS, swarming the poster, hauling away chunks of the illustration to expose the powerful scene of bio- and cultural diversity that lies under the surface of this nightmare.

The Beehive Design Collective is based in Eastern Maine. All their work is anonymous and anti-copyright, for free use as popular education tools. To obtain full-size copies of this design or other artwork and educational material, or to collaborate with them in other ways, contact them at:

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## THE W.A.S.P. NESTS

In order to convey not just the current situation of Plan Colombia, but also the larger historical context of colonialism in Latin America, the origin of this invasion is represented as a W.A.S.P. (White Anglo Saxon Protestant) nest. In nature, paper wasp nests are structured in tiers: multiple colonies drop out of one another, each attached to the previous nest by a stem at its midpoint. Here, this is illustrated with the United States nest dropping out of, but still connected to, the W.A.S.P. nest of Europe...

So let us begin our story at the top, where three leaves of the ghosts of Columbus' boats fall from a white branch. From a W.A.S.P. nest shaped like the European Union, the monarchy of Spain is directing the migration of "ghost" colonists towards the Americas. Each of these W.A.S.P.s represents a different force in the push for colonization.

- Two Pilgrims have packed their bags, ready to move in...

- While a Missionary flies in clutching both the cross of the bible as well as the cross of Western medicine...

- As a Conquistador invades with a sword and blanket covered in smallpox...

- And a Judge brings in the white man's concept of time and the law...

- His pal the General has doubled up his arms with a sword and a musket to protect the new landowners...

- And they've brought along the pope to bless their mission with incense and a crucified ant...

- And lastly, the Slave Trader is clutching his load of stolen ants bound in wooden stocks.

Across the top of the W.A.S.P. nest shaped like the United States, written in a bar code font, is "Plan Colonia: 500 anos de terrorismo." This is a reference to a common graffiti slogan from the Andean Region: "Plan Colombia = Plan Colonia." This heading helps to convey the intense irony of the US using the word terrorism as a justification for war... and to remind North Americans of the unforgotten history of terrorism in the Americas that began with the imperialist push from Europe over 500 years ago. The larvae of these W.A.S.P.s, hungry with the voracious demands of North American consumerism, are isolated in each of their state cells, mesmerized by American flags on their televisions and computer screens. A few of these larvae have become grotesquely overgrown: for instance...

- In the Northwest is the Microsoft larvae, constantly thirsty for millions of gallons of fresh water (see the Beehive's FTAA poster for facts on the connections between water consumption and computer manufacturing.)

- Next door in Montana, the land of cattle ranching, an enormous McDonald's larva is clutching an "ALCA Meal" as his happy meal. ALCA is the Spanish acronym for the Free Trade of the Americas: Area de Libre Comercio de las Americas.

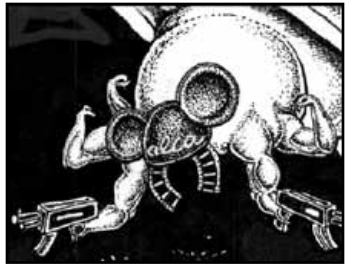
- Over in Minnesota, Valerie, the Mall of the Americas larvae, just went on a sweatshop shopping spree, "thanks to ALCA."

- Eastward to New York, a cocaine larva reminds us that the number one consumer of cocaine in the world is the United States, where the racist and classist "war on drugs" is rigged to criminalize those

that are economically forced into cocaine production and trafficking, but not those that are truly profiting from demand.

- Down in Texas, the oil baron larvae, a close friend of the Bush administration, will give you a tax break... if your vehicle is big enough. Thanks for driving!

- Off in California, Larval Schwarzenegger's Disneyfication of war abroad keeps the American people mesmerized with its well-timed Hollywood blockbusters.



## THE SIX-LAYERED, MULTI-BILLION DOLLAR MILITARY SWARM

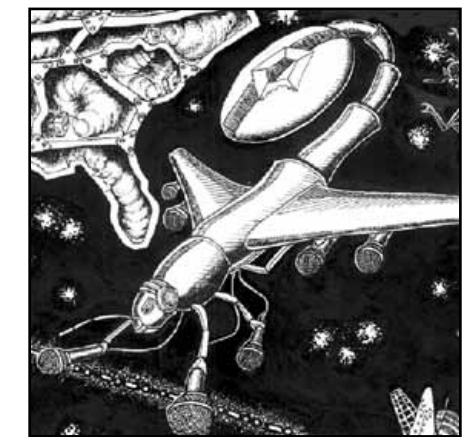
Swarms of metal-armored insects have been unleashed from this nest onto South America, to carry out "Plan Colombia," a multi-billion dollar military operation in the name of the "War on Drugs" that is now being opportunistically morphed into a "War against Terrorism." Here follows a description of the layered formation of these operations...

- First to emerge from the nest are three praying mantis missionaries parachuting out of Utah into remote areas of the jungle. It's no coincidence that they are bringing with them not only the cross of the bible, but the cross of Western medicine, as these two concepts are simultaneously pushed on indigenous communities. This cultural push is not just a thing of the past: even now, when a corporation seeks to extract resources from indigenous land, they first send missionaries to establish "friendly contact."

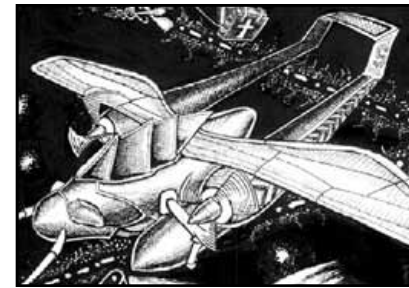
- In the air high above all other aircraft in the scene are the ears of U.S. surveillance: a scorpion-like military airship, covered with antennas, with one large, radar disk on its hind parts... these AWAK planes are used for "listening" by the Pentagon, and for communication with smaller planes and helicopters below.

- Out in this expanse of space is a web of surveillance satellites scanning the scene from every angle. These satellites, which impart the paranoid sensation that Big Brother/Uncle Sam is watching, are a little known indicator of the extent of the high-tech invasion of the fumigation operations. Thanks to co-ordination from a U.S. military base in Florida and a contract with the U.S. corporation DynCorp, satellites are being used to identify the actual chemical

structure of the plants of the terrain in Colombia down to four meters. With the use of Global Positioning Systems (GPS), this surveillance is supposedly used to guide the fumigation planes to "pinpoint accuracy." (We heard that about smart bombs too, eh?) Given that these showers of chemicals, often dumped at high



altitudes, rarely hit their supposed target of coca, many believe that this technology is being used in heat-searching of human forms for covert military operations...



- In formation below this, a squad of DH C-47 and OV-10 Bronco planes create a "layer of protection" for the fumigations to take place. The planes are being used to "secure" the area. The many incidents in which whole villages, with their inhabitants and farm animals present,

have been directly fumigated indicate clearly that this force is not present for the safety of human beings in these areas.

A swarm of metal-plated Blackhawk wasp-copters are itching for a fight big enough to justify their multi-million dollar price tags. They hover in formation alongside the fumigation planes.

## THE LIE OF THE DRUG WAR, THE HORRORS OF BIOWARFARE

Amidst the ghost trees and animals is seen the depopulated, defoliated, and devastated countryside, where the fumigations of Plan Colombia are taking place. On the left, you see a crop-duster with the Monsanto logo, and on the right, a duster with DynCorp's. These are the two U.S. corporations which are the major players in this military operation. Monsanto is the multinational which has developed products such as Agent Orange, BT Corn, NutraSweet, and holds the patent on "Terminator Technology." DynCorp, a defense contractor based in Virginia, is a lesser-known actor in this foreign policy. It is a U.S. corporation that functions as a "private army"; as such, it is involved at every level of Plan Colombia, from coordination with satellites, to shipping chemicals and training pilots.

Monsanto's products clearly illustrate the connection between war and agricultural chemicals. Roundup Ultra, a broad-spectrum herbicide also known as glyphosate, is being used at many times its normal strength, and with additives that make it more gel-like for the purpose of lingering longer on the plants. This chemical is being sprayed to justify the war on drugs to the American people, but has had devastating effects on both the crops of subsistence farmers and the rainforest habitat that hosts some of the most diverse species of plants and animals on earth. T-65 Turbo Thrush planes, being flown by DynCorp pilots, release stripes of chemical clouds onto



the landscape. In order to avoid being shot down by guerrillas and angry farmers, these planes release their chemicals at much higher altitudes than they are designed to be released. This makes for a very inaccurate spraying process that has resulted in the displacement of

millions of campesinos and indigenous people from their homes. Faint illustrations of the chemical structure of glyphosate sprinkle down from the clouds, stripping trees of their leaves, and trickling down into the groundwater and earth below.

A swarm of mosquitoes has landed to extract the resources of the area. Three petroleum mosquitoes—Occidental from the U.S., British Petroleum from the U.K., and Repsol from Spain—have pierced the veins of the earth to pump out its blood. These three companies are the biggest players in the consortium known as OCP that is continuing to build a contentious pipeline in the Amazon Rainforest of Ecuador and Colombia. This, by no coincidence, is where the most intensive fumigations are taking place.



- In the trees, a mosquito scrapes a rubber tree to extract for the automotive industry...

- As a Nestle mosquito is extracting cash crops like coffee and cocoa from the countryside.

- Pharmaceutical mosquitoes are busily extracting genetic material from plants to use in patented medicines. The patents make it illegal for indigenous communities to continue using these plants in their traditional medicines.

- A Coca-Cola mosquito is sucking up the water from a river full of fish skeletons that has been polluted by the fumigations. Coca-Cola is one of the major companies that have been privatizing water throughout Latin America. Notice that the can only shows the word coca, to remind the viewer that the big boom in the cocaine industry happened with the introduction of cocaine in their products, and that they have been involved in the massacres of workers and organizers ever since.

Central to this situation is the OCP (Oleoducto de Crudos Pesados) pipeline, the jugular vein of petroleum extraction in the Andean region. It is owned by a conglomerate of multinational corporations, and has ruptured many times, causing irreparable damage to vital rainforest habitat over the years. It has also been the target of insurgent military groups who are angry at how little the impoverished regions see of the money being made from the mineral wealth that is extracted and transported through this pipeline. As a blatant example of war for oil, the Bush administration has given 98 million dollars to create a special forces branch of the Colombian military to guard this pipeline.

The paramilitary beetle in the foreground is rolling up a ball of ant parts to represent the ferocious massacres that are taking place. Like so many millions that must keep moving to escape this violence, a family of ants is being displaced from their homelands. As they run from the massacre, a comrade ant beckons them to an entranceway of the underground...





## STORIES FROM THE ANT WORLD

There they embark on a journey that takes them through a spiral tunnel where, thanks to the dismantling of the leafcutter ants, two coexisting realities are juxtaposed on opposite sides of a cross section of the earth. These two layers of the situation, shown simultaneously, further convey the multi-faceted invasion of colonialism into every aspect of daily life and culture.



## ORGANIZING FOR EMPOWERMENT VS. TRAINING FOR TORTURE

Next are the contrasts between two classrooms. A group of miners learning about how to organize a union are having an animated discussion. The teacher is distributing pamphlets while raising a fist and showing them on the chalkboard how to link arms to do a blockade. On the desk is a bowl of the coca leaves that miners chew on the job to relieve the fatigue, hunger, and pain of their labor.

In contrast, there is a classroom at the School of the Americas in Fort Benning, Georgia. The students, all sitting at attention, have on their backs the flags of some of the Latin American countries where SOA graduates have contributed major atrocities: Argentina, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Chile, and Colombia. The teacher, an Army ant from the United States, is simultaneously distributing diagrams of weapons, while banging his fist on the table and showing them on the chalkboard how to remove arms for torture. Also on the board is the emblem of the new name that the SOA has recently chosen for itself: "The Western Hemispheric Institute for Security Cooperation." Sounds nice, doesn't it? Their emblem includes the Maltese cross as a representation of "Columbus' legacy of security cooperation in the Americas." Yikes!

## KARAOKE VS. THE FIESTA

Their adventure begins in the karaoke bar... But first take a look at the opposite side of the world, where a traditional fiesta is raging. Fiestas have historically been used as a form of rebellion, a refusal to submit to genocide: an action taken by communities to come together to create joy in the face of madness and war. At this fiesta, five ants are singing, dancing, and holding hands as a musician plays under a traditional party decoration and the moonlight. They have one bottle of rum to share between them all.

Back in that karaoke bar, there are only four ants, because a machine has replaced the musician. Thanks to the anti-social influence of homogenized culture, one of them is singing some commercial pop music while the others have their "fun" by pointing and laughing. They "party" under the disco ball; instead of passing around one bottle of rum, they all have their own individual bottles of beer.

## DOLLARIZATION VS. BARTERED GOODS

In the next scene, the ants' economy has been dollarized with U.S. currency. They now must trade dollars for corn and wool ant socks. On the opposite side, with both hands, they are bartering goods with each other that they produced themselves—in this case, a bushel of corn for a specially made wool ant hat.



## AGRI-"CULTURE" VS. AGRI-"BUSINESS"

The next scene depicts a small indigenous farm that uses ancient permaculture techniques. A square of four plots is surrounded by a ring of local fruit-bearing trees to create a buffer zone that helps to protect the crops from pests. They have planted beans, quinoa, potatoes, and yucca, and are gathering them into baskets to bring back to their families.

Back on the nightmare side is a scene on an industrial agri-business farm. The workers, whose traditional hats have been replaced by uniforms, are harvesting from massive rows of bananas, cocoa, flowers, coffee, and sugar cane. Instead of loading baskets for their own consumption, they are filling burlap sacks, each with a flag of the different countries to where these cash crops will be shipped.



## GATHERING AROUND THE FIRE VS. TELEVISION

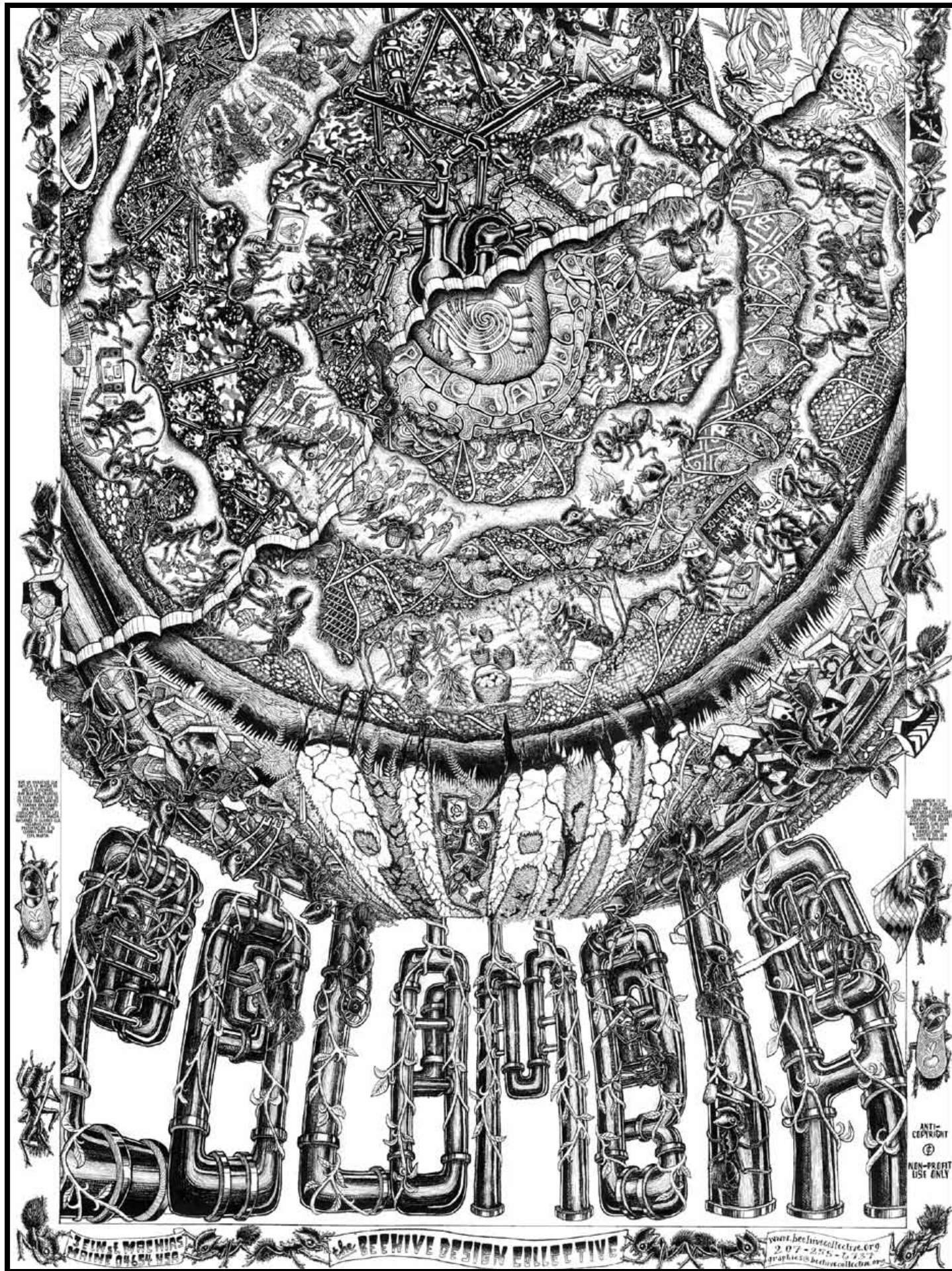
Further down in the scenes on the "live" side of the Earth, an elder ant gesticulates wildly, telling stories of "La Violencia" to a mesmerized group of youngsters gathered around a campfire, whose hair stands on end.

In the analogous scene on the side of colonization, the children are gathered around and mesmerized by the campfire on the television instead. The elder ant is now reduced to changing the channel for them instead of telling his own story.

## MONOCULTURE VS. TRADITIONAL CORN

This story of corn is a separate scene from the other agricultural scene, because of the significance of corn as a cultural icon with attendant mythology. On the left, a farmer's crop, planted in straight,





homogenous rows, is depicted as grenades with DNA strand tassels to represent genetically engineered corn. The campesino is wearing a backpack sprayer, as well as the cap he got for free at the Ag store where he bought the chemicals. He is spraying weeds that are attempting to run away to the other side of the story...

On the right, the heirloom, seed-saved corn is many different colors and heights, and is fluttering with butterflies not endangered by its pollen. A woman, still wearing her traditional hat, has a child on her back instead of a sprayer. With a machete, she is harvesting from her field the small plants that she knows how to use for medicinal purposes.



### MAMA COCA VS. COCAINE

This is the dead end of the spiral path that many of the ants have been forced to tread. Here, a coca bush has been split down the middle: on one side is leaves, and on the other they have turned into dollar bills. On the right is an ant that is brewing up a batch of coca tea for a young ant that feels fatigued from altitude sickness. On the left, an ant adds coca leaves to an extractor. It is important to note that he is adding many different chemicals as well, as it is impossible to make cocaine purely from mamacoca. These chemicals, often including kerosene and formaldehyde, are imported almost entirely from the U.S. The young ant is packaging up the cocaine into a box to be shipped back up to the origin of the demand: those resource craving consumer larvae in the U.S.

### LAYERS OF HISTORY IN THE SOIL

In addition to the scenes in the ant tunnels, the complexity of the situation is depicted in the different layers of soil underground. The first layer deep is a layer of the arms and compacted guns that serve to pull communities apart. On the "live" side are various types of basket weaving, representations of community work that weaves people together.

The second layer down are mass graves of ant skulls mixed with protest signs to represent the massacres of those that have organized against the nightmare. Opposite this are sprouting seeds. The third layer, the fabric of society, is camouflage on one side, contrasted with traditional woven fabric made in community on the other. Digging down to the last layers, on the side of monoculture one finds a landfill of discarded bottles, cans, and trash, while opposite this are vessels that are decomposing back into earth.



### THE HEART OF THE EARTH

In the center of the anthill is an anatomical heart that looks on one side like a petroleum pumping station, alluding to the extraction of what some indigenous communities in the Andean Region consider to be the blood of the earth. On the side of hope, on the other hand, it is a living heart with a spiral in the middle and the Kichwa word "pachakutik" written below it. Pachakutik is an indigenous word with many meanings. It often refers to the idea of time as a spiral with the beginning in the center and the future spiraling ever outward, in contrast to the western idea of time as a straight, continuous line. This perspective offers hope, as there is always a new layer covering up the previous one, and "what goes around comes around." Surely this wise perspective can give context to current events in the North of the Americas, where there is ever-increasing irony in the U.S. calling for a "war on terrorism."



### THE NIGHTMARE BROUGHT TO JUSTICE

At the bottom of the poster is a reclamation scene. The ants of the leafcutter resistance, streaming up and down the sides of the poster, are carrying in the chunks of the nightmare that they have been busy dismantling. They are further breaking these pieces up with their tools, and taking them back to the soil. This composting of the nightmare, processing it through the filter of the earth, will assure that what grows back in its place will not be just as destructive. With this new hope, they are replanting the countryside and bagging up contaminated soil to clean up the many oil spills that have resulted from the pipeline. A team of leafcutters is dismantling the pipeline that spells out "Colombia" in acknowledgement that many indigenous people consider the concept of "Colombia" to be itself a mass hallucination. The boundaries they observe between each other often transcend the borders imposed on them by those who have colonized their ancestral lands. The ants work in tandem with an ally from the plant world: the Cat's Claw vine, powerful enough to tear through concrete.

The ant world has much to teach us. A popular saying in Latin America is that revolution is "el trabajo de las hormigas"—the work of the ants. Their existence is a reminder of how small and inconsequential we may feel in the face of adversity, beneath the immense weight of the work necessary to transform it. Yet they are also a potent symbol of the constant and seemingly insignificant efforts all around us that work powerfully in concert to break the spell of nightmare.



PRESIDENT (IN DISGUISE, BUT THROGGED WITH GUARDS): ...BUT TELL ME, WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE PRESIDENT?

*Beggar (casually): There is no President—only some who believe there is one, and at least one lunatic who believes it is he. He thinks the whole world revolves around him, but there are far more important people—me, for example, or even you.*

PRESIDENT (INSULTED): AND WHAT'S SO IMPORTANT ABOUT YOU? WHAT EXACTLY DO YOU CONTRIBUTE TO SOCIETY?

*Beggar (imperturbable): Let everyone do what he enjoys and give away what he doesn't need, and all will have plenty.*

PRESIDENT: OH YES? IF EVERYONE WERE A BEGGAR, WHAT THEN?

*Beggar: And if everyone were a President? What then?*

PRESIDENT (INCENSED): THAT'S NOT THE SAME THING! [TRIUMPHANT LAUGHTER FROM THE BEGGAR] BESIDES, THERE ARE ORDINANCES AGAINST BEGGING HERE.

*Beggar: I'm well aware that what you consider duty would have you jail me, Diogenes, Jesus of Nazareth, Saint Francis of Assisi...*

PRESIDENT: YET WE ALL MUST OBEY THE LAWS OF OUR NATION.

*Beggar (animated): No, only of nature, and that is too many already! It is bad enough to be born without wings; to be denied the free use of one's hands and feet is simply intolerable.*

PRESIDENT: MY FRIEND, YOU LIVE IN A DEMOCRACY—THE LAWS THAT GOVERN YOU ARE MADE BY A STATE THAT IS NOTHING MORE THAN THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE THEMSELVES.

*Beggar (sardonically): Oho, the will of the people! Once the State proclaimed itself the representative of God's will among us, now it calls itself the representative of our own will. I suppose lies must be replaced from time to time, when they become rusty! Two hundred years ago, Beggars were beaten by the will of God—now we are jailed by our own will? At least we have made progress in wit! "Now I lock myself in prison"—"now I pay myself minimum wage"! We Beggars are not so mad as to conflate ourselves with our masters. Are you?*

PRESIDENT: AND WHO WOULD YOU HAVE MAINTAIN ORDER, IF NOT YOUR GOVERNMENT?

*Beggar: Governments are only necessary where there is disorder to be maintained. Left to ourselves, Beggars are quite capable of maintaining order on our own. I daresay the same is true of all.*

PRESIDENT: A WORLD WITHOUT GOVERNMENTS? BUT THAT IS UTOPIAN, AN IMPOSSIBLE IDEAL.

*Beggar: Perfect health, too, is an abstraction, an ideal—but I still fight off infections when I get them! [feigns as if to take a sudden swing at the President; the President flinches, then quickly reasserts an exaggerated composure] Besides, if there is to be imbalance, it's better to be among the have-nots; at least then one sleeps better at night. [looks deep into the President's eyes, as the latter's guards step forward to surround him] We only have to be lucky once; you have to be lucky **all the time**.*

# OTTO



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The cans in Jerome's backpack rustled and clanked as we came to a stop beneath the billboard. I shifted the milk crate from my left hand to my right and stared up at the bottom of the brown metal ladder, easily twelve feet out of reach. It wasn't the bottom rung that bothered me, though—it was the top, a hundred feet up in the black sky. I could hear the bitter wind singing shrilly through the structure far above—I couldn't tell if it was an invitation or a warning.

"You ever wonder why they don't just fall over?" I said in a low voice, the same voice that Jerome and I had used since we parked behind the nearby department store and hopped a few fences. "That big billboard, propped up on a narrow metal pipe? The wind oughta just blow it over."

"It's solid metal, dude. The pole goes down into the ground, through that thick concrete base." Jerome's voice was that of a teacher impatient with his student. Known only by OTTO, his vandal's pseudonym, he was infamous throughout the region—hated by billboard advertisers, sought in vain by police, admired by graffiti artists, and revered by anarchist groups.

I had met Jerome through one such group, a small cell devoted mostly to animal rights activism. The cell was targeting the pharmaceutical company Eli Lilly primarily for their animal experimentation, but also because of their role in "creating a benumbed Prozac nation," as one of the cell's typically overwrought press releases read.

When I first saw Jerome at one of their meetings he almost seemed like a comical figure: a squat, bald guy with thick-framed glasses, clad in an oversized black hoodie and baggy, olive-drab cargo pants. He looked like a refugee from an MTV mosh-pit casting call. That impression was dispelled when he spoke for the first time, outlining his objections to an unusually outlandish call for action proposed by another member of the cell. He was brusque, articulate and firm without being aggres-

sive or intimidating, though his obvious intellect was probably off-putting by itself.

I never would have met Jerome if a few friends of mine, members of the cell, hadn't already trusted me enough to bring me into their circle. All of them, including Jerome, were quite paranoid about their activities, and at first I was amused by all the cloak-and-dagger pretension. Once they felt comfortable enough to openly discuss their more ambitious plans around me—and once I realized who Jerome was—then I completely understood their desire for secrecy. One day, around the same time that I stopped noticing that the apartment in which we met smelled of cat piss and garlic, I found that I was no longer playing along with their "security culture," but actually a serious part of it.

I imagined that the few people who found out that Jerome was OTTO felt a bit of surprise, awe and maybe some disappointment—like you might upon meeting a controversial late-night radio host for the first time. When he wore his bleach-white college cap, oxford shirt, dark sweater and khakis—what he called his "undercover gear"—he looked like a person who scorned double-parkers and welfare cheats, and not at all like an accomplished vandal.

Jerome was strictly into direct action, though he did a good job of concealing his distaste for theory and rhetoric. When the college students in the cell volunteered to compose a manifesto, Jerome had no objections, but when it came time to plan what they called "night work," Jerome participated in every aspect of the planning.

For this particular action against Eli Lilly, about half of the cell members were driving to Indianapolis to target the corporate headquarters. The rest of us separated into three pairs, each of which was tasked with targeting a particular billboard. Jerome had actually volunteered to take me along for my

I think that I shall never see  
A billboard lovely as a tree.  
Perhaps, unless the  
billboards fall,  
I'll never see a tree at all.

—Ogden Nash

first time out, arguing that he was best suited for that job as the most experienced "writer" in the cell. There was no argument.

The car ride from my apartment to the department store parking lot was filled mostly with Jerome's music: fast-paced metal that careened from savagely heavy to curiously melodic and back again. He spoke only when switching CDs or punching equalizer buttons on his shimmering stereo, little silence-filling sentences like "You'll like this track" or "Check out the lyrics to this one." Sometimes he'd mention how he first discovered a particular band or say that he'd seen them play live a few times. I don't remember him asking me if I liked listening to metal or not. I thought, here I am sitting next to OTTO in his car, listening to his favorite metal bands, and though I enjoyed the idea of hanging out with such an infamous criminal, the reality of it was so far less than thrilling.

We could see our target from the expressway: a well-lit billboard featuring part of an African-American woman's face in the lower left-hand corner. The woman was laughing—guffawing, really—and glancing out at the expressway with her head angled backwards, as if she had just told a great joke and wanted to let you in on it. In the upper right corner was the word "irritability" in giant sans-serif letters. The first five letters were crossed out with a big X, and beneath that the board advised, "Think it's PMS? Think again," in a nice italic serif font. It was an ad for a new medication called Sarafem, targeted at women experiencing premenstrual depression.



The billboard had seemed large but not intimidating from that distance, but here, gazing up at it in a fenced-in field of weeds behind a department store at around three in the morning, it seemed oppressive and vast. It was quite cold and all we could hear was the Doppler whine of passing cars and the occasional 18-wheeler downshifting on the unseen off-ramp near the store.

"Ready to do this?" Jerome muttered. It wasn't really a question.

"How are we gonna reach the ladder?"

"We'll climb up on the base, then get up on that electric box near the ladder. From there we oughta be able to reach the ladder."

The base was a squat concrete cylinder about six feet high and four feet wide. Jerome took the milk crate from my hands and placed it at the bottom of the base, then used it as a step so he could haul his squat body up. I followed, not really needing the milk crate but using it anyway.

We leaned back against the billboard's metal pole and looked down at our toes hanging off the edge of the concrete. The lip of the base was just under a foot wide. Jerome edged around the pole until he reached the utility box bolted adjacent to the foot of the ladder. I pivoted on my left foot, being careful with my balance and weight, so I could hug the metal pole and watch what Jerome was doing.

He gazed at the foot of the ladder for a moment, then reached out and touched the top of the utility box. It was about eighteen or twenty inches long, as tall as my arm from top to bottom, and around five or six inches wide from front to back. Two thick cables came out of collared holes in the top and went straight up the pole, carrying juice to the billboard lights, which were still on.

"Are we gonna work with the lights on?" I asked. I wondered if he was going to break open the box and pull a switch.

"No. There's a light-sensitive trigger up there that we'll take care of. You'll see."

He peered at the box and its cables for another silent moment. "OK. Are you any good at pull-ups?"

Because of the whistling wind overhead, I thought he asked if I was "any good with bullets," and for a few unreal seconds I thought the cell had decided to initiate me into some kind of anarchist assassination program—maybe I was going to learn sniper techniques up there on that billboard. Then I figured it out.

"No, there's no way I can pull myself up onto that ladder," I said with more than a little relief. Abort mission, I thought, the new guy doesn't have the upper body strength for it.

"Then you're going first," Jerome said matter-

of-factly. I'm not sure if he noticed my expression of surprise. "I'll come behind you with the gear—" he jerked a thumb over his shoulder, indicating his backpack—"and once you get to the top, stay on the back platform, OK?"

"How am I going to reach the ladder?"

"I'm gonna boost you up onto this box. Use the power cables to steady yourself, then grab the ladder and you're set. I've done it a million times, it's no problem."

I considered this. I could have backed out, if I'd wanted to, but I felt obligated to complete the task. I wanted to get this message up on the billboard as much as everyone else in the cell did, and I couldn't exactly expect them to do it while I sat shivering on the sidelines. Also, I had to admit, I got a kick out of going out on a mission with a guy like Jerome. It was something like being starstruck, and since I scorned the cult of celebrity I was ashamed to discover this within myself.

If I was really blown away by his celebrity status, I reasoned to myself, then I'd be too intimidated to go along with this. I'd be standing off to the side, staring in admiration. He's just a regular person like me, so I should treat him that way.

"Sounds good to me," I said. "Here I come."

I scooted around the narrow ledge of the base until I was next to Jerome and the utility box. Without meeting my eyes—maybe he did sense that I was sort of in awe of him, and maybe it made him uncomfortable—he bent his knees a bit and cupped his hands low between his thighs. I grabbed one of the cables with one hand and put my foot in Jerome's hands. This is it, I thought, and then before I could scare myself with the idea of failure I hauled myself up with Jerome shoving me from below.

The ladder didn't seem so far away once I was standing on top of the utility box. I leaned to the side a little and grabbed the ladder's fourth rung with both hands. The coldness of the metal wasn't a surprise, but the rough surface was. The paint was chipped or peeling everywhere, and the center of the rung actually seemed to be without any paint whatsoever—probably from years of billboard workers' sneakers grinding away during ascent and descent.

"Now kick your feet up there and get on the bottom rung," Jerome said. He sounded like someone's dad patiently explaining the mechanics of bicycle-riding.

I pushed off with my feet—and dangled against the ladder uselessly. I was asking my legs to cooperate but they just weren't paying any attention. Instead of folding up and to each side so that my feet could hook onto the ladder's bottom rung, my legs just flopped around below me.

"Jerome!" I gasped, but he was already grabbing my hips and steadying me so my feet could find purchase. He shoved me upwards as best as he could, too short to actually get me where I needed to be but sturdy enough to stabilize me.

I managed to clamber up a few rungs before I realized how short of breath and freaked out I was. I felt stupid and burdensome, like a kid who knows his older brother is only just barely putting up with the incompetence of his younger sibling. Jerome was right below me, having already pulled his whole compact bulk up onto the ladder. He tapped my foot and said "Let's go, it's a long climb."

I made the mistake of looking up. It was indeed a long climb. I couldn't even begin to guess at the number of chilly, ragged rungs I'd have to grip one by one on the way up. It was literally too late to back down at this point, though. I took a deep breath and raised my right arm up two rungs, then my right leg, and pulled myself up; then my left arm and left leg followed, and I was climbing the ladder.

I tried to focus on the thing that was ultimately holding me aloft—not the ladder, but the wide pole to which it was bolted. It was a nice steady reference to stare at while I moved up, one hand and foot at a time, over and over again.

Below me, Jerome murmured something indistinct, but the wind carried his words away. I stopped and said "What?" in that same low, discreet voice we'd been using all night long. He mumbled again and I told him I couldn't hear him but he kept on muttering. I looked down at him to say something polite but urgent like "Jerome, I'm sorry, I still can't hear you," but my tongue froze in my mouth when I saw just how far up in the air we were.

The ground seemed as far away as it does from a plane. The ladder started shaking and my brain shrieked *Earthquake!* but it only took me a few seconds to realize that it was just my body trembling with fear. It's not often that we modern, civilized Americans are placed in a position where the strength of our hands is the only thing keeping us alive, I thought, and as soon as I did my hands felt more tired than they had ever been, more than after the three-hour written exams that my freshman English professor had been famous for, more than they had after washing all of the dishes from my sister's wedding reception, more than after an entire day's worth of piano practice. My fingers were curled into claws around that

rung—I had lost count, but it could have been rung number ninety or rung number nine hundred—and I felt like they could never uncurl, and if they did then they'd never be able to wrap themselves around a rung again and I would surely plummet to my death.

I was composing the next day's headlines (which was worse, STUDENT PLUMMETS TO DEATH or STUDENT FOUND FROZEN TO BILLBOARD LADDER?) when I felt Jerome smacking my right heel.

"Hurry the fuck up," he shouted over the shrieking wind, "we don't have all fucking night! Look up, not down, fool!"

I had just been chastised by the one and only OTTO, and he had raised his voice to do it. That was enough to get me going. Somehow I managed to issue the right commands to my frozen claws: Loosen, raise up, clamp next rung. Step up. Loosen claws, repeat until end of ladder.

The ladder ended in a rusty, man-sized, three-sided box behind the billboard itself. I managed to pull myself up and over to one side, though I was almost blinded by the glare of the fixed spotlights shining just below the massive Eli Lilly advertisement. Attached to the rusty cage was a narrow metal walkway with thin rails, as long as the whole board, and there I planted myself, still shivering, to watch Jerome unpack his bag and begin his work.

He pulled out a roll of duct tape and a tiny flashlight, then carefully stepped around me to examine the edges of the billboard. I heard a quiet exclamation of discovery.

"What's going on?" I asked.

He turned on the flashlight and pointed it at a small panel on the side of the billboard. Immediately the spotlights died and I blinked to clear the lingering harshness from my vision.

"This is a solar trigger," Jerome explained. "When the sun rises in the morning it cuts off the spotlights. I need you to hold this flashlight in place while I tape it down."

I grabbed the tiny rail and the steel frame of the billboard, braced my feet, and carefully hauled myself up to a hunched standing position. Despite the whistling wind which threatened to blow my wool cap off my head, the billboard was rock-steady, yet I still felt like a green sailor trying to get his sea legs.

I staggered over to Jerome's position at the end of the billboard. He laid the flashlight flat on the small solar panel so that its light formed a small parabola on the dark surface. I held the bulbous end of the light in place as Jerome yanked a few feet of duct tape off

the roll, tearing it with his teeth. He pressed the tape against the light first, then wrapped it around the sides of the billboard. He tore off another long strip and applied it, then one more, until he was satisfied. He nodded and I took my hand away. The flashlight held; the spotlights stayed off.

"Now that the lights are off, your job is to



watch for cops," he said, gracefully stepping around me on the narrow platform. "Their lights probably won't be on, so you'll have to look for markings."

He picked up his backpack, pulled out a pair of binoculars, handed them to me, then heaved one padded strap to his shoulder and made his way around to the front of the billboard. Almost immediately I heard the unmistakable ratta-ratta sound of spraypaint cans being shaken.

I laid down flat on the cold, rough walkway and peered down at the department store parking lot far below. The cars seemed tiny but their makes and models were easily distinguishable in the stark glare of the tall light poles sprouting regularly throughout the lot. With the binoculars, I could tell if a particular car had whitewall tires or not, so I figured I wouldn't have any problem noticing a white Crown Victoria with a big cop logo on the side.

Jerome seemed to have a certain way of working: rattle the can, spray a little, then repeat. Ratta-ratta-psssss, ratta-ratta-psssss. I knew he was a perfectionist when it came to legibility and style so I had tried to get as

comfortable as possible on the metal walkway, figuring that we'd be here for a little while.

He surprised me by walking back around to my side of billboard about fifteen minutes later. I felt his footsteps through the steel structure before I saw him come around the corner. I was ready for him to say something like "Forget it, I dropped my cans" or "I saw a cop, let's go," but instead he said "I'm done. Let's get out of here."

I stood up and handed him the binoculars. "Aren't we going to get the flashlight?"

"If we turn it off and take it with us, the spotlights will come back on, and then everyone riding by on the expressway will see that we just fucked up this billboard. Come on, let's go, dude."

"You going first this time?"

"You wanna go first?"

"Sure." I wasn't sure if volunteering to be the first down would redeem me in his eyes, but it was worth a shot.

Going down turned out to be a lot easier than going up. I didn't have to swing my creaky arms up over my head. I was cooperating with gravity instead of fighting it. I felt safe moving slowly towards the earth, as if the solid ground beneath me would be more forgiving if I hit it while coming back down.

The bottom of the ladder rose to meet me faster than I expected. I let my legs dangle again, swung them over to the utility box and successfully lowered myself down to the concrete base of the pole. I leapt down and picked up the milk crate. Jerome dropped to the ground beside me, landing on his feet in a crouch like a tomcat's.

In the car Jerome finally smiled. "We did it, dude! Fuckin' A!" he shouted, throwing his up-

right open hand almost in my face. I reached up and smacked it, grinning like an idiot.

"You totally froze up going up that ladder, man," he continued, becoming uncharacteristically expansive. "I thought I was gonna have to climb over you, do the job, climb back down and then call out the hook and ladder truck, you know?"

He laughed at my shocked look. "Just kidding, just kidding! You were fine for a virgin. You went down that ladder pretty damn fast, didn't you? Fuckin' A you did! Goddamn, I gotta hear some metal. How about some Harakiri? They're from Indy. I wonder how the Indy operation went? I hope those kids pulled it off. Dude, we gotta go to Denny's. I always go to Denny's after some successful night work."

He chattered like that for the rest of the night and I was barely able to get a word in. Some of his metalhead friends were at Denny's, so Jerome spent most of his time talking to them. I felt sort of left out for a while. Once our food came, though, Jerome was fixed in his seat, alternately taking bites of a double stack of pancakes and a pile of hash browns covered in Tabasco sauce.

Despite having ordered twice as much food as I did, Jerome finished first and was bidding farewell to his buddies when I ate my last bite. We paid our bills and walked out to the car. The sky, so dark just a few hours ago, was now pale gray and pink.

Jerome clapped me on the shoulder. "Come on, dude, let's go see our handiwork." The adage *criminals always return to the scene of the crime* popped into my head right away. As we left Denny's and got on the expressway, I tried to remember the second part of

the saying. It came to me when I saw a police car whizz past us in the opposite direction: *criminals always return to the scene of the crime, and that's how they get caught.*

"Shouldn't we be avoiding the scene of the crime?" I asked Jerome, who laughed. I felt silly and small again—the student humbled once more.

"Dude, it's almost rush hour. Look around. There are hundreds of cars on the expressway. We don't stand out at all. If we headed back to that parking lot and whipped out a camera and started congratulating ourselves, then we might look suspicious. We're cool, man. Trust me."

Jerome tapped his fingers on the steering wheel and I rubbed the corduroy covering my thighs. We were impatient to see the billboard. Almost there, I thought, just around this bend, and—

"Ha! Woo hoo!" Jerome boomed, filling the car with his voice. "There it is, dude! That looks great!"

There it was, on the left side of the expressway, looming over the department store and its no-longer-empty parking lot. The African-American woman was still laughing at something, and the upper right of the board still said "irritability" and "Think it's PMS? Think again," but below that text were massive black letters in a style all their own:

"ITS NOT PMS, ITS RACISM AND SEXISM. FUCK ELI LILLY! STOP ANIMAL ABUSE!"

Below that was a tall jumble of curves and lines, unintelligible to the untrained eye. I could distinguish the two O's and two T's, though, despite the stylized capital A's inscribed within each circles: OTTO.



"Hey Stella, I love graffiti and fucking shit up in general, but have you noticed how much of this magazine is just about boys and their exploits?"

"Yeah, that's fucked! Let's find their office and burn it to the ground!"

"Myself, I'm going to give them the benefit of the doubt: I'm going to send them articles about some of the bad-ass direct action we do, along with an analysis of why machismo is still so prevalent in anarchist communities, and if they don't print them, *then* I'm going to burn their office to the ground."



## ok so far

sitting on the curb  
feet in the gutter  
smoking,  
alone,  
listening to music through  
tiny headphones,  
one-thirty in the morning  
an unusual fog all around  
staring at the fluorescents  
across the way at the gas station.

i look at my bare feet  
they don't look like the feet  
of a young man  
anymore  
but they never did  
really

and they seem ok  
ok to still be with me  
ok so far they seem to say  
we're in it together.

## winter in olympia

after the film  
at the capitol  
walking  
in the rain  
a few blocks  
to my restaurant  
where they know  
me  
ordering the usual  
pouring the tea  
holding the small cup  
tight and warm  
between my hands  
wet hair  
cold sticky skin  
a mending heart  
a sip of tea  
warmth  
from the gut out  
waiting for the  
spring roll  
to arrive  
winter  
in olympia

## early spring

i would wake up first  
always and  
watch her sleeping

look out the window  
at early spring  
it was quiet  
with her  
there

she would wake  
stretch out her arms  
scrunch her face  
moan  
press up against me  
sigh  
an eyes-still-closed smile  
we would talk  
slow, weak-fingered talk

some mornings  
she rushed downstairs  
and returned  
with a beaten, discarded  
grapefruit  
and peeled it  
while we sat together and  
watched through the open window  
early spring sun and clouds

she would put a section  
into my hand and  
i would eat it  
we spat the seeds out  
the window  
it was going to end and  
we ate our early spring  
grapefruits  
anyway

## not enough

if i sat across from her  
across the table  
again  
i would reach out  
touch her  
face

my thumb  
lightly resting on  
her cheek bone  
my fingers grazing the  
underside of her jaw  
soft and solid  
i would look at her  
and i would cry  
and not stop

it is a lie and i think this  
every time  
before i see her again  
i never do it  
i keep trying everything else  
and it fails

i still don't know what to do  
when love is not enough

**taking care of the cat**

he had a girlfriend  
 and the girlfriend  
 had this cat  
 it was very old  
 she'd had it a long  
 time and had grown  
 quite attached to it  
 one day the cat got sick  
 so she asked him  
 if he would take care of it  
 while she was at work  
 he said he would  
 and later that day  
 after she had left  
 for work  
 he took the cat  
 into the backyard  
 and shot it thru the head  
 with a .22  
 when she returned from work  
 she asked him about the cat  
 she said, "what did the vet say?"  
 "the vet?" he asked  
 "yes," she said "i asked you  
 to take care of the cat—you took  
 it to the vet, right?"  
 he nodded, slowly  
 thinking, oh shit, is that what  
 she meant?  
 "well," she demanded, "what did the  
 vet say?"  
 he looked at her and tried  
 to project a sense of grim seriousness  
 then took a deep breath and said,  
 "the vet said there was nothing he could do."  
 "what?"  
 "i had him put the cat to sleep."  
 "you did?"  
 "i didn't want the cat to suffer."  
 "you didn't?"  
 "no, and i didn't want you to have  
 to make the decision because  
 i know how much the cat meant to you."  
 she stepped forward  
 threw her arms around his neck  
 and gave him a deep kiss  
 "you're the sweetest, most compassionate  
 man in the world."  
 and he thought to himself,  
 don't i know it

**the last man on earth**

just heard that  
 the destruction  
 of the Amazon Rain forest  
 has jumped 40%  
 it makes me short of breath  
 just to think about it

Soylent Green is on it's way

i'm the last man on earth  
 alone in my room  
 with nothing but the music  
 of the dead  
 to keep me company

this is just the way  
 i like it

**freedom of the working class**

all it takes to cheer me up  
 is a pocketful of money.  
 it certainly helps  
 when i'm feeling smashed by the forces.  
 it's a nice feeling  
 to be off on a friday  
 with the weekend  
 ahead  
 a fresh paycheck in my wallet;  
 it almost makes the murdering  
 of my hours  
 during the rest  
 of the week  
 worthwhile.  
 almost, but not quite;  
 this is the pitiful freedom  
 of the working class:  
 48 hrs to do what the hell you want.

**jubilant desolation**

the clichés are true  
 you can't run away from yourself  
 it's too bad  
 if you want to

**the enemy**

the horror. to look into  
 the mirror and see my father's face.  
 to look down at my hands and see  
 my father's hands. the hands of the  
 enemy, of the man i don't want  
 to be.

# THE VILLAGE

*A parlor game in the form of a psychodrama, courtesy of the Curious George Brigade (cgb@ageofdinosuars.net)*

The Village is an excellent way for a room of acquaintances to get to know each other better and have a raucous accusation-slinging, alliance-forming time in the bargain. Incidentally, it also provides rigorous training in deceiving, recognizing deception in others, remaining calm during cross-examinations, persuading your comrades of an important truth when they have reason to believe you are lying, and many other skills that come in handy for those doing both organizing and undercover work.

This game is still in the early stages of its development. Please feel free to experiment with the rules and format, and report your findings to us. Happy bickering, dissembling, and mauling!

**TO PLAY**

To play, you need at least nine people, one of whom will be the host. The host begins by randomly distributing identity cards to the other players, who should not let each other know what cards they have received. These cards will identify the players as Peasants, Witches, Elders, Hunters, Children, or Werewolves. There should be one card for each of these roles, with the exception of the Peasant role: there should be as many Peasant cards as you have extra players. For example, if ten people including the host are playing, you should distribute four Peasant cards. In a pinch, as few as eight people can play, if you leave out the Child card.

Players should sit in a circle, insofar as this is possible, so all can have a good view of each other to watch for psychological cues. The host occupies a central position so he or she can officiate throughout the playing and address players by night without it being clear to other players who is being addressed.

If you so desire, you can photocopy the illustrations accompanying this text and make them into identity cards. You can also design your own such cards, or just scrawl the names of the different roles on scraps of the napkin you found in the jail cell in which you are playing.

**PREMISE**

The Village is essentially a role-playing game: the players take the roles of citizens in a village that has been infiltrated by a Werewolf. The catch is that no player can be sure what role any other player is actually playing: thus, the heart of the game is the psychological challenge of deciphering the motives and activities of the others while keeping your own to yourself. Most of the game is spent in guarded discussions and heated arguments over Werewolf-catching tactics, punctuated by exchanges of accusations and denials about who the Werewolf is.

It is the goal of the villagers to kill the Werewolf with a silver bullet. If the Werewolf is shot with a silver bullet, the villagers win. If the villagers run out of silver bullets without killing the Werewolf, or if the Hunter and all the Peasants are killed, the Werewolf—or Werewolf team, depending on how badly things have degenerated—wins.

**GENERAL RULES**

It generally works best to play with only three silver bullets for the gun, unless there are twelve or more players, in which case four bullets is a better number.

The host is neutral and the final judge on all rules and procedures. Dead players should remain silent and not influence the game—the dead don't speak! No player may look at another's card, or show another player their card until they are killed. A player should not mouth information or otherwise communicate during the night.





### FIRST NIGHT

After each player is aware of his or her secret identity, the host announces that the first night has fallen in the village. During each night period, the villagers all keep their eyes closed while gently tapping their hands and feet for atmosphere. The host addresses each of those playing a special role in the village, without giving away who is who, in this order:

“Child—wake up.” The player who received the Child card opens his or her eyes, makes eye contact with the host, then closes them again. Later in the game, the Child may get the chance to silently ask the host a question about the identity of the Werewolf.

“Elder—wake up.” The Elder does the same thing as the Child did. Later in the game, the Elder will receive clues from the host at this stage in the passing of the night.

“Witch—wake up. Who do you want to protect tonight?” The Witch opens his or her eyes and points to a player to be protected, as described below, then returns to “sleep.”

“Werewolf—wake up. Who do you want to kill tonight?” The Werewolf opens his or her eyes, points to the player to be killed, then returns to “sleep.”

“Hunter—wake up.” The Hunter does as the others called on before did. He or she will not have the choice to kill or not kill another player until the following night.

### FIRST DAY

After the first night, the host announces that day has broken—i.e., all the players can



open their eyes and stop making noise—and describes the death of the unfortunate victim of the Werewolf. In death, a player’s identity is revealed to the others.

There follows a town meeting at which the villagers discuss what is happening, speculate wildly as to the Werewolf’s identity, and try to force each other to reveal their identities. Such characters as the Witch, the Elder, and the Child will usually want to keep their identities a secret so the Werewolf doesn’t come after them; at the same time, they may wish to attempt to convey somehow what they learn. The psychological and emotional dramas that play out during this phase are the heart and soul of the game.

If the Hunter was not the first victim, the villagers now take a majority vote to give the Hunter—even though his or her identity is not known—a mandate to shoot someone during the following night. If a majority of the villagers vote for one player to be killed, the Hunter has a mandate: the Hunter must shoot the person thus selected, or not shoot anyone at all. If the villagers do not give the Hunter a mandate, it is the Hunter’s choice: he or she can kill any one of the players, or not kill anybody that turn.

If the Hunter was killed on the first night, then the villagers vote for a sheriff, who takes over the Hunter’s weapons and role—see “Sheriff Rules.”

If the players are taking too long to come to conclude their discussions on any given day, the host can hurry them along by announcing that the sun is going down.

### SECOND NIGHT, AND ADDITIONAL DAYS AND NIGHTS

On the second night, everyone again closes their eyes, and the host addresses the players in the same order he or she did the first night. The differences are that, from the second night on, the Elder receives clues, the Hunter—or the sheriff, if the Hunter has been killed and the villagers have been able to agree on a replacement—has the choice of killing another player, and the Child can ask silent questions of the host about the Werewolf’s identity, if a player on either side of him or her has been killed by the Werewolf.

On the second day, the host announces who has been killed by the Werewolf, and who, if anyone, has been killed by the Hunter or sheriff. The villagers can tell the difference between the two murders, as one has been committed with a silver bullet and the other with fangs and claws. Again, the villagers must agree on a mandate for who their Hunter should kill. If the Hunter has been killed, the village must elect a sheriff.

On the third night, and then again on the sixth night, a full moon rises. On a full moon night, the Werewolf has two options, and must indicate to the host which he or she chooses. If he or she holds up one finger, she can turn another player into a second Werewolf. If he or she holds up two fingers, he or she can attempt to kill two players.

When there are two Werewolves, each night they must agree by means of sign language whom they will kill. The two can still only kill one player per night, at least until the second full moon.

### VARIATIONS AND FIELD NOTES

Your skills in negotiating with others and assessing their sincerity will be honed to a razor’s edge through successive games of The Village. You and your friends may acquire a sense of what kinds of proposals are “wolf talk,” and then use this to reverse-psychologize one another. You’ll notice how people who know each other well can make use of this in games, both to establish needed trust and to trick one another. You may develop long term strategies that extend over a series of games by which to teach your playmates how to read and interpret your actions and then, when the time is ripe, outwit them.

Add additional characters or roles as you wish—some possibilities include the Village Idiot and the Owl.

### ELDER RULES

Each night, excepting the first one, the Elder gets a clue. The host picks a question and announces it to the entire sleeping village. The host will indicate the answer to his or her own question with a nod or shake of the head, which only the Elder, being the only player with open eyes at that juncture, will see.

In a case in which there are two Werewolves, the Elder must indicate which Werewolf he or she is requesting a clue about by holding up one or two fingers before hearing the question.

Like all players but the Hunter and the Peasants, the Elder can be elected sheriff, but cannot fire the gun. This means that if the Elder is elected, when it is the time of night when the sheriff is called on to decide who if anyone to shoot, the Elder can only decide not to shoot anyone.

Elder clues could include:

Is the Werewolf male?

Is the Elder sitting next to the Hunter?

Is the Werewolf sitting next to the Elder?

Is the Werewolf wearing a sweatshirt/facially tattooed/etc., according to the demographics of the players—it helps to pick a characteristic that describes about half the players.



### CHILD RULES

If the Child’s parents—the players sitting to the left or the right of the Child—are killed by a Werewolf, the child’s ability to “peek” is activated. The reasoning here is that, as the Child was in the house during the attack, he or she may have gotten a glance at the Werewolf. When addressed by the host the night following his or her parent’s death, the Child is allowed to point at any player to ask the host if that person is the Werewolf. The host nods yes if the person selected is the Werewolf responsible for the parent’s death. If two Werewolves together were responsible for the parent’s death, the child can learn about either one’s identity as a Werewolf. If the Child’s parent was killed by a single Werewolf, the Child cannot be told the identity of the Werewolf that was transformed afterwards.

The Child can be elected sheriff, but cannot fire the gun.



### WITCH RULES

The Witch can protect a person every night by pointing to him or her while everyone else sleeps. The Witch can also choose to protect himself or herself. The Witch cannot choose the same person two nights in a row—he or she can pick the same person twice, just not in a row.

The person protected by the Witch is safe from all forms of Werewolf attack: he or she can neither be killed nor turned into a Werewolf during the full moon. The Witch cannot protect from silver bullets, however.

The Witch can be elected sheriff, but cannot fire the gun.



# How to Fuck the Police

## WEREWOLF RULES

The Werewolf, like all players but the Hunter and Peasants, can be elected sheriff, but cannot fire the gun. The same goes for the second Werewolf, should a player be transformed: even if the player could operate the gun before, he or she will no longer be able to.

If, on the night of the full moon, the Werewolf chooses to transform another player, the host asks all players to hold out their hands. The host then goes around the circle and quietly touches the hand of the player indicated by the first Werewolf. The player thus selected then opens his or her eyes and makes eye contact with the first Werewolf: the two are now partners. If the player had been a Child, Witch, or Elder before being transformed, they do not retain their special abilities. If the player had been the Hunter, then the gun and remaining silver bullets show up in the town square the next morning and an election is held for the role of sheriff.

The host continues to act as if the second Werewolf still is a regular player: the host will continue to announce Elder clues, ask the Witch to protect someone, and ask the Child to open his or her eyes. Only in the case of the Hunter does it become obvious to the whole village that the Hunter has now become a second Werewolf.

There can never be more than two Werewolves in a game. If a second full moon falls with two Werewolves alive, the two Werewolves must attempt to kill two people. If, however, one of the Werewolves has been killed by that juncture, then the remaining Werewolf can choose to transform a third player into a Werewolf.

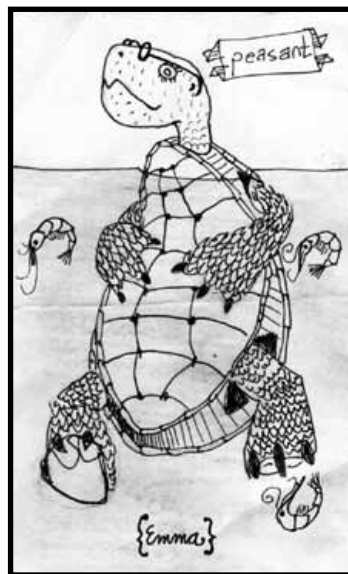
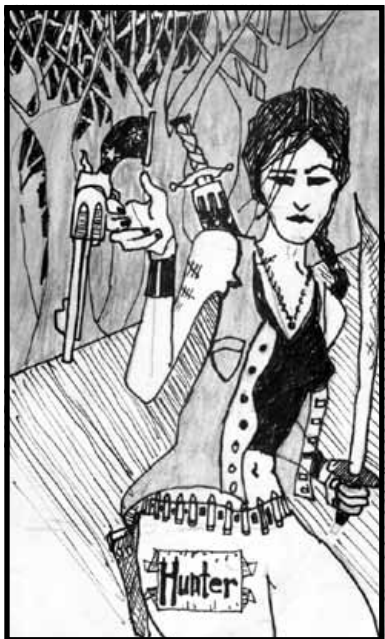
## SHERIFF RULES

Once the Hunter has been killed, the gun and its silver bullets appear in the town square. The players must elect one of their number sheriff; the sheriff will take over the Hunter's role. The vote is generally decided by a simple majority, although anarchist players with a critique of democratic voting processes may desire to explore other options.

Any player can be elected sheriff and get the gun and silver bullets; however, only Peasants can fire the gun. A Werewolf, second Werewolf, Witch, Child, or Elder cannot fire the gun.

The sheriff is free to shoot anyone he or she chooses, no matter whom he or she promised to kill. A sheriff is also permitted not to fire, if he or she so chooses, though this will likely arouse suspicion.

After every day's town meeting, there is a new election for sheriff, even if the last sheriff is still alive. If a mandate cannot be reached that day—i.e., there is no majority reached in the voting—there is no sheriff for that day, much to the Werewolf's good fortune.



*"A poor man needs the police like he needs a hole in his head."*  
—Amadou Diallo

## On the Streets: Organizing a Copwatch Program

Copwatch groups seek to contest or at least limit police repression by directly monitoring police officers. Copwatch volunteers patrol the streets, observing police and recording their interactions with civilians. They often concentrate on areas of high police activity or to which known trouble-making cops are assigned. Copwatch groups also advise people of their rights and listen to their stories, and otherwise endeavor to undermine and thwart the police state.

Most radicals, not to mention many others, realize that the idea of policing itself needs to be completely rethought. In the meantime, people have to be protected from the brutality they face daily at the hands of the police.

## Get a Group Together

Form a group. Put out calls for one everywhere, even on the bulletin boards of church groups and local grocers, not just in the activist community. Approach your neighbors—the best neighborhood watch includes a copwatch.

Educate people in your community and other communities, especially targeted ones, about their legal rights, and about how to carry out a copwatch. Hold classes everywhere in your city, at accessible places and times. These can be formal events, or informal teach-ins outside a movie theater or between performers at a show.

Hold regular, accessible, well-advertised meetings—don't depend on the internet for all or even most of your communications. Many of those who need copwatch most are unlikely to have easy or regular computer access. Decide as a group what your goals are and how you will go about achieving them.

Find hotspots where police repression frequently takes place. Look for them in the police blotter in your local paper, or ask around in neighborhoods, or approach lawyers who do a lot of street work and request advice.

Establish patrols, and have them report on their observations on a regular basis.

Your group will be more effective if it is well organized.

For a variety of reasons, it makes the most sense for people to do copwatch patrols in their own neighborhoods. If it is important that you patrol another neighborhood, make an effort to become familiar with it: get to know locals, and make sure you understand local issues and context. Canvas from door to door if necessary, introducing yourself and your group and announcing your intentions and motivations. Be open to input from locals; they are the ones who will experience the bulk of the repercussions from everything that happens in their neighborhood. Come through on your commitments: don't just show up out of nowhere doing a copwatch program for a little while and then disappear, stick around until locals know who you are and that they can count on you.

When the cops are particularly brutal or kill someone, raise a ruckus about it. Put pressure on them and keep it on. Approach the survivors and follow their lead as to how to handle things. Offer to organize protests or benefit events, screenprint shirts, or play media liaison for them. If they're into it, hold demonstrations, spray paint the names of the victims and murderers everywhere, smash out the windows of the offending police station.

Agitate for laws and regulations that enforce stricter controls on police. Try to get the worst police officers fired. If your community has a Citizen Review Board, make an effort to give it teeth. Police review boards should be elected by district, not appointed. They must be empowered to impose punishments and fire officers.

People from communities that are terrorized will often be understandably afraid to stand up for themselves. A copwatch program can be the first step towards solidarity with each other.

## How to Copwatch

To copwatch effectively, all you need is your eyes and ears, and some means of recording incidents. A small notebook and pen or pencil are the most useful and least conspicuous. A camera or video

camera can also be useful, as can a cell phone or an audio recording device.

Copwatching is generally safest and easiest if you make sure to follow the letter of the law. There should be no drugs, alcohol, or illegal weapons on your person or in your system. Be careful not to jaywalk. This author has friends who have done a perfect copwatch, then jaywalked almost immediately after leaving the scene, receiving a \$50 ticket for their efforts. If you



are driving, make sure that you and all of your passengers have on seat belts. Resist unnecessary horn honking or loud music as you drive away—violations of noise pollution laws and ordinances can be used as excuses to detain and arrest you. If you are not following the very letter of the law, you may end up doing more harm than good and could get yourself arrested. Don't give them any excuse to bust you.

Copwatching is best done with two or three others—you are less likely to be arrested in a group. One cool-headed person can take the role of speaking to officers, getting their names, ranks, badge numbers, district designations, squad car numbers, license numbers, and general descriptions, thus making them aware of your being there as observers. The others should hang back, recording every detail of the encounter, being careful not to interfere, provoke, or draw attention. If you have the numbers, one person can pose as an individual onlooker with no connection to the rest of the group. Decide on your roles before the encounter, if possible.

Presumably, you are there to defuse the situation, not escalate it. Don't goad the police into arresting people as a way of getting back at you because of your attitude. Reign in the hostility you feel towards them—be polite but firm. Remember, police are dangerous. Walk, don't run, and avoid quick or sudden movements around them.

At the same time, don't be so easily intimidated that you cannot accomplish your task. Police officers who feel threatened by your concern about the victims of their repression may well threaten you, shouting "Move on!" and puffing themselves up like territorial frogs. In the course of your interactions with them, you'll develop a sense of what to expect from them and an instinct for exactly how seriously to take their threats.

Carry cards detailing legal rights, flyers with information about local copwatch programs, and other information with you to give to people subject to arrest or harassment. Inform people about their rights, and of any numbers, local services, or internet sites by means of which they can contact a lawyer or learn how and where to file a complaint. Citizen complaint review boards are often virtually useless as a way of dealing with police brutality, but they can be useful for documenting incidents. Be aware of local laws and limitations—for example, in some cities, in order to be able to file a lawsuit against the city, you must send a letter to the mayor announcing your intention to sue the district within six months of the incident in question. In such a case, you should emphasize to people who have suffered police brutality that they should keep their options open: "You don't have to follow through with it, but you should secure your right to sue if the incident was severe enough for you even to think about doing so."

When observing police officers' interactions with civilians, try to get as much information as you can. Make note of the day, time, and exact location of the incident; the officer's name, badge number, district, and physical description; where arrestees are being taken; the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of any witnesses; and vehicle or license numbers for any police vehicles involved in the incident. Use cameras or other recording devices to document the event from beginning to end. Take down complete descriptions of police actions and any resulting injuries. If there are injuries of any sort, even preexisting ones, be sure to detail what medical attention was or was not

offered by the police—people have been let go by officers after copwatch members observed them being denied medical attention, even though the injuries had been not caused by the police.

If you feel it is warranted, you can call 911 and report that someone is being injured. Wait until the end of your statement to note that it is the police doing so, but don't leave that out, and stick to the facts. As all 911 calls are recorded and are relatively hard for the justice system to "lose," they can provide useful documentation for legal proceedings. You can also call a friend's or your own answering machine and record what is happening as it happens, assuming the tape is long enough. The sound quality may not be as good as an on-site recording device would provide, but the police cannot confiscate the tape; this method can be particularly useful if everyone present is getting arrested. If you get arrested and the police don't take your cell phone immediately, call a talk show or progressive radio station from the back of the police vehicle.

If you witness someone else being arrested, try to give the arrestee a way to contact you, and vice versa. This is not to say you should give your name or get their name in front of police. Give your name and contact information only if you are comfortable with the police getting it, unless there is another way.

If you are comfortable doing an assertive copwatch, introduce yourself when you approach the scene and explain that you are there doing a copwatch. Ask police why they are detaining or arresting people, but don't ask arrestees for their names directly, as they might not wish the police to have it. If arrestees say their names and addresses to the police loud enough for you to hear, write them down. If the justification for the stop seems to be vague, ask officers to name the section of the law they are enforcing. Officers will lie and make mistakes—if you know the code do better or have a copy of it with you, speak up. Don't approach or speak to the arrestee directly while he or she is being detained; if you do, you risk being arrested. Sometimes you'll have to do just that, but know what you're getting into.

If a detainee is let go or ticketed, make use of the opportunity to give your flyers and rights cards to them. If a detainee is arrested, you can fold a card in half and ask the officer to give it to him or her—fat chance, but miracles happen. You can't speak to an arrestee directly without risking trouble, but you can loudly talk about what rights people have with the police or

a bystander or your compatriot. These include the right to remain silent, the right to speak to an attorney, the right to refuse a search of your person, personal items, or car.

Stick around until the police have moved on. The Rodney King beating began with what seemed to be a routine traffic stop.

Make use of every opportunity to have educational conversations. Speak to onlookers about their rights, about what citizens can do about police brutality, about community alternatives to policing. When answering questions about legal matters, don't be afraid to say, "I don't know." This is always better than giving out wrong information.

Collect statements from other witnesses if you can. Many will not want to get involved. Try to persuade and educate them otherwise, and get statements from them even when you can't get their names.

Keep the information you have gathered from your copwatching. If your copwatch group does not keep records, keep track of it yourself. It can be useful to submit copies of your records to government agencies, so they will have them documented and on file. Do not edit any videotapes you shoot, as this can render them useless as evidence in court.

If possible, carry with you the text of the laws most commonly used to justify harassment. In addition to being familiar with and ready to cite local laws, it can help to learn local police regulations, though it is often difficult to obtain copies of these. During your encounters with police, be forceful rather than tentative, but remain polite.

In extreme cases, police will smash or confiscate and "lose" your equipment to keep you from having evidence against them. If it seems like this might happen, a member of your group should swiftly leave the area with the evidence that has been gathered so far.

Be prepared to be arrested. Though copwatch is not illegal, police will trump up charges. Carry ID and at least \$50 if you want to be able to get out of jail swiftly and easily.

Know what you will and will not do in extreme situations. Consider in advance what risks you are willing to take and what charges you are prepared to receive in order to intervene if someone is being beaten, injured, or killed by the police. Decide this ahead of time and talk about it within your group, so all of you know what to expect from one another. If you copwatch in some areas, you will eventually find yourself in this situation.

Be prepared to follow through on your work. If you couldn't get an arrestee's name and you feel that the situation was bad enough to warrant further investigation or that the abuse will continue after the arrest, go to the station to which he or she has been taken. Loudly and firmly ask what condition the arrestee is in and demand to know the charges he or she has received; explain what you saw during the arrest, and ask to make a complaint against the officers. This makes the police aware that people are concerned and will follow through; it may stop a back room beating.

Be careful leaving the area after a copwatch. Police have been known to follow, ticket, target, or beat copwatchers a few blocks from the site at which they were observed. Don't let down your guard.

Report on what you have seen to your group, to whatever citizen review boards your area has, however ineffective, and to your community at large. Talk to city council members about police conduct, and show them your evidence. Tell them you want hearings and policy changes. Get your information to the National Lawyers Guild and or the ACLU. Tell community and church groups. Write up reports and spread them through local independent media outlets, both websites and papers.

If your copwatch group is ready, you could establish a copwatch hotline, a phone number people can call to report the activities of police officers; you could even have a response team ready to follow up calls. You could also start your own local copwatch paper or website, reporting on your observations, the conduct of local police, and the struggle in your community to survive and thwart police repression.

### **Copwatching Alone**

Don't copwatch alone if there are other options. You should not ignore those in exceptional danger just because you are alone, but be aware that lone copwatching entails taking extra risk. If you have been convicted of felonies, have a lengthy arrest record, or are not a citizen, you should probably not copwatch alone unless the circumstances are really exceptional. Be less assertive in engaging the police or the individual being detained or arrested than you would be if you were in a group. Police officers are much more likely to arrest or assault you if there are no other witnesses present.

Be especially careful to obey the letter of the law. If possible, remain at least

twenty feet from the incident that you are watching; try to phone someone and let him or her know what's happening. As always, take complete notes and, if possible, photos, audio, or videotape of the incident. If you take photos, make sure that they are taken at the last possible moment, to ensure the safety of you and your camera. Be especially careful leaving the area.

### **In Private and Community Spaces: Handling a Police Raid**

If police knock on your door, do not invite them inside; step outside and close the door before speaking to them, locking it behind you if need be. If there are other people in the house, make them aware that the police are present. Don't address other people in the house by name; let them decide how they want to identify themselves. After saying clearly "I do not consent to this search," stand aside and maintain silence. Do not answer any questions.

If you are arrested or detained in the course of a raid, do not resist unless it is absolutely imperative that you escape and there is a high likelihood that you will be able to do so; instead, calmly ask on what basis you are being held. Don't volunteer any information or answer any questions except when you are asked to identify yourself. No matter what they tell you, speaking to the police can never accomplish anything except making things worse for you and those you care about. If you have a lawyer, upon interrogation—whether formal or informal, whether by federal agents or local officers—simply present your lawyer's card and state, "You can speak with my lawyer." If you don't have a lawyer, assert and maintain that you will seek legal counsel before answering questions.

If the police say they have a warrant, ask to see it but do not at that point resist the search. A warrant is simply a piece of paper signed by a judge; it should have an address and some terms of the search. It is not valid without a judge's signature. In most cases, the police cannot enter your residence legally without a warrant. To get a warrant, they must have probable cause and a judge must sign his or her name validating this; judges can be sneaky, but

they also don't want any heat to come back on them. This is why we often don't see warrants used in activist raids: there simply isn't the probable cause. If they can't get a warrant, the police may try to use other pretexts to get in: fire code violations, health violations, looking for people who have warrants out for their arrest. Educate yourself on local laws and municipal code. If the police come by when there is someone inside who has a warrant, it may be best for that person to go outside so the police cannot use this as a justification for entering the building.

If your space may be raided, decide in



advance how you will handle this. Except in a few specific cases—for example, if you are engaged in a political squatting action with widespread community support, and you intend to resist eviction by militant means—it will make the most sense to cooperate carefully with the police, and then take revenge later by legal or extra-legal means. Determine with everyone involved what image you will try to project—"nonviolent peace activists suffering unjust police harassment," for example—and maintain it from the beginning of the process through the follow-up media and court campaigns. Hold discussions in advance, so everyone who may be affected by a police raid knows what to expect, how to conduct themselves, and what their role will be in your response. Make sure everyone is comfortable with the decisions made and understands each other's needs.

Sometimes a police raid will come as a surprise. Other times, especially if they are planning a raid on a larger scale, such as at an infoshop, activist house, or convergence space during a mass mobiliza-



tion, you may be able to see it coming. Stay aware: if they are escalating their surveillance of your building or your activities, this may culminate in a raid. This surveillance may take the form of infiltration by undercover agents, who may be easy to recognize as such—on account of poor acting, suspicious questions, or suddenly getting involved right before an action—or very difficult to detect.



If you are involved in any kind of activity that demands security, your collective should decide ahead of time how careful to be in working with others who desire to get involved in your group and in actions you plan. Do you need to have a vouching system to protect against loose-lipped liberals and undercover cops? Or do you want to work with large numbers of people to such an extent that it makes more sense to leave things wide open? Some collectives decide not to take on last-minute stragglers right before an action: police infiltrators usually show up late, because there isn't enough funding to put them in earlier.

If you are on good terms with groups that are in dialogue with the authorities, they may be able to tip you off when a raid is nigh; likewise, locals familiar with the workings of the local police force might be able to provide useful insights. For a serious raid, the police will establish a staging area a couple blocks from the location, which may give away their plans at the last minute if nothing else has.

In preparing for a potential raid, be conscious of what you have on the premises and what can be found nearby in dumpsters and adjacent lots. Make sure

nobody has any illegal drugs or paraphernalia, recognizably stolen items, or other material which authorities could use against you. Police officers will routinely confiscate such standard household items as paint thinner and PVC pipe and claim the possessors were using them to make bombs. Such ludicrous charges will not generally stand up in court, but they can enable the police to denounce your group to the public; they can also paralyze individuals, preventing them from participating in serious actions until their court cases are finished.

Knives, spray paint, gasoline, anarchist literature, bottles of urine, and other similarly dangerous articles will all be needless liabilities when the police show up, unless you're actually planning to fight them off with the stuff. Be conscious of what can be seen even when your doors are shut and locked; the police can use items "in plain view" to look further, even without a warrant. In extreme cases, the courts have declared it permissible for the police to enter a home to investigate further after seeing something suspicious through a window. Be careful to follow the very letter of the law: police who can find nothing else to use against you may ticket you for parking more than ten inches from the curb, for example.

Have a phone tree in place, to be activated in the case of a raid: there should be a couple numbers you can call to reach people who can instantly call others, and so on, until a large number of people have been informed. It is important that there is always at least one person off-site who knows what to do if he or she is the only person not arrested.

Don't leave phone lists or similar information accessible to the police; there's no sense in doing their intelligence work for them. If those informed by the phone tree converge immediately upon the space being raided, this will force the police to restrain themselves, and show them and the community at large that this is an issue many take seriously; in a best case

scenario, this can even transform the raid into a positive, community-building event. Have local media ready to come: don't miss the chance to have the local alternative or pirate radio station report live from your raid, or to get sympathetic coverage in the alternative press. Plan in advance what spin you want to give the story, so the police play into your hands. Compose a press release ahead of time and have it ready to go out.

If you fear a police raid is possible or imminent, keep a video camera charged and equipped with a blank tape, ready for use in documenting police conduct. You can also hide secret cameras on the premises; these may prove especially important if the police break their own laws in the course of invading your space. Get every single badge number and license plate, and record every movement and action of each individual police officer; in court, it will be very much to your advantage if you can prove that, for example, a police officer who claims he remained outside during the raid was actually upstairs knocking over bookshelves and breaking things. Your camera people should be levelheaded; even if things are heating up, it may be more important in the long run for them to record events as they unfold, calmly and consistently, than to get involved.

Once you've got documentation, keep track of it. Don't edit or adjust it in any way. Be able to prove that your footage has been in your "line of possession" from the time you recorded it to the time it appears in court; this means you should be able to document everywhere it has been, and show that it has been in the care of good, law-abiding citizens the whole time—and as few of these as possible. To this end, it can be wise to leave your material with someone's conservative parents or responsible sister-in-law; this can also be a way to make sure it is not seized in a secondary raid. Keep an organized journal, with times and dates and signatures, detailing all your observations from the time you first begin to fear a raid might take place. After one occurs, compile written narratives, with signatures, from all witnesses and participants, while the events are still fresh in everyone's minds.

If you're in the middle of organizing an action or campaign from the space that may be raided, make sure it won't be crippled by a raid. Keep important materials elsewhere, make sure that all the people in pivotal organizing positions are never in the space all at once, see to it that there

are other spaces to which activities can be shifted. Establish a place to get back together after the raid or ways to reestablish contact with one another and make sure that everyone is accounted for.

When bringing suit against the city over a raid, work out the local chain of command and sue as high in the hierarchy as you can. Those who hold power will attempt to portray any misconduct as the anomalous incompetence of individual underlings; your job is to show that the raid was orchestrated from on high and that the people at the top of the pyramid are to blame, if not the system itself. Get the best lawyer you can—the American Civil Liberties Union is generally a better resource than the National Lawyers' Guild when it comes to violations of 4<sup>th</sup> Amendment rights regarding search and seizure and 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment rights regarding freedom of speech. If you don't own the space that was raided, make sure you have the cooperation of the landlords: emphasize that they too can get something out of the proceedings. Keep the media informed throughout the affair, and keep the pressure on.

### Account

As we were organizing a convergence against a particularly ridiculous meeting of politicians, it became evident that our city's Red Squad had its eyes on us. We continued our work, though we realized that, under the circumstances, we lacked the numbers to go forward with our original plans of turning the city into our playground. We narrowed our focus and message, deciding our best bet would be to embrace the image of pacifist peace activists: this would give us an advantage should the defenders of Power attempt a smear campaign against us. Having established this strategy, we decided that the weekend would go ahead as planned, with a festive street march and demonstrations outside the hotel where the politicians were meeting.

As the dates for the actions approached, we saw a steady increase in police traffic around our collective space, which was serving as a meeting and organizing point for the demonstrations. On multiple occasions, we experienced the unique pleasure of visits from undercover cops. Keeping tabs on liberal organizers we knew maintained ties with the police, we received additional clues that we were facing impending state repression, which was likely to take the form of a raid on our space.

We met as a collective and resolved to act preemptively in order to minimize any possible harm we would suffer and, if possible, humiliate and expose the police. We started by compiling a phone tree of our friends and supporters in the community, as well as a list of local media contacts. Drawing on the precedents established by the numerous police invasions of autonomous spaces that summer, we took a number of precautions, such as removing items that had justified earlier absurd charges against revolutionaries: for example, we removed all kitchen knives and Vitamin C pills, since cooking utensils and supplements had been considered weapons and drugs in other raids. We also cleaned the space and planted new flowers around the house, hoping this would make the police look even more ridiculous should they choose intrude on our space. We stockpiled photo and video cameras, tape recorders, note pads, and other recording devices, and spread them throughout the house, both openly and covertly. We made sure that at least one of the collective members was downstairs at all times, and that our door was always locked—though this was particularly difficult, with so many people coming in and out. People who could not risk arrest stayed at other locations.

Everyone who spent time in the space was briefed on the situation and developed an understanding of the collective's rights. In a move that later proved to be of some importance, we painted the door with some "house rules," including bans on weapons, animal products, and substances. This has since been used in both the media and in legal decisions as a further embarrassment to the police. We also prepared a press release, leaving only a few blank spaces for the details of the expected raid, and left it with an uninvolved family member in case the raid was accompanied by numerous arrests.

Busy as we were with organizing against the meetings, we were still able to keep our space open for concerts and other events. Two nights before the planned protests began, the police arrived during one of these shows, an apolitical folk performance. The raid caused quite a bit of alarm for the artists and visitors! At that time, some of us were leaving to work on the pirate ship puppets—described as "anarchist body armor" in police reports to the media—that we were planning to use for street theater. As we were loading the ships into a pickup truck, we noticed that police vehicles were assembling at

every nearby intersection and decided to attempt to leave. As soon as we began driving, we were pulled over for the most minute of traffic violations. We called back to the space, where police were already knocking on the door. We set in motion our well-planned phone tree, calling our lawyers, leaving reports on answering machines, and informing scores of friends that we were in trouble. It turned out that the police had used supposed fire code violations to get into the house, because it is standard practice in our city for housing inspectors to be "protected" by police. Each cop and each inspector were followed everywhere by comrades from our ranks who documented everything. The police went through our book selection, our kitchen, our desks, our basement, our storage areas, even our bathroom, not to mention the personal belongings of those living upstairs. They searched our whole house and the squatted house next door. They towed our cars, on the ridiculous pretension that they were parked three inches too far from the curb! In the end, they didn't use violence or arrests; they just hoped to scare us and reveal our supposedly violent machinations to the public.

The phone tree, however, paid off. The local media as well as a slam poetry group showed up immediately, along with about fifty of our friends. In conjunction with the drumming and the constant flash of still cameras, the slam poets created an atmosphere of festive defiance and creatively informed the media and curious passers-by about just how fucked up this situation was. While normally hostile to radicals, the local corporate media could not resist covering the obvious foolishness of the police, who wandered about the property en masse with bomb-sniffing dogs while obviously earnest and non-violent activists explained how the events of the evening were—can you believe it?—causing them to "lose faith in this society."

Thanks to the thoroughness of our preparations, we were able to upstage law enforcement prior to the main event of the protests themselves; this coup gave us much-needed attention and credibility. Additionally, afterwards we were able to succeed in suing the city for tens of thousands of dollars. This enabled us to fund many new subversive projects, which the forces of order are even less equipped to deal with in the aftermath of their ill-thought-out raid.

# Handbook for the Traveling Houseguest

So, you're sick of your town and headed out into the world. You expect to find a trail of places to stay easily enough by means of notes with addresses, scribbled phone numbers of friends of friends, sister houses, and rumors of after-show living rooms for

your path, not to mention a string of free motels, houses to stay at, a (barely) overground railroad. Occupants therein have likely had bodies clad like yours shelter with them dozens and dozens of times before, and will not demand any rationale for your travels. Having



sleeping. It'll be a snap. You'll carry little and expect little, meet sparkle-eyed new punk friends, solve problems with great adventurous yield, take in conferences and gatherings here and there, and suck the very nipple of romance itself, you vagabond hobo you.

The prospects are bright, indeed. Your calendar is clear, you have enough time and wits to get all over the damn place and back, your immunity is high, you're innovative in a pinch. You have the trains, your thumb, scams in mind, counterfeit coupons, and punk connections to boot.

However, one thing works both for and against you: many just like you have come before. Insofar as that is true, there is traveling punk protocol to light

followed the string of would-be motels themselves before, they know better than to turn you away at the door. You're in. But that many just like you have come before can also mean that you're out. Many of your predecessors have left a stinky wake behind them that solicits a requisite groan the minute the word houseguest is spoken. You, aspiring wonderful houseguest, are there to dodge the groan from the moment you arrive. You, aspiring wonderful houseguest, are an asset-in-training to punk houses everywhere.

## House Manners

*Be observant.* The rule of thumb is to follow your hosts' lead. Do they eat

dinner together, go to bed early, turn lights out as they leave the room, share the groceries, leave shoes at the door? Take your cues from them... believe me, they're there to be taken.

*Sleep neat and be tidy.* Stuff your sleeping bag into its sack in the morning, roll up your extra socks, bundle up your things and put them into the closet or corner. Bring your own toothbrush, sweep up your messes.

*Be helpful.* Offer to run an errand, babysit for an hour, clean the toilet, pick up the day old bread from the bakery, fix the broken bicycles, repair the drips the landlord never does, sew the tear in the sofa created by the last guest, do all the dishes—not just the ones you create. As a traveler you probably have greater flexibility with your time than your hosts do. Consider what they do all day. Does it interest you? Should they need help, offer to tag along. You can help make packages for a program that sends books to prisoners, or assist in promoting a fundraiser for local projects. You could cook for a secret café, help set up for a show, hang up posters, be a supporter at somebody's court hearing, or spread word for any number of important events. The Girl Scout vows to always leave her space better than she found it; consider that old-fashioned but ever-applicable motto as you drop in on the communities you encounter in your travels. You are the migrant worker of revolutionary projects everywhere!

*Be self-reliant.* If the house hosting you has a standing weekly house dinner or house problem to work out, assure them that you have a good book, would love to take a walk, were hoping to get a letter off, and will look for them another time. It's generally a good idea to find places to be most of the day other than the house, so as not to wear on anybody's nerves. Find a public library, free museum, or basketball court; rest in the park; look into community-sponsored events, fairs, and presentations; find out what talks are happening at the

local college; go out to the dumpsters and bring back your bounty, making sure to dispose of all your hosts don't want yourself. Go ruffle some feathers out there in the city—but if you run into an authority while doing so, don't immediately go running back to your hosts' house where you could wrap them up in it too.

## House Presents

Yes, you should bring one. Put some thought into the gift. What do your hosts do with their leisure time? Garden, cook, read? Try to match your gift to their interests—unless, of course, these are watching TV and drinking heavily. In that case, feel free to present them with something different that you particularly enjoy and could pass on to them: sock tag, curiosity about a nearby landmark, wacky cake baking—at least that way you won't be politely bored the whole time! If you don't know your hosts' interests, arrive with food and the ability to prepare it, and plan to leave something small but singularly appropriate with your thank you note as you leave. Don't worry about it. A creative memento will receive the highest marks. Is the house lacking hot-pads? Sew one from freebox scraps with their house name or motto on it and rest in their hearts forever. Collect street sweeper bristles and weave them into an ornament to hang from a tree branch at the house entry.

Whatever you do, don't just leave them with more junk to deal with long after you leave. It's got to be useful or special or at least be a thoughtful reference to an experience you had among them. The opposite of house presents are the leftover dumpstered items and foodstuffs that some unwise guests leave to sit collecting dust or rotting in the kitchens of frustrated hosts.

## The Traveling Punk as Carrier Pigeon

Mention where you're heading next to the people hosting you. Perhaps you could transport a bundle between friends who live in different cities. One especially unique thing about a nomadic subculture is that we can depend on our old-fashioned word-of-mouth

communication networks in times of increased surveillance of mail, email, and telephone conversations. You can take secret messages between people, along with news and reminders. If you see something wonderful happening in Houston, be sure to pass it along to the people you know in Gainesville who could build on it and make it their own. Be a carrier pigeon that brings inspiration, tales of tragedies and victories to live by, folklore and plans from one battlefield to another.

## Horrors to Avoid

One house got evicted after a guest's dog companion rushed the neighbor's cat, maimed it, killed it, then began to bark incessantly. The landlords were called, and this final straw broke the camel's back.

One houseguest stayed in town long

enough to make out with a bunch of people, break some hearts, upset a few couples who didn't see it coming, and ring up an expensive long distance phone bill.

One meat-free house was filled with the stench of a rodent being boiled over the stove for hours when for a houseguest decided to part the dead animal's skin from its muscle and bones.

One houseguest carried strep throat from house A to every member of house B by forgetting to wash up while sick.

One house got wrapped up in some police drama when a guest shoplifted some running shoes from a nearby mall and got chased all the way back "home."

One houseguest decided to abide by this list of guidelines so obsessively that he had so little fun adventuring that he never left town again.



# RECIPES FOR DINNER: Vegan

# French Toast

*Blend or whisk together two cups of soymilk, one tablespoon of margarine, five or six ounces*

I met E--- in a Chicago apartment at a small party following a show. I was mute, as my band had just played and I was suffering from serious vocal damage, and she was no more outgoing than me, despite being on her home turf; we were the two people sitting silently against opposite walls on either side of the chatting, jesting crowd.

By the end of the night, everyone else was at home or asleep, and we were pressed together in the stairwell, alternately kissing and recounting segments of our life stories in excited whispers. I had lost my voice entirely for eleven days straight the previous year, and had thought it gone forever; she had experienced something similar, having gone blind for some months as a child—although an operation had eventually restored her eyesight, she still had to gather her courage in the morning before opening her eyes for the first time. I was on tour with a punk rock band, and had already seen much of the world that way; she, too, had traveled the world, running away as a teenager to hop trains, squat empty buildings, and perform fire tricks with an anarchist circus in New Orleans and on street corners in Key West—hence the tattoos, piercings, and worn black coveralls. I hoped to put my art at the service of revolution; she was doing so herself, screenprinting radical posters, welding metal fortifications onto bicycles for street protests, designing a calendar to be sold as a benefit for friends who had been arrested at a recent demonstration. I was an anarchist warrior, aspiring to bring about the downfall of capitalism; she kept her scalp shaved from her forehead to the crest of her skull and wore blonde dreadlocks behind that, as the women warriors of the Native American tribe she counted among her ancestors did. I was terrified of death, as there was so much I still longed to do; she was living with two different terminal illnesses and a host of other medical problems, and had made her peace with the idea that the end might come at any moment.

I didn't return with her to her apartment that night; I was in a long-running love relationship that was tumultuous enough already. She departed reluctantly just before dawn, and I lay down to get a couple hours of sleep before my band left for the next show. That was the end of the honeymoon phase; things between us would never again be so simple.

Two months later, she came to join me at my friend M---'s place in Pittsburgh. It was the week before Bush's inauguration—the second Bush's first inauguration, to be precise, as I'm sure the citizens of the Roman Empire had to be in their day—and she generously set aside the time to teach us what she knew about screenprinting and other forms of do-it-yourself art, so we could show up with plenty of subversive material to share with the dissatisfied masses.

We spent each day in a delirium of experimentation and invention. We ransacked the library, pouring through the rare book collection for formulas and formats we could appropriate. We stole all the priority mail stickers from every post office in Pittsburgh, spread them out on the floor of M---'s studio, and used bargain-priced mis-mixed housepaint to paint them white; as they dried, we stenciled designs on them, then stamped slogans across them with a stamper improvised out of wire and shoelace and dipped in mis-mixed black housepaint. We stayed up all night in Kinko's, taking turns distracting the seemingly drug-addled night shift employee while ripping off as many photocopied pamphlets and posters as we could fit in E---'s van. We built a screenprinting apparatus, went to another Kinko's and stole all their posterboard, and screenprinted hundreds of huge multi-color posters decrying George W. Bush as a murderer<sup>1</sup>, one of which later occasioned an FBI visit to the dorm room of a student who had hung it on her wall. E--- took M--- and me to a party, an affair far outside our usual social regimen; we barricaded ourselves behind the refreshments table, gorging ourselves and excitedly scrawling crazy diagrams on the backs of paper

*of silken tofu, one teaspoon each of vanilla and cinnamon, two shakes allspice, and half a*

plates as we hashed out the centerfold of our next propaganda paper and fought off the inebriated bores who didn't understand why we weren't drinking with them.

Privately, things were more complicated. Owing to her medical condition, E--- had trouble with little things like climbing stairs, but didn't feel comfortable enough to say out loud what she was struggling with; I often played intermediary between her and others, trying to help her avoid or escape uncomfortable situations that were invisible to others. More complicated still were the dynamics between us: we were still attracted to each other, but I was also still involved with someone else, deep in denial of what I was feeling and doing, and this couldn't have been easy for her. We were both sleeping in the living room, I on the couch and E--- in her sleeping bag on the floor; at night, after everyone else had gone to sleep, she and I would talk, and I would end up on the floor with her, our bodies entangled. Then, as indecisive and inconsiderate boys have since time immemorial, I would get up and go to sleep on the couch, as if nothing had happened. If I regret anything from that period of my life, it is that I didn't stay with her on the floor those nights; it wouldn't have been any more disloyal than what I was doing already. Non-monogamy has since taught me and many others a lot about how to handle such situations, but nothing can wipe away mistakes already made.

Holding E--- in my arms, I could feel the dents in her ribcage from the time skinheads had found her and her friends sleeping in an abandoned building and assaulted them. I have a particularly vivid memory of one night when, immediately after we made love, she had to get up and pace up and down the room for half an hour to work off the adrenaline from the pain that came with her medical problems. I lay there, naked and shuddering on a floor far from home, having just been unfaithful to my partner, overcome by how interconnected desire and tragedy seemed to be, wishing

desperately that I had some idea where to start to make up to E--- and the others I loved all the injustices of the heartbreaking world, not least the ones I was responsible for.

At the end of the week, we all went to Washington, D.C. together; among other things, we were to assist in operating a pirate radio station through the events. M--- brought along his friend T--, a performance artist who, having never been to the capital city before, decided to experience the entire inauguration and attendant protests blindfolded. This occasioned hilarious conversations in which E--- and I imagined the strategic possibilities of a Blind Bloc, which the police would be afraid to attack for fear of bad publicity.

The inauguration protests came and went in a flurry of black bandanas, liberal signs about electoral fraud, and light midwinter drizzle. Flushed with excitement after an invigorating day of flier distribution and illegal broadcasting, E--- and I drove with a full vehicle of maniacs to a small party at an apartment hosting friends of hers.

For the first time in the days I'd spent with her, E--- spent the evening drinking. By the end of it, she was thoroughly drunk and in bad condition. On the trip back, she lay prone and semiconscious in the back seat of her van; as she was the only one who knew the route, she called out the turns to us as we came upon them, her eyes closed and her voice slurred, and thus guided us back to the house at which we were to sleep. This she did flawlessly, despite not even being able to control her bodily functions; as a train-riding hobo, her acute sense of direction was a point of pride.

When we arrived at our destination, the others went inside, while I helped her out of the van. Leaning with her head against the van, vomiting in waves, mortified to be in this condition with me, she tearfully insisted that I must hate her and that I should leave; steadying her, searching for the words I needed, I insisted in return that I cared about her and wanted to be there. She confessed that, fearing

<sup>1</sup> At the time, these were a reference to his tenure as governor of Texas, during which 152 prisoners had been put to death. In view of the incalculable loss of life that has taken place under his reign since then, these posters, in which the former governor is depicted in the act of pulling the rope at a lynching, now seem like a throwback to a more innocent time.

<sup>2</sup> Stay tuned for the sheet music for the blues traditional “On Bread Alone,” appearing next issue.

***teaspoon of sweetener. Dip the bread in it, then cook it in a frying pan, preferably of cast iron.***

M--- and I would think less of her if we knew she was an alcoholic, she had forcefully restrained herself from drinking during the week she spent with us; now her tolerance was lower, and she had misjudged her limits. Privately cursing a cosmos that would torment its most precious creatures into pursuing oblivion and self-destruction, I continued wiping her face with my bandana, and struggled unsuccessfully to reassure her.

After this, she and I only saw each other once more, when she passed through my home state just long enough to help me pick up a van-load of magazines from a printer. I went to Europe for six months, and she moved to another city and joined a long-standing anarchist collective. Near the end of my trip, we exchanged emails. She confided that she had waited so long to contact me because she was afraid that I was angry with her. I assured her that, on the contrary, I was eager to reestablish contact with her, that I wanted to be a part of her life for a long time to come. We began to make ambitious plans together: we would travel to see each other again when I returned to the U.S.A., we would screenprint a new line of posters together, we would start an anarchist circus and tour the country offering wild performances and educational workshops...

The day I got off the airplane from Europe, I received the news that she and one of her friends had been killed in a car accident the night before while driving back from an adventure in Hawaii. A postcard in her handwriting waited in my room, mailed a few days earlier: in glowing language, she described her time on the islands as an earthly paradise of squatting, sunbathing, and food gathering. I found bittersweet consolation in imagining that, after such a difficult life, she had spent her last days in uncomplicated bliss.

E--- lived and died like a firecracker in a world constructed to smother every spark. Knowing death to be at her heels, she kept ahead of it, living like there really was no tomorrow. Others, fearing death and captivity, institutionalize those things in their lives through their attempts to escape them; knowing she had no hope of escape,

she rushed headlong into life, cheating the illnesses that waited to claim her by reaching death ahead of them in the course of sucking the marrow out of every day of her existence.

I was in love with E---, not in the way that bourgeois couples describe themselves as being in love when they mean they've found a mutually beneficial investment, but simply thrilled to bear witness to the extraordinary human being she was, the jagged edges no less than the shining core. I consider myself honored to have been privy to a few of the difficult aspects of her life as well as some of the heroic ones. The true stories of brave and beautiful people like her never get to be told, not even in eulogies, because they give away too much about the living, and because they aren't clean, aren't perfect like the fairytale lives we all feel we are supposed to have. None of us alive today are living those spotless fairytales, either; perhaps we can't be forthcoming about the aspects of our lives that are of interest to the repressive authorities, but we would do well to be open about our so-called imperfections, our mistakes and shame and suffering, while we are still alive and can help each other weather them.

What does this have to do with recipes? One of the many wonderful things I learned from E--- was how to prepare really excellent vegan french toast. She emailed me the recipe she had used in Pittsburgh to cook the bread M--- and I had dumpstered, and I use it to this day to impress friends. It's especially useful for people in my walk of life, as bread is so much easier to acquire outside the capitalist economy than anything else is that it's sometimes possible to imagine our enemies are trying to kill us with it<sup>2</sup>. A good french toast recipe can make all those loaves of stiffening gluten into a potential treasure trove of culinary delight. As to how you're supposed to gather soy milk, silken tofu, vanilla, and all the other fancy ingredients it calls for, I can't help you there—but you're resourceful, aren't you? E--- certainly didn't have any trouble harvesting them.

# for Andres Raya

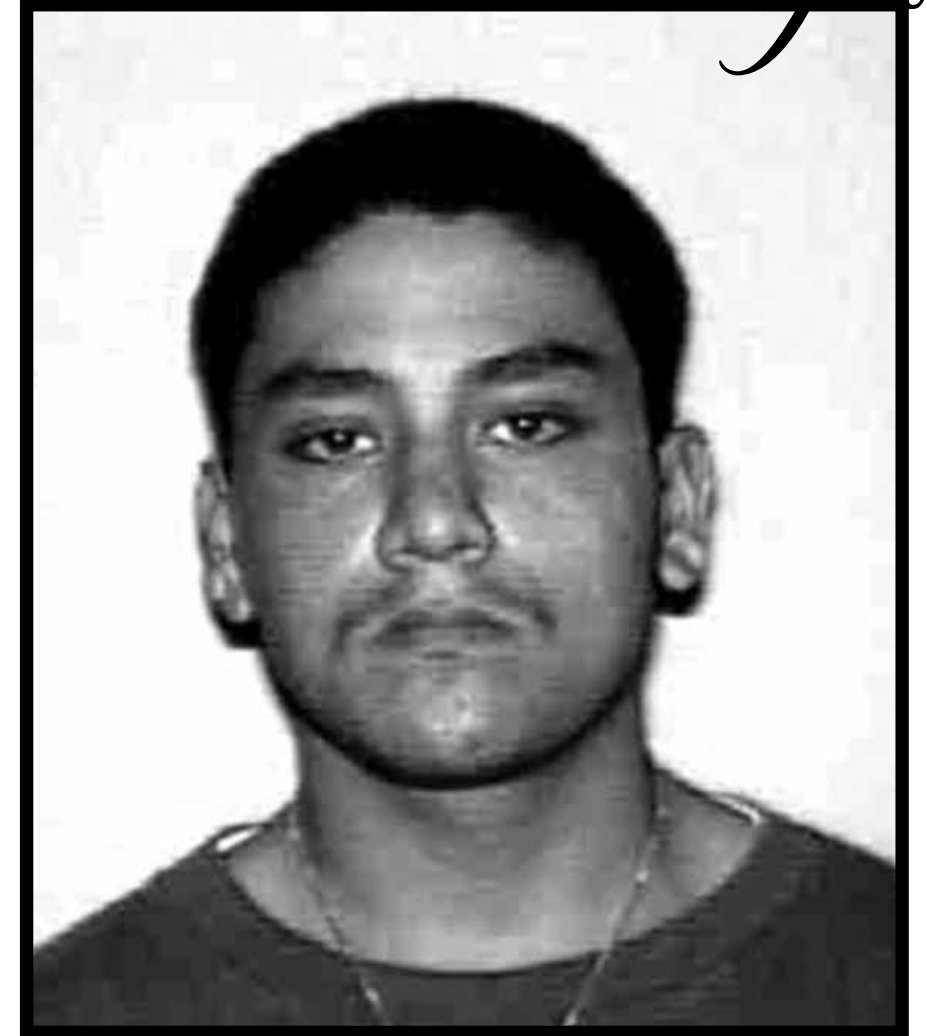
On January 9, 2005, outside a Ceres, CA liquor store, Andres Raya ambushed the police. Raya had earlier fired into the air, hid his assault rifle, and rushed into the store requesting police assistance. Raya shot and killed arriving Ceres police Sgt. Howard Stevenson, and seriously wounded officer Sam Ryno. Raya then fled. He died later following a cop stakeout and another confrontation, in which he was shot eighteen times.

Raya was nineteen years old. He had spent seven months of 2004 as a Marine with the 1st Intelligence Battalion, assigned to Iraq. While there, Raya earned three medals and a ribbon for his service. Raya was on family leave in California, set to depart again for duty.

One account of Raya's attack on the cops gives the gunman's words to a local resident as he ran from police: “Don't worry, you're a civilian. You won't get hurt.”

The Ceres police have denied that the action had any connection to Iraq. They ignore eyewitness testimony. Gangs, drugs and rap music are instead put forward as probable causes. According to autopsy reports, Raya had cocaine in his system. It is hard to know whether to trust these reports—authorities have every reason to skew them. Few in Raya's community believe that he was a gangster, even if he may have had friends in gangs. No amount of empty talk from our rulers can cover up the essential truths. Andres Raya did not want any more medals. He wanted nothing more to do with US society. He fought in the way he knew how to, as a soldier. Raya's final enemy was Uncle Sam.

Andres Raya may not have been a hero, but he was not a villain either. He was a Chicano working class teen who acted as he could. He was a Marine who went to war against America. He played his role in society, and then he tried to break out.



According to the newspapers, Raya and some accomplices broke into a local school on December 28. Video footage from the burglary allegedly showed Raya smoking pot, flashing gang signs and tearing up U.S. flags to leave a “Fuck Bush” message on the floor. Despite the “gang” nonsense in the news, there's only one thing to say about the school incident: in a sick society, such rebellion is healthy. Raya clearly understood that school, work, poverty, and war are all part of the same problem. Between his time in Iraq, and his upcoming military assignment in Japan, Raya realized that there was something terribly wrong about the system worldwide. After attacking a school, Raya targeted the police.

The cops always symbolize raw, naked power against impoverished communities. Perhaps Raya saw connections between his military role in Iraq and the role of police in cities in the U.S.A. In America, cops fill up prisons that are no better than Abu Ghraib. In both Iraq and the U.S.A., patrols target whole communities, because everyone there could potentially be an insurgent. Most folk have every reason to refuse poverty and brutality. They're right to cast off the roles they've been taught. The cops exist to prevent resistance. When police are attacked, that makes sense.

Raya must have known that he was killing himself when he struck out. He was furious,

... and All of Us



**Here follows a report from a member of the DAAA Collective in Modesto, CA on their experiences distributing a flier version of the above eulogy:**

Last Friday we headed down town for anarchist café, an activity that involves about twenty or so feet of literature, food of some sort, and now films. We made copies of the Andy Raya flier in two sizes.

Almost immediately a young woman came up to us with her friends; she took the flier and almost started crying. She told us that she was Andy's cousin, and thanked us over and over again for putting the flier out. We then talked a bit about the repression of youth and people in Ceres, and the coverage police harassment had been getting in local newspapers—on the front page in the Spanish speaking press. We then gave her a copy of our outreach flier, and traded phone numbers for future collaboration.

I then took off to go visit my dad in the hospital, but this is what I got from the others who remained. A man and his wife approached the table and saw the flier. According to other collective members, the man was a little drunk. He only read a couple sentences of the flier, then started screaming about how we were supporting a gang member and cop killer. He went on to

curse a lot and called all the members of Raya's family and community gang members. He also identified himself as a friend of the police officer who died, and as a former city council member of Ceres. The collective members were very calm, and tried to get across to the man that the flier was not in praise of Raya's actions, per se, but rather a critical consideration of the reasons behind his actions. The man stayed around for a while, and then left. A minute or so later, he stormed back, grabbed the larger poster fliers, and went for the smaller ones. Some people tried to stop him, but he managed to grab the fliers and then proceeded to rip them up and throw them away. He then called the police.

The police got there, and he tried to make a weak case that we were passing out flyers about Raya. Okay. The police, frankly not really caring that much, and also knowing that the man was in the wrong, told the man to go home, and then left.

Some of Raya's friends were in fact next to the man during the whole ordeal, and were very upset by his words and actions. They were on the verge of physical confrontation, and even got on the phone to call more friends.

Anyway, a interesting response. Thanks to Social War for making the flier—it has helped us to make further connections for future organizing.

not ignorant. Raya's despair wasn't unusual. From U.S. police getting away with murder—like the nearby Modesto police killing of Sammy Galvan in August 2004—to the massacre in Fallujah, it's hard to know how to react to this catastrophic society. We lead tragic lives at school, work, and home, because there doesn't seem to be any other way. We put up with everyday humiliation, even as it takes its toll on us. Andres Raya did not accept the disaster of our lives. He struggled, killed, and died.

The tributes to Sgt. Stevenson disgust us. Cops never deserve our tears. As long as police terrorize communities—that is, as long as police exist—cop funerals should be spat upon. We are saddened that Raya is no longer around, though. We hate society with the same intensity he did. Unlike the gunman, however, we do not see our refusal of society to be suicide. What would have happened if Raya met more who were like him? Could we not have come up with a plan? We can all say “no” when ordered to eat shit. We can fight back in ambitious ways, and with all our strength. Let's get together, not just lash out one by one. Respect to Ceres taggers, who write better than every journalist. RIP Andy—Fuck the police—Let's start to live.

comments: info@socialwar.net

# Against Love: A Polemic & Ecstasy Unlimited: On Sex, Capital, Gender, and Aesthetics

two books by Laura Kipnis

*Against Love* is the recently published full-length work that grew from the same seed as the article on adultery in the third Harbinger some years back. In this work, Kipnis fixes a merciless eye on the miseries that transpire in monogamous relationships, not resting until every public secret of married life and its equivalents is laid bare. She then applies political and economic analyses to this social subject, works out all the implications of the ways infidelity scandals play out in the public sphere, and comes up with a critique of bondage and repression that extends from boardroom to bedroom and back again. Existing in a society in which love is touted as the one remaining bastion of pleasure and escape, but in which “good relationships take work” and an enormous industry has grown up around medicating, counseling, and indoctrinating the industrious yet still joyless inmates of what Kipnis terms “domestic gulags,” we suffer the contradictions of capitalism in our relationships with each other as much as our relationships with the market economy. Taking the struggle for liberation seriously enough to wage it on every front, Kipnis takes up for cheating, arguing that this indefensible behavior is actually an attempt, albeit a confused one, to explore lives forbidden to us by the senseless injunctions of our culture. This is exactly the kind of radical literature I get excited about: assaulting institutions so familiar as to be practically invisible and thus unassailable, it manages to be insightful and inciting at the same time; the author's lyrical brilliance and biting wit are icing on an already fortifying cake.

But what solution does she propose, you ask? Throughout the book, Kipnis focuses on adultery as the opposition to monogamous fidelity, neglecting the possibility of opting out of traditional coupledness altogether. One might think a book purporting to be *Against Love* would do more than explain why some flee from love into, as Kipnis herself admits, more love: it might critique the ways we rely upon our relations with others to give meaning to our lives, for example. For my part, as an advocate



(and sometime practicer, if an embattled one) of non-monogamous relationships and a former adulterer of no small notoriety, I have to say I regard adultery as monogamy's problematically *loyal* opposition. I think it's

actually quite surprising that Kipnis doesn't address polyamory or other alternatives to monogamy monoculture here; sure, it's silly to waste time speculating about life after the revolution when there's a struggle to be fought here and now, but an intrinsic part of that struggle is crossing the line *out* of oppression into relationships free of coercion and deception. Kipnis might argue that most of today's non-monogamous relationships are plagued by the same dynamics that have made monogamy insufferable, and are therefore just as objectionable (I imagine she'd make a clever analogy to the effect that these are to marriages what “real existing socialism” was to capitalism)—and I could be persuaded to agree with her. But if we're talking about full-scale social revolution—and Kipnis drops hints left and right that she is—then extolling mere isolated rebellions is not enough. We have to talk about what we're fighting for.

Quibbling aside (for that matter, are we going to use biodiesel or vegetable oil after the revolution?), I recommend this book as one of the most important radical texts to be published in the past couple years—yes, over and above anything by Noam Chomsky or Howard Zinn, since it challenges us on issues we all grapple with directly, rather than merely informing us about matters distant in space or time. If you enjoy it, I suggest you go to a library and check out an earlier book of hers, *Ecstasy Unlimited*, a collection of essays and film scripts in which, foreshadowing her more recent work, she endeavors to frame what I would describe as an extra-activist radicalism: a resistance that is not the specialty of a protester vanguard or intellec-



tual class, but instead proceeds from the subversive desires present throughout all levels of society.

Kipnis argues that these desires must inform our participation in social struggles. Discussing so-called “mainstream” backlash against feminist politics, she cites a consumer study which analysts found that a majority of housewives preferred roach spray over roach poison “because it allowed them to participate in the kill” and “a lot of their feelings about roaches turned out to be similar to their feelings about the men in their lives”; here, Kipnis argues, barely concealed beneath the pretense of suburban sanitation, is a furious rage that should be playing out in social upheaval, not consumer sublimation. Why are many of these women so alienated by the existing feminist movement that they decline to participate in it at all? And what would it take to foment a new movement that could deliver on their desires?

Kipnis explores this subject further in her screenplay “A Man’s Woman,” a takeoff on the life of Phyllis Schlafly, a reactionary conservative woman who, ironically, rose to national prominence on the platform that women should stay out of public life and power. Given that as long as hierarchies exist, there are always going to be people ready to be what Malcolm X would have called house niggers, it’s worth asking what forces compel people to transform their own yearnings for liberation into tools of repression, and how these forces might be offset.

Kipnis is never one to avoid a controversial topic or confrontational conclusion. In one of these essays, she sets aside her feminism to consider what she finds to be a powerful subtext of militant class consciousness in, of all publications, *Hustler* magazine. This goes be-

yond questions of censorship and obscenity: if *Hustler* uses the sexist medium of pornography to mount attacks on bourgeois proprieties and capitalist power, how are class conscious feminists to negotiate their allegiances?

The final piece in the book is her screenplay “Marx: the Video—A Politics of Revolting Bodies.” The central metaphor of the film is Marx’s struggle with illness—carbuncles, to be precise, a “proletarian disease” afflicting a dropout from the middle class—as a physical manifestation of the struggle between capital and worker, present and future, death and life: “like a body trying to turn itself into another body.” Here, again, we have the grand themes of history playing out on an intimate level, one of Kipnis’s fortes. A suffering Marx faces the end with humorous rancor: “At any rate, I hope the bourgeoisie will remember my carbuncles all the rest of their lives.” The film itself ends with an exhortation: “Sometimes the lines in the conflict over power are clear: sides can be taken, social revolutions enacted. Other times, they are less so; confused in such moments, we can begin by interrogating ourselves.”

For my part, I’ll post below in grey the conclusion to “Ecstasy Unlimited,” the film script from which her book derives its title, a summary of her account of modern sexuality that is characteristic of her total approach.

## Do or Die—Voices from the Ecological Resistance, Issue 10

As radical publications go, this 382-page blowout final issue of England’s long-running premier eco-anarchist/direct action

journal is absolutely essential. If anyone else is publishing material this refined, uncompromising, and comprehensive, it’s news to me! The first one hundred pages (!) are dedicated to an exhaustive analysis of the past and present of anti-authoritarian environmental activism in the U.K. and the world around it, coupled with an all-encompassing proposal of future strategy. The sheer arrogance of such an undertaking is inspiring, and while not everyone will agree with their emphases (they pass over workplace organizing and so on to concentrate on protecting threatened ecosystems, nurturing counter-cultures that can survive industrial collapse, and solidarity with those in resistance outside the West) it’s great to see somebody thinking in terms of the big picture.

And that’s only the tip of the iceberg. Proceeding on, we encounter an interview with infamous animal rights saboteur Rod Coronado, a discussion of the pros and cons of different approaches to creating autonomous social spaces, and a primer on herbal healing. In well-researched extensively-footnoted (yet not boring) expositions, the reader can learn about the history of Morocco’s occupation of the Western Sahara, the recent anti-authoritarian insurrection in Algeria, and current revolts and repression in Colombia, Bolivia, Guatemala, Ecuador, Surinam, and more. In addition to the environmental focus, there’s an insurrectionist slant here, as evidenced by “Without a Trace,” a piece glorifying anonymous, decentralized revolt, and of course the introductory piece entitled “Insurrectionary Anarchy”; I can’t say I’m convinced that secret acts of sabotage alone will be enough to change the world, but I agree that putting organization before activity means confounding means and ends. If you want a break from the serious stuff,

you can read about a famous prison break, or humorous stories of animals outwitting humans, or any of the various crazed letters to the editor. On top of all this, there are extensive reviews of a variety of other radical papers and books.

One can only hope that some equally formidable journal will appear to fill the vacuum *Do or Die* leaves behind it—and that the adjacent vacuums in other strains of radical thinking and organizing, as yet unfilled, will be seen to as well. In the meantime, though this final issue is by now almost certainly out of print, look for it in the collections of your radical friends and local infoshops.

*Do or Die* c/o Prior House, 6 Tilbury Place, Brighton BN2 2GY, England ([www.eco-action.org/dod](http://www.eco-action.org/dod), [doordtp@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:doordtp@yahoo.co.uk))



## Vagabond Isabelle Eberhardt

*“What I long for is the freedom of going about alone...”*

-Isabelle Eberhardt, *Vagabond*

Sitting on the couch in the living room at the punk house on Cedar Street, I thumbed through a few paperbacks on the coffee table. There were some interesting titles in the pile, but the third from the bottom, especially, caught my eye. *Vagabond*, it was titled. Flipping through, I read a few lines:

“He listened vaguely to the chaotic Babel of conversation going on around him, deep voices joking in different languages, arguments inside the frail tents buffeted by the wind. His place was here now. He would curl up here, make a niche for himself amongst these companions, each of whom had his own secret past. All

these lads had had cruel and damaging things happen to them, and now they were blotting them out, escaping. They had abandoned for a while their cumbersome personalities, as if they were shedding a garment that was too restrictive, and assuming another that enabled them to walk more at ease, to live a freer inner life under the tyranny of rules, relieved of the dead weight of responsibility. In this return to the warmth of the herd, to animal life, there was a sense of relief at casting off a burden, a lightening of the chest.”

Only moments away from my own departure, I felt a little resonance with this writing, this talk of travel and the casting off of old weights. I decided to steal the book.

Later, I recognized the author, whose name had sounded vaguely familiar but elusive; it was Isabelle Eberhardt! I’d heard stories of her, the legendary nomad who traveled through North Africa disguised as a young Arab man, joining up with mysterious Sufi sects and wreaking havoc across the Algerian Sahara, shocking the tame French settlers with her libertine way of life. Isabelle Eberhardt—who remains the only European woman to have ever witnessed the ritual “fantasia,” who fought and killed with a dagger an officer of the French colonial police in the uprising at Bone, who survived assassination and conspiracy to die at the age of 27 in a flash flood in the desert outside of the Ain Sefra military base in Morocco.

She was born in Geneva in 1877, the daughter of Russian exiles. During her life, she published scores of articles and short stories in various European and African journals, which were collected posthumously into books and published along with her diaries. Her only novel, *Timardeur* (“Vagabond”), remained unfinished at the time of her sudden death. In 1922, a friend of Isabelle, Victor Barrucand, published *Timardeur* with an ending he pieced together from some of Isabelle’s papers. It wasn’t until 1988 that the novel made its first appearance in English, translated from the French by Annette Kobak.

*Vagabond* is the story of Dimitri Orshanow, a Russian anarchist who gives up his life as a student in Saint Petersburg and travels south, as a migrant worker and vagabond, through Europe and eventually to Africa, where he joins the Foreign Legion. In this highly autobiographical



work, Eberhardt discusses many of the dilemmas that she faced herself while writing the novel: love versus lust, individual emancipation versus the dogma of collective revolution, university study versus the study of life experience. It is a rough, very flawed novel, with an unrefined, unfinished feel. The tone is warm and contemplative, with a distinctly Russian style; perhaps Eberhardt drew influence from the tradition of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky.

For me, the book was a guide, a map through the world of adventure, a volume I could consult for advice during my own travels. The words derive their power from the experience of Isabelle’s life. Her passionate and relentless search for answers in a world that only offers excuses truly shines through the character of Dimitri Orshanow and continues today to push me on towards the horizon, towards worlds of which I have not even dreamed. While packing up for my own Drift, I decisively left out the *Lets Go!* travel guide, throwing in Isabelle Eberhardt’s “Vagabond” instead. After all, when there’s limited space, we’ve got to keep our priorities straight, right?

*Vagabond* and all of Eberhardt’s other writings are recommended for anyone who is interested in the things life has to offer beyond what Ronald McDonald and his army of burger servants can provide. Recommended for fans of Dostoevsky and Alexander Supertramp, it is a tale of raw adventure, a meditation on the price an anarchist must often pay for freedom. It is a testament to what is possible, if we have the courage to follow our hearts, be they frozen or enflamed, focused or confused, so long as they are free.

-Jon Sarrows, Stockholm



Our sexuality is not repressed, it is produced, and in forms custom-made to our social order.

The paths to pleasure are frequently not pretty, but they are our pleasures. Instead of denying them or glorifying them, we can try to understand them.

Our sexuality is produced in the form of a commodity; our fantasies are repackaged and sold to us as products in porn stores; our desire has the grammar of consumer capitalism, and those sexual forms will exist as long as those social forms exist.

It is ironic when we believe our “liberation” is in the balance.

Instead, we could say of sex what was once said of religion: that our pleasure is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people.

To do away with the illusion that we have chosen these pleasures is to demand new choices.

The call to abandon illusions about a condition is a call to abandon all conditions that require illusions.

To critique our mode of sexuality is to criticize the mode of social organization that produces it.

## The Foundation: Lies and Half Truths

I cannot be expected to pen an objective review of this zine. It is about a house I used to live in a long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away. There is something comforting and a little unhealthy about seeing pieces of your life set down in print, and I am not sure how relevant these stories would be to me if I had not been so intimately involved. With all of that being said, though, I am really glad that this zine exists, and I recommend it highly.

*Lies and Half Truths* tells the tale of the rise and spectacular fall of The Foundation, a squat cinderblock hovel floating in a sea of kudzu on top of an abandoned landfill on the eastern outskirts of a certain shithole southern city. It is the dare I say archetypal story of some people (and other animals) who came together for a time, loved and cared for each other, did some glorious deeds, failed and betrayed each other, did some truly awful shit, attained a kind

of transcendence, and went their separate ways. The story is bittersweet and beautiful in much the same way that *Tortilla Flat* by John Steinbeck is, and that is no small compliment in my book.

It's worth noting that, on a purely visual and tactile level, the zine is superbly done. It is thick and fat and feels nice to hold, is full of evocative color pictures, and is handwritten in neat and legible script. Also, the author shows real skill and style in arranging a whole lot of vignettes to trace the arc of the big picture. It's no fault of her own, but it's also worth mentioning that the writer simply wasn't around for some of the most inspiring and positive things that happened out at that place, especially in the beginning. I do wish that some more of those stories could have found their way into this collection, since they make the ultimate demise of the house that much more compelling. Her account unavoidably reflects one perspective on what was a complicated and multi-faceted set of experiences for a whole lot of people.

The Foundation was a refuge for outlaws and renegades, a sanctuary for the lawless and ungovernable, and an asylum for sinners, outcasts, and pariahs of every description. It was a den of thieves and urban pirates, home to an ever-expanding cast of ex-convicts, known felons, middle-aged vagrants, abused runaways, recovering addicts, hopeless drunks, sensitive activists, and homicidal maniacs. I learned more about direct action and mutual aid there than I ever would have from a thousand protests and pamphlets. It means a lot to me that someone finally took the time to write about it. Toward the end she says, accurately, that "everyone who ever went out there turned feral." I'll take that as a kind of victory. It can be easy to lose myself in regret and nostalgia while reading this beautiful little zine about me and my friends, but if there's one thing I know it is that the Foundation was a part of a subversive current of which the last has not been heard, and that the final chapter is yet to be written.

## Crimson Spectre CD

The Crimson Spectre manage to pull off a real coup by appropriating the ghoulish aesthetic of bands like The Misfits, and employing it, in their own words, to "draw attention to this collective political nightmare, and to articulate it in a highly stylized and accessible form." This is a brilliant concept, and it works. The lyrics are particularly strong, and occasionally hit the nail so squarely on the head that they beg to be scratched onto the walls of Waffle Houses and Greyhound terminals everywhere. These songs are set into a hard foundation of poverty, frustration, and loss—and I appreciate that. The music is succinct and well executed, and the guitar solos are convincing. The booklet even includes a hopefully prophetic picture of skeletons impaling the severed heads of George Bush, Donald Rumsfeld, and various other businessmen on guitar necks in a graveyard. YEAH!

I want to be able to wholeheartedly endorse this band, not the least because I happen to know and deeply respect some of its members, but there is one problem here, and it would be two-faced of me to

avoid addressing it. There is a disheartening Marxist/Leninist slant to every aspect of this project that I cannot let pass without comment. I can understand. I grew up in trailers and pickup trucks, too. I've stood at the end of any number of conveyor belts, and I've seen the inside of more than one day labor office. I know how oblivious the anarchist movement of today can be sometimes to the needs of people who have to work for a living, and that it can seem like just another playground for privileged and ungrateful white kids. But none of that changes the fact that I also believe that if we have any hope of extricating ourselves from the mess that we are in it will be in spite of the authoritarian legacy that Lenin and his would-be successors have left us with, not because of it. The basic critique of communism by anarchists—that capital and the state are inextricably linked—has remained consistent, and unanswered, since the days of the First International. If anarchism as it stands now is often missing a working class perspective then we who can do so need to inform it with one, not abandon it

entirely. I, for one, certainly do not intend to take the hammer and sickle up out of the museum when they have had, to put it very mildly, such a questionable track record in terms of their effect on the material conditions of poor people's lives.

All of that being said, I really do like this CD. The Crimson Spectre are, in practice if not on principle, giving a reality check to an essentially anti-authoritarian counterculture, and that's important. They deserve to be commended for finding an original way to draw attention to the "horrors of war, horrors of occupation," and the "horrors of poverty," as they put it, and for giving a shout out to Greensboro, NC. When the singer screams "OUR DAY WILL COME!" at the end of "The Ghosts of Long Kesh," I fucking believe it, and I know he's not just talking about the Irish. I just hope that come the day we end up playing for the same team.

P.O. BOX 10093 Greensboro, NC 27404  
cspectre@slavemagazine.com

CD available from The Magic Bullet Record Co., 17 Argyle Hills Rd., Fredericksburg, VA 22405

www.magicbulletrecords.com

## Guardia Negra "Adrenalina!" CD

If you have been keeping your alter ego as a Red/Anarchist Skinhead with a penchant for vengeful internationalist Oi and Ska in the closet, this is the somewhat rough-edged answer to your prayers. From the epic glam intro to coarse streetpunk singalongs to 1970's-style Ska, it's all here. Think saxophones à la The Specials, or nasal lead guitar throughout the entire song to complement the tuneful strains of Oi-boy yelling and gang backing vocals. And the lyrics—talk about over the top! "Skinheads, not like the rest—red and black is our flag... with black helmets and ski masks, the bourgeoisie we'll terrorize" "Let us follow the spirit of Nechaev—with knives and bombs there will be no truce; in order to destroy all your emblems, I'll kill with no problem... proletarian vengeance will be felt the whole earth through." There's even a song about their favorite football club, for Kropotkin's sake! To their credit, the content also shows some political development, covering Latin American resistance (including the dictatorship in Argentina), anti-imperialist internationalism, and anarcho-syndicalism; it's just that, as has sometimes been the case with enthusiastic revolutionaries, it's hard to tell exactly where the thrill-seeking bloodlust leaves off and the cool-headed political analysis and strategy in the service of justice and compassion kick in. Most everything is in Spanish, with some English translations. The production is a little rough around the edges in a way that doesn't flatter the music the way the terrible production of old did the classics of Oi, but I wouldn't say the singing or playing is slick enough that it's

losing anything in the mud. I have to admit that, despite actually being a fan of old Blitz, that one song "Victims" by The Strike, and, of course, "Freedom" by Last Resort, not to mention some Prince Buster, I'm responding to this more as a cultural curiosity piece than as an artistic masterwork; but that's not to say there's nothing to recommend this. -b

Fire and Flames, P.O. Box 24, Boston, MA 02133 ([www.fireflames.com](http://www.fireflames.com))

## HK/Pledge Alliance split CD

This is a lovely example of a fully-realized opus of passionate hardcore punk, and worth the attention of anyone moved by that music and culture. I'll go further than that—as far as I'm concerned, this is a classic, that should not be forgotten by the punk scene for a long time. The packaging itself establishes this, as to every song is devoted a separate lyric sheet with artwork, translations of the lyrics in three languages, and an explanatory essay on a fold-in sheet.

From the first haunting guitar note, Pledge Alliance flaunts everything I treasure in the best hardcore punk: fiery, forceful delivery, flawlessly constructed songs, an atmosphere of epic drama, and uncompromisingly revolutionary content. The musical themes are as compelling and eternal as Beethoven would have written, the arrangements in which they are developed build and build the intensity like the stoking of a fire, the deep roaring vocals and incinerating guitars offer a perfect vessel for this rage and longing. The first song is a timeless anthem to gatherings outside the domination of power, an invocation of wildness for

modern day witches' sabbats and anarchist convergences. The second, a work in several movements fully ten minutes long, evokes and the turbulence of social struggles such as the recent one in Argentina through mesmerizing musical dynamics, and further explores this lyrical theme in the liner notes. That a member of more of this band has been to Argentina, and on the front lines of the struggle in Europe as well, is evident from the soulful performance as well as the content here. The final song, named "The End of the Epidemic" in a reference to their influence Diamanda Galas, applies a more rock sensibility in contrast to the metallic aesthetic of the others; it concludes: "FIRES WILL BREAK OUT. FIRES WILL BREAK OUT. FIRES WILL BREAK OUT."

HK took a while to click for me, fixated as I was with the Pledge Alliance songs, but now that they've connected, I'm thrilled about them, too. Their songs alternate between repetitive staccato attacks and grooves with which they establish a hypnotic rhythm. The genealogy of their abrasive discord and shrieking vocals goes back to Acme, if anyone reading this remembers that 7", but their songwriting focuses on extensive exploration of themes rather than blitzkrieg assaults. I have to say I was surprised by the white-boy funk intro to their last song, but a healthy musical diversity is important to any band. Unlike Pledge Alliance, they haven't yet broken up as of this writing, so we may get to see where they're going with it.

Collectif Maldoror, Champrevault, 58170 Luzey, France ([maldororpunx@free.fr](mailto:maldororpunx@free.fr))

Impure Muzik, 19, Faubourg Tarragnoz, 25000 Besancon, France ([www.impuremuzik.com](http://www.impuremuzik.com))

# SOME STRAIGHT TALK ABOUT AWAROGHY

PAUL MAURIDES © 1978

WHAT'S YOUR PREFERENCE: APOCALYPTIC BABYLON OR PLANETARY DISNEYLAND? PICK YOUR POISON QUICK BECAUSE... HERE WE GO!!

TARGET CITY ROTARY CLUB LUNCHEON GUEST SPEAKERS: SPARKY AND BILL (RET) ON THE EXQUISITE CORPSE BY PROXY

...CONTINUED EXISTENCE OF A VIABLE LIFE FORM - B. SPUNKY LITTLE GUY IS HE DOESN'T EVEN OBEY THE LAWS OF GRAVITY. (HA HA COUGH) WITHOUT FURTHER NOTICE - UH - WHAT IT IS! UH...

AS A HUMAN, THIS ISN'T HUMAN! WELL, UH, LAWS OF GRAVITY. UH -

UH... SPARKY "THE TORCH"

HURRY IT UP, BILL

CLAP CLAP CLAP

HONK

YOU AND YOUR KIND HAVE BEEN SOLD OUT FOR A PLATE OF BEANS!

IT DIDN'T TAKE LONG FOR THIS SORRY MESS TO HAPPEN, EITHER.

BUT WHAT DID YOU EXPECT?

FILL IT FAST... SUCKER

GRUMBLE MUTTER

CLIC

TIRED OF ALL THESE BOTHER-SOME AUTHORITY FIGURES CLUTTERING UP THE LANDSCAPE?

"SON OF GOD," INDEED HRRRUMPH!

BOOT!

CONSIDER THE HUMAN PSYCHOLOGY -

THE BRAIN A.I.D. C.SUPER EGO

YOUR MIND DOESN'T NEED A GOVERNMENT... DOES IT? ...

THAT CAN'T BE ME

HONK HONK

WANT IT...

SUPER EGO

BUT WHAT IF THERE WERE NO TRAFFIC LAWS?

TURN AROUND AND TRY AGAIN - HE'S STILL MOVING! HEE HEE

LOOKING OUT FOR NUMBER ONE

THAT'S OUT OF THE QUESTION, PERHAPS - YET -

IT DOES SEEM LIKE MODERN LIFE MEANS NOTHING BUT ANXIETY! SOME IGNORE IT...

MAYBE IF THE KITCHEN CURTAINS WERE YELLOW...

SPROING! PING! CLIC

WHILE OTHERS DISCUSS IT AT LENGTH...

AND YET... AND YET... AND YET...

SAFETY FIRST 25 MINUTES WITHOUT AN ACCIDENT

SPEEDUP

BUT THESE DAYS THE RIGHT TO PEACEABLY ASSEMBLE MEANS QUIET FACTORIES.

WARR

WARR

WARR

CAPTAIN ATOM FLAKES

...WHILE EVEN THE PREDICTABLE LIBERAL SHEDS TEARS FOR RONALD REAGAN.

SOB!

HE WAS A TRUE HUMAN - CHOKE.

NOW WE NEED MORE POLICE

AS FOR THE "SELF-STIMULATED" ELECTORAL PROCESS...

BUSH WINS

BUSH KERRY

IF VOTING COULD CHANGE THE SYSTEM, IT WOULD BE ILLEGAL!





## *how can you resist*

### ***Recipes for Disaster: An Anarchist Cookbook—\$12***

For ten long years, our operatives have honed their skills, testing their wits and mettle against the global capitalist empire, the most formidable adversary in the history of life on earth. We have learned how to redecorate the walls of cities occupied by armies of riot police, to transform random groups of damaged, isolated individuals into loving communities capable of supporting one another through the most severe bouts of repression and depression, to shut down corporate summits and franchises armed with little more than plastic piping or eyedroppers of glue. Now, we've compiled many of the techniques that made these feats possible into a 624-page handbook entitled *Recipes for Disaster*.

The sixty-two recipes run the gamut from Affinity Groups to Wheatpasting, stopping along the way at topics as disparate as Hitchhiking, Sabotage, and Supporting Survivors of Domestic Violence. Each recipe is illustrated as necessary with photographs, technical diagrams, and firsthand accounts. Countless individuals and collectives have contributed to the testing, composing, and editing, in order to put the most useful and comprehensive manual in the hands of revolutionaries everywhere. *Recipes for Disaster* has not yet been banned by the U.S. government; it is currently available from us for no more than the costs of printing and transportation. We hope this book will help those working to transform both their own lives and the world at large, but the rest is up to you.

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***Zegota "Reclaim!" CD***—The third wide-ranging full-length album from these expatriate artistic geniuses. \$8

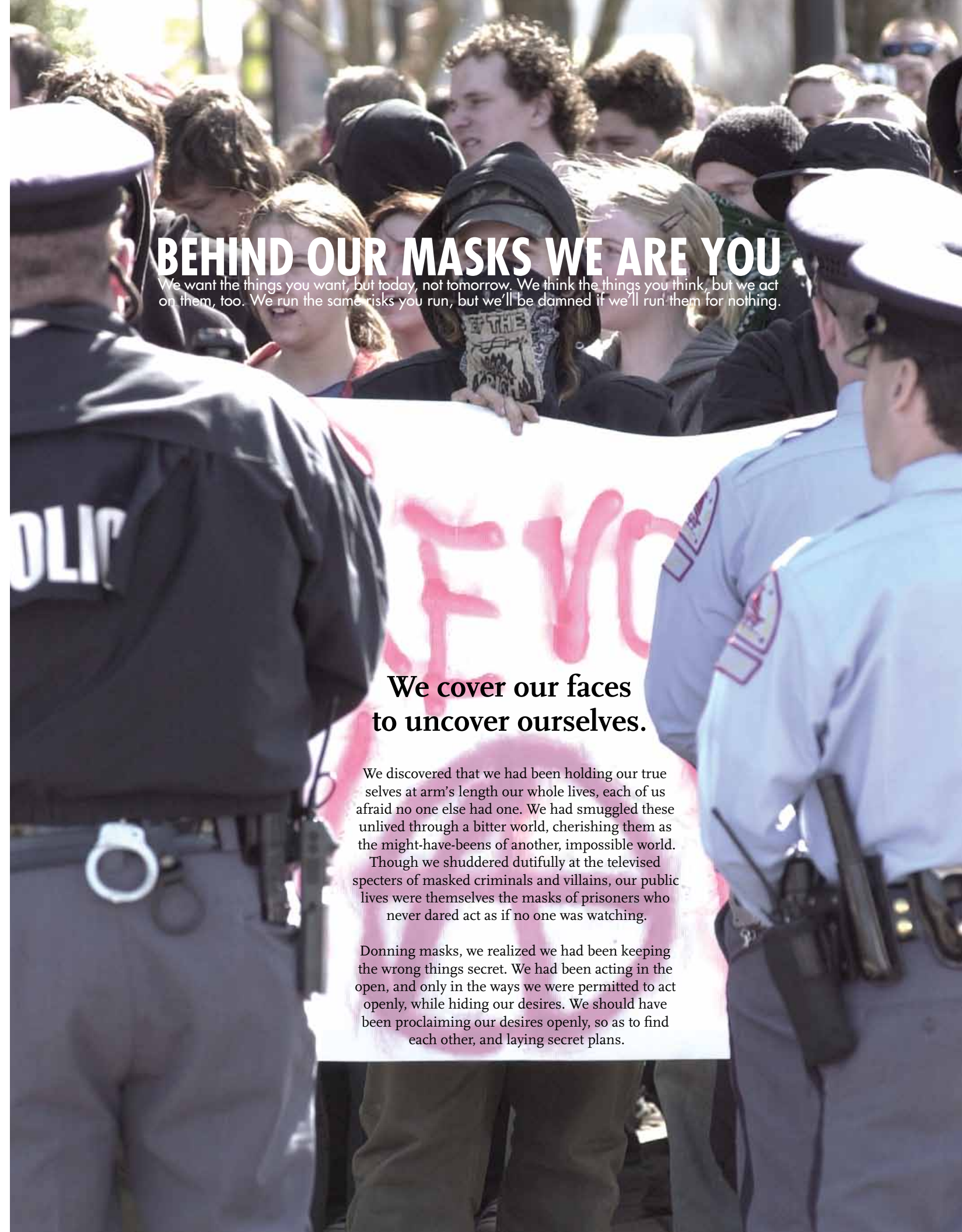
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***Blacken the Skies CD***—This was Stef's band between Catharsis and Requiem; imagine early Zegota, if they were a d-beat crust band. \$9



Postage included. CrimethInc. Far East, P.O. Box 1963, Olympia, WA 98507 USA ([www.crimethinc.com](http://www.crimethinc.com))



## **BEHIND OUR MASKS WE ARE YOU**

We want the things you want, but today, not tomorrow. We think the things you think, but we act on them, too. We run the same risks you run, but we'll be damned if we'll run them for nothing.

### **We cover our faces to uncover ourselves.**

We discovered that we had been holding our true selves at arm's length our whole lives, each of us afraid no one else had one. We had smuggled these un-lived through a bitter world, cherishing them as the might-have-beens of another, impossible world.

Though we shuddered dutifully at the televised specters of masked criminals and villains, our public lives were themselves the masks of prisoners who never dared act as if no one was watching.

Donning masks, we realized we had been keeping the wrong things secret. We had been acting in the open, and only in the ways we were permitted to act openly, while hiding our desires. We should have been proclaiming our desires openly, so as to find each other, and laying secret plans.



# PUNCH COPS IN THE FACE

*... and get away with it!*

To say police abuse their authority is redundant—as everyone who's ever been on the other side of a badge knows, the only authority of the police rests on the abuse they can threaten and inflict. Police brutality is not an aberration from the norm, but normal life in this society taken to its logical conclusion. Wealthy executives, warmonger politicians, and others who benefit from inequality and oppression claim that law and order must be established for peace and freedom to be possible, but in fact it's the other way around: crime and violence can only intensify as long as our so-called protectors enforce the social imbalances that give rise to them.

Fortunately, there's now a cure for this social disease. We anarchists, believing that our own communities can govern themselves better than any armored occupying army could, have spent long years perfecting methods for resisting their encroachments upon our lives. These tactics are now ready for general use.

If you treasure liberty—if you hunger for justice—if you crave revenge . . .

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