

Killing King Abacus Anthology



a collection of writings for relations
without measure

Killing King Abucus Anthology

a collection of writings for
relations without measure



Changing Suns Press
Regina, Saskatchewan
2016

Killing King Abacus Anthology

Changing Suns Press, 2016

ISBN: 978-0-9951551-0-7

Anti-copyright @

This book may be freely pirated and quoted. The authors and publisher, however, would like to be informed at:

Changing Suns Press
2138 McIntyre Street
Regina, SK
S4P 2R7
Canada

info@changingsunspress.com

<http://www.changingsunspress.com/>

Table of Contents

Taking the challenge to Kill King Abacus; or trying to create relations without measure ... an introduction to this anthology by Chris Kortright	ix
Turning to Insurrection by sasha k	xii
Political Imagination in the Age of the Smart Phone Leila	xiv
UNTIMELY for Worlds Without Measure (being my thoughts on the project <i>Killing King Abacus</i>) Wolfi Landstreicher	xix
Section One: Issue # 1 Spring 2000	
Killing King Abacus	3
Action	5
Anarchists and Action by Alfredo Bonanno	6
The Elves and Lit up Signs	9
ELF Communiqués by Earth Liberation Front	10
Letter Introducing Nikos Mazotis by Comrades from the Anarchist Circle and the Collective Anarchists in Solidarity	11

Excerpt from Mazotis' Court Statement by Nikos Mazotis	12
The Acme Collective Communiqué by Acme collective	19
On Behalf of the Barbarians by Bleu Marin	24
Caught in the Web of Deception: Anarchists and the Media by Wolfi Landstreicher	35
Against War and Pacifist Bliss by <i>Neither their War more their Peace</i>	39
Kula Shells and Zombies: Notes on Value by Leila	41
Enter ... Enter ... by <i>Diavolo in Corpo</i>	43
Drowning ... by Wolfi Landstreicher	46
Necrophiliac Logic and the Revolution of the Imagination by Leila	48
Civilization and the Creative Urge by Wolfi Landstreicher	51
From Thought into the Unknown by Leila	55
Clocks by Julio Cortázar	58
The Persistent Refusal of Paradise by Penelope Nin	59
Capitalism at the Crossroads and Opportunity of the Yugoslav crisis by sasha k	61
Freedom by Albert Libertad	69

Obsession by Albert Libertad	73
The Particular and the Universal by Julio Cortázar	75
Fixed Abodes by Leila	76
In the Distance: Suburbia Against the Barricades by Leila	80
The Continuing Appeal of Nationalism Among Anarchists: A Review of Hakim Bey's <i>Millennium</i> by sasha k	85
Section Two: Issue # 2 Spring 2001	
Killing King Abacus # 2	91
Notes on Insurrectionary Anarchism by sasha k	92
A Few Notes on Alienation by sasha k	97
Notes Towards a New Analysis of the Institutions of Domination by Wolfi Landstreicher	99
Civilization and History: A Comments on John Conner's <i>The Rise of the West</i> by sasha k	101
Parody and Subversion: Notes on Roles by Leila	104
Never Cry Wolf by Wolfi Landstreicher	107
Unmasked Simulations in White Overalls by Sandra K.	110
Brittle Utopias by Leila	112

We Go On by Albert Libertad	116
The End of the World by Mara Almani	119
At the Center of the Volcano by Dominique Misein	123
The Anarchist Ethic in the Age of the Anti- Globalization Movement by sasha k and Leila	133
The Ferocious Jaws of Habit by Mare Almani	152
Alienation, Marvelous Pursuits and the New Nomadic Sciences by Leila	157
A Balanced Account of the World: A Critical Look at the Scientific World View by Wolfi Landstreicher	162
Where Do We Meet Face to Face by Wolfi Landstreicher	171
Money and Logos by M.D.P.	177
China: Capitalist Discipline and Rising Protest by sasha k	187
Section Three: Hot Tide Discussion Bulletin	
<i>Hot Tide Bulletin #1</i> The Scale of Capitalism and Resistance by Leila and sasha k	196
Terrorist Threats by Leila and sasha k	198
<i>Hot Tide Bulletin #2</i> Direct Action cannot be Televised by Leila and sasha k	200

Comments on Hot Tide by Wolfi Landstreicher	203
Our response by Leila and sasha k	206
<i>Hot Tide Discussion Bulletin #3</i> Solidarity, Analysis and the North-South Divide by Leila and sasha k	209
Assault on the Border by Leila and sasha k	213
Section 4: Discussion between sasha k and Chris Dixon on Activism and Organization	
Finding Hope After Seattle by Chris Dixon	218
“Activism” and “Anarcho-Purism” a response to Chris Dixon’s Finding Hope After Seattle by sasha k	226
Reflections on Privilege, Reformism, and Activism a response to sasha k by Chris Dixon	231
Dirty Mirrors and Deformed Reflections by sasha k	241
Section 4: Killing King Abacus elsewhere	
A Brief Note On Insurrection by sasha k and Leila appeared in <i>Green Anarchy</i> Issue 8, 2002	252
The Same Old Empire (Oops, I mean Imperialism)... by sasha k appeared in <i>Aporia Journal</i> Issue 1, 2003	254
Thirteen Notes on Class Struggle: Some notes for discussion by sasha k appeared in <i>Green Anarchy</i> Issue 18, 2004	260

**The Insurrectionary Act and the Self-Organization
of Struggle**

by sasha k

appeared in *Aporia Journal* Issue 2, 2004

264

**Insurrectionary Practice and Capitalist
Transformation**

A discussion between The Batko Group and sasha k. 2005

267

Taking the challenge to Kill King Abacus; or trying to create relations without measure ... an introduction to this anthology by Chris Kortright

What was the project *Killing King Abacus*?
What does it mean to Kill King Abacus?

The Project

Killing King Abacus was started as a writing project to challenge aspects of discourse and practices within the North American anarchist scene as we—anarchists—engage in struggles against capitalism and the state. The project was the engagement of three individuals Leila, sasha k and Wolfi Landstreich-er. One of the central challenges of this project was to think through/explore “insurrectionary anarchism” as a practice/process. The project first appeared on the anarchist scene as a zine which came out in spring of 2000. Number 1 of *Killing King Abacus* was a mixture of translated texts, communiqués regarding actions that were happening in North America and original texts by the individuals involved in the project. A second issue came out in print the following year (spring 2001). This second issue again had translations and original texts, but this time talking back to the reception that the first issue received within the anarchist scene. Although the print zine only came out these two times, the project itself became more than just the zine. The project became located on a website that produced both dialogue and discussion through a discussion board and letters as well as launching a second connected project *Hot Tide Discussion Bulletin* taken up by Leila and sasha. At the time, Wolfi was working on a project called *Willful Disobedience*¹ which was promoted through the website. The website also became a space to archive articles and new translations addressing insurrectionary anarchism and questions of informal organization.

A significant aspect to this project—and one that separates it from many other anarchist projects—was the influences and tensions that it brought together. The three individuals came together to explore questions of insurrectionary anarchism and translate (primarily from Italian) texts that many in the North American anarchist scene had not yet had access to, but the project did not have a singular vision or voice. Wolfi, Leila and sasha entered into this project together, but they were influenced by authors and ideas that were often in conflict with each other. In these texts you can feel

1. A book collection of *Willful Disobedience* spanning from 1996 to 2006 is published by Ardent Press and available through Little Black Cart: <http://littleblackcart.com/>

the desires of Max Stirner and Karl Marx while being pulled by explosive passions ranging from autonomous Marxism, communization tendencies, and situationism to the anti-civ critiques that came from Black & Red².

What brought together sasha, Leila and Wolfi's often divergent ideas was their connection with Italian insurrectionary anarchist writings *and* the writings of Fredy and Loraine Perlman. Many of the articles draw on anthropology, literature and art to think through questions of liberatory experiments and attempts to dislodge *naturalized* notions of human practices, organization and desire. One of the central effects of these differences is divergent ideas addressing similar questions: the most notable are Leila and Wolfi when exploring identity and subjectivity or sasha's focus on the valorization of Capital.

To Kill King Abacus

The first issue of *Killing King Abacus* begins with the statement: "To Kill King Abacus is to create relations without measure." What "measures" were in the analytical cross-hairs of this project? Money as a general equivalent is one form of measure they are attacking as Capital captures and consumes other value systems excreting "blood and fire"—as Marx argues—across the globe. But, the critique does not end with Capital because Capital alone does not create all the scales, measures, values and moralities that alienate us from our creative, economic and political power as well as from one another. To "create relations without measure" or "create relations which defy such equations," our language, symbols, practices and beliefs need to be reexamined, which is what this project attempted to do.

The practices and processes that come under question and are explored in these texts are Capital and the State, but they also examine taken for granted or invisible processes—seen as "natural" or "human nature"—such as social roles, identity, space, time and power. I use the terms "practices" and "processes" specifically because Capital and the State as well as social roles or time are not "things" in the world but social relations. This analytical point is an important starting place for our analysis because if Capital or the State or Civilization are not "things" in the world but social relations then our approach to resistance needs to be reexamined—the State is not a "thing" to be "smashed." In our forms of resistance, do we reproduce/recreate the relations that produce our alienation? This is one part of *Killing King Abacus*. It is a careful exploration of the naturalized concepts we use to interact with the material world and each other. But, the other part of *Killing King Abacus* is turning the critique back on ourselves—as anarchists. How do our ideas, practices and organizations possibly reproduce our and other's alienation and reinforce dispossession. The texts in this anthology try to ask these questions and begin a dialogue in this direction. The questions raised in this anthology are important no matter where you fall on these debates and discussions. No one will agree with all the texts—sasha, Leila and Wolfi

2. For more information on the influences and their effected the project see the last text in this anthology "Insurrectionary Practice and Capitalist Transformation" pages 241-255

did not always agree with each other—but the project is to question and re-think the relations we are faced with in our resistance. These questions will only open up more possibilities. Some of the texts in this anthology inspire me while others frustrate me and others I disagree with, yet all the text help me shape the lens I see the world through as well as form the tools I use to interact with the world I live in.

The Particularity of This Anthology

The most noticeable change in this anthology is that the articles by Leila, Wolfi, and sasha have the author indicated. In the original printed text of *Killing King Abacus*, the original texts had no author indicated, and in many cases reproductions of the texts had reproduced this. Upon request by some of the authors, I have connected the author to their text. By doing this, the differences, tensions and divergence within the project becomes more visible. This anthology spans a time between 2000-2005 and is broken up into five sections. The first two sections are *Killing King Abacus #1* and *#2*. In these sections, there are original texts by Leila, Wolfi Landstreicher, and sasha k and translations from historical insurrectionists like Albert Libertad and the 1999 trial of Nikos Mazotisas as well as articles from magazines such as *Insurrection*, *Diavolo in Corpo*, *Neither their war nor their peace*, *Canenero* along side communiqués from the ACME Collective and the Earth Liberation Front. The third section is *Hot Tide Bulletin* which is comprised of anti-authoritarian/anti-capitalist analysis co-written by Leila and sasha as well as a critical letter from Wolfi. *Hot Tide Bulletin* ran at the same time as *KKA*. The fourth section is an exchange between sasha k and Chris Dixon that happened between *KKA #1* and *KKA #2* debating/dialoging issues of organization; the role of “activists” and “political experts;” the tension between reform/insurrection; and forms of defiance. The final section is a collection of letters and articles in other publication that were in response to or in discussion with the larger *Killing King Abacus* project. Specifically these letters and articles distinguish the differences between *Killing King Abacus* and the anarcho-primitivism in projects like *Green Anarchy*³ while continue to expand the ideas of insurrectionary anarchism and informal anarchist organizations. The translations in *Killing King Abacus* were done by Leila and Wolfi and their individual styles come through in the different texts with their notes on their translation choices in the footnotes. The references for the different texts are not consistent between the articles because I kept the citations as they appeared in the original texts. These citations differ between the authors and these differences were maintained. There are a few footnotes added by me to give a little more information which are marked as [Editor].

3. Specifically, *Green Anarchy* after issue #4 when Saxon Woods left the magazine and the editorial collective was made up almost solely of anarcho-primitivists

Turning to Insurrection

by sasha k

Killing King Abacus grew out of dissatisfaction with the anarchist debates of the 1990s. Conducted largely between primitivists and syndicalists, the 1990s debates focused on positive and specific images of post-revolutionary society. Instead, *KKA* looked to shift the debate to one of revolt, in particular concerning strategies and tactics: present attacks over future blueprints. In doing so we hoped to open up a new space for discussion and for new forms of solidarity. While we considered ourselves anti-civilization, we were not primitivists, who looked to the distant past in order to understand the future. For us, anti-civilization meant a total critique of present and historical civilization and encompassed a belief that humanity could have broken with exploitation and exclusion at any time. The stale dichotomies of the 1990s had to be kicked to the side.

To do so we revisited the Italian insurrectionary debates of a much earlier time, considering the work of Luigi Galleani, Errico Malatesta, and others. Malatesta pushed the idea that the important difference between anarchists concerned practice and not ideological images of the future. What linked the insurrectionaries was a belief in an immediate and sustained destruction of all institutions of contemporary society and a criticism of any form of transitional program. In other words, sustained attack and immediate expropriation. What divided the insurrectionaries was the question of the organization of attack, with some, like Malatesta, supporting formal organizations, and other, such as Galleani and Giuseppe Ciancabilla, rejecting formal and permanent organizations for informal organization strategies. We fell clearly on the latter side: permanent conflictuality instead of permanent organizations. For us, these older debates came by way of contemporary Italian insurrectionary anarchism, especially Alfredo Bonanno. Other influences included Fredy and Loraine Perlman, Jacques Camatte, and Gilles Dauvé.

In our stress on practice, attack, and the total destruction of the present society, we spent less time thinking about the historical genesis of present society. And in a sense, this was also a strength of the insurrectionary anarchism found in *KKA*, in that it did not look to specialized theorists to call for revolt at the correct moment at a time of capitalist crisis. The real domination of lives under capitalism meant we had to make a total break and there was no reason to wait; there was no “progressive” dynamic to capitalism. The

focus was on moments of revolt, not the measured moments or momentum of capital. Debates about the decadence of capitalism or premature transition were meaningless. Unlike communization theorists, there was no sense of a need to historicize capitalism, even if it might have reinforced our break with the programs of contemporary formal organizations.

In our attempt to escape the dead air of the 1990s, we ran head on into the summit-hoping activism of the anti-globalization movement. For us, revolt implied a strong critique of activism, while recognizing one could not simply “give up” activism or the social position of the activist; one had to constantly struggle against it as one struggled to destroy capitalist society, which produced that position in the first place. We stood against those of the anti-globalization movement that celebrated and reinforced “the activist” and its separation from (and usually leadership of) the exploited and excluded. Specialists in social movements were managers of the present society, and did not lead to the kind of total break we called for. Insurrection entailed the social spread of conflict with and revolt against present society, and the activist, like the party and the politician that they mimicked, only blocked the proliferation of acts of revolt. This stress on immediate and total destruction of capitalist society and the critique of transition anticipated a later emergence of communization proponents in the US and, for some, a blurring of ridged lines between anarchism and certain forms of communism.

But in the project the tension between individualist and communist ideas remained real, if somewhat papered over or put on hold. We called the divide between individualism and communism a “false problem.” On the one hand, there were articles, such as the one on Yugoslavia, that attempted to understand the historical and social development of struggles; on the other hand, we made claims, as individuals, to being outside of history itself, to being orphans confronted by an alien world. And many articles still read as somewhat out of joint with each other as a result. Just as one cannot simply give up the social position of the activist but must continually struggle against it, one cannot simply break from history at will. Breaking from history can only come with the complete destruction of capitalism, and until then the tension of insurrection remains.

Political Imagination in the Age of the Smart Phone

by Leila

In the past fifteen years the world has become a more nightmarish place than even us cynics imagined in our wildest dreams. As I sit outdoors on a sunny October day, weather once reserved for the fourth of July, I am reminded, as we all constantly are nowadays, that if we don't do something drastic fast we are screwed. Most of the old models of subversion and social organization, including those discussed in *Killing King Abacus*, were imagined in other times and places. In this case we borrowed ideas from the Italy of the 1970s and 1980s. The tendency among anarchists is to try to find an idea they can use as a badge of identity instead of using their own imagination to refashion tactics in the historical context in which they actually live. Instead of introducing *Killing King Abacus* in general, I would instead like to discuss how the world has changed in the last fifteen years and how some of the ideas discussed in the zine are still relevant today. I will also discuss some points on which my own views have changed.

Insurrectionary anarchism contains a glaringly obvious contradiction at its core: to take a life is the ultimate authoritarian act. And if the argument goes that it is unacceptable to participate in authoritarian organizations as an anarchist, because to do so would result in a new social order that is also authoritarian, then it also follows that to use violent means will produce a violent social order. Look at violence rates in any country ten years after the end of a war. Take El Salvador for instance. Of course, in this case there is the question of lingering social inequality and the lingering presence of arms among the population. But once people have been psychologically broken down by violence, victims or perpetrators, they are more likely to commit violence. Just look at violence levels among returned Iraqi vets.

The classic anarchist line is that of course we would never support a group like the FARC, because they are authoritarian. But did the FARC bomb a commercial airliner because they are authoritarian or because they engage in violent acts? If we look at the history of authoritarian revolutions and regimes, it is difficult to separate out their authoritarianism and violence; the two join forces inextricably. Of course, violence itself is not the same thing when separated from a regime. Likewise, a single hierarchical organization is not the same thing as a state. A single violent act is a small-scale *potential*

building block for authoritarian organization. Violence is coercive, and coercion is the heart of the state. If we are to be so very strict about what level of hierarchy is acceptable in organizations we participate in as anarchists, then it only follows to be equally circumspect when it comes to violence.

I am not making an argument that the only acceptable form of subversion is nonviolent. Imagine an alternate historical trajectory in which none of the revolutions of the past had ever taken place. What if the Sandinistas had left Nicaragua to Somoza? What if France still had a monarchy? If able to travel back to 1620 with a case of guns, who besides direct descendants of the Mayflower would not arm the Wampanoag at Plymouth rock?

Gandhi said that the most spiritually evolved way to approach injustice was with nonviolent resistance. He said a violent man could become nonviolent, whereas an impotent (passive) man could not. That is, at least the violent had the gumption to rise against injustice, but passive folks were hopeless. I look at it as a spectrum; nonviolent resistance should be prioritized for both practical and ethical reasons. I would substitute creative for “spiritually evolved” here. Violent tactics are often resorted to because of a lack of creativity. Can we be *creative* enough to come up with nonviolent tactics? Violence, as distinguished from sabotage, should be an absolute last resort.

Functional MRIs show that new neural pathways can be formed in the human brain. The brains of brain injury victims show that neurons rewire around a damaged area. Normal brains have been shown to change dramatically when trained. This has been shown in musicians, master meditators, yogis and others. Through meditation the brains of people with PTSD have changed their patterns, providing relief from their trauma; those who are emotionally damaged can heal to some extent. These findings blow old neuroscientific theories out of the water. This means that human beings can change in a far more profound way than was previously known. Without this capacity for change, we could not hope for a post-capitalist order. Any revolution—violent or not, must start in the minds of the people. Otherwise, the same order will reassert itself in time.

Social inequality is at an all-time high in the United States. According to the Pew Research Center, the gap in wealth between whites and other groups has gotten far worse since 2007 with whites now owning thirteen times the wealth as African Americans and ten times the wealth as Latinos on average. Meanwhile, capitalism has finally shown itself to be so exploitative at its core that like a cancer it would kill its host, the planet, before relenting; a dramatic change is needed in our hearts and minds. This is a historic opportunity for profound social change.

Ursula Le Guin called anarchism, “the most idealistic of all political philosophies.” It’s not a surprise that one of our most imaginative writers has been drawn to it. Anarchism demands that you dare to dream. There is no insurrection without imagination; it is unique in each instance. What insurrectionary anarchism has to offer radicals of all persuasions is its inherent openness. The only way humanity can continue to survive is if it makes

a quantum leap of the imagination. To move beyond capitalism, we need new social models and for these we need to look at history; we need to study every form of social organization that has been practiced and every Utopian model that has been dreamed up in political theory or literature. And then we need to transcend these models.

Silence, Virtual Chatter and Creativity

Smart phones and other devices have colonized daily life to the point that quiet moments to oneself are now rare. Silence is a space for reflection, a chance to figure out what you really think without having the question framed for you by someone else's post. On top of this people are required to work more hours. Silence and idleness play a fundamental part in human creativity. Our brains are wired in such a way that the calculating conscious brain has to take a break in order for the subconscious to kick in with creative solutions. This is why you come up with ideas in the shower, running or waking up from a dream. It turns out that the most driven of us are fast approaching a neurological limit. Harvard University wrote a letter to its freshmen asking them to take more free time. It turns out that academic results were suffering, because the students were overrunning their brains with busywork without giving the subconscious a chance to kick in and present imaginative solutions. Google has created "play areas" for workers for the same reason. If we are constantly busy and then plugged in to a din of psychic white noise during the entirety of our free time, we lose imaginary potential.

Walter Benjamin spoke of the way in which fashion mimicked natural seasons; in a death-like twisted parody novelty mimicked the actual regenerative qualities of nature. Now in order to be hip you have to keep up with a lot more than fall fashions; nature's seasons move way too slowly. The only time that matters is *now*. As everyone is concerned with keeping current with the eternal present of their news-feed, revisionist history can easily become convincing, since yesterday is already passe. In 1984, Orwell described a world in which history could be revised in a day—all archives were altered to agree with the new "truth." Now the "truth" can be altered much more quickly. If someone had a post on their feed at 10:16 AM that said "We are at war at Eurasia" and then a post at 11:45 saying, "We have always been allies with Eurasia," some people would think they must have been confused in the first place since they're so busy. If we look beyond the virtual instant to history we see that humanity has a remarkable capacity for change. Empires have risen and fallen many times. People have organized themselves in a myriad of ways, and most of human history and prehistory was not Capitalist or Statist. The question is not whether we can change, but whether we can change quickly enough for our species to survive.

I have been racking my brain for twenty years for a new form of political imagining that can carry us beyond this crisis and have come up with nothing, no surprise. However, I feel it is on the tip of the collective tongue. Einstein came up with the idea that became the basis of the theory of relativ-

ity while daydreaming at work; staring at the same old elevator, he suddenly saw its motion in a new light. Einstein had rigorously studied; he drew upon the history of science. In order for his “genius” to come forth, a lot of mere mortals had to do a lot of work. Are we open enough to recognize genius when it appears? Or are we stuck in the same dichotomies, asking the wrong questions? I do not know what the right questions are but I ask this of you; when they are asked, please don’t be too busy on Facebook to notice.

In *Killing King Abacus* we spoke of the destruction of common space, from destruction of old working class neighborhoods of Paris to the death of the precorporate cafe. Now common space has shrunk even further as a part of our actual lives, while virtual space has in turn been collectivized (though heavily mediated by capital). Now we have a place to discuss our ideas, as long as they can fit in 140 characters or less. Of course, social media has been an important part of rebellions worldwide, but be careful. Every paranoid fantasy we had in the nineties about the use of the Internet was mild compared to the current reality where Facebook owns more personal information than did the Stasi.

The Internet has created a white noise loud enough to block out the sound of one’s own voice. The twitterization of ideas, where ideas are simplified to post-size as no one has time to read an entire argument never mind an entire book, has caused the capacity to create coherent arguments to deteriorate. With the ability to form arguments goes the ability for independent thought.

Hannah Arendt said the Nazi war criminal Eichmann, was “unable to think” and “lacked imagination.” For example, the internalization of the language of the Nazis, where the murder of sick people became “mercy killing” and extermination became “deportation,” necessitated throwing rationality aside. He calmly planned filling the trains to Auschwitz by simply crunching numbers. The abacus asserted its dominion over life once again. Independent thought took a step down. Her characterization of Eichmann showed how the capacity to think is linked to the capacity to feel. Thus a politics that lacks feeling will ultimately lack depth of thought. (It can also have some unfortunate genocidal side-effects.)

In *Killing King Abacus* we emphasized creativity not only for its powers of political imagination. We also saw creativity as a key component of any life worth living. We didn’t want a revolution that would create a society that lacked the potential for a rich emotional life; we didn’t want a society that would bore us to death. Now if folks happen to get bored, they won’t notice since psych meds are even more over-prescribed; there is a real med called Soma, the same name as the drug used for social control in Brave New World, life imitating art once again. We wanted a society that would create space for the direct unmediated unmedicated experience of daily life.

Though we suffer a postmodern super alienation on the one hand, perhaps it is not the recreation of the commons alone that is required, as we once imagined. At the same time we also need to recuperate private spaces.

Without privacy and silence, there is a diminished capacity for individual thought. Without individual thought, the only politics possible is the status quo, the dystopian nightmare of the continuing dominance of capital. The abacus is now too simple to calculate it, instead you need a supercomputer but the result is the same, without independent thought, daily life is reduced to the increasingly complex giga-nano logic of capital.

UNTIMELY

for Worlds Without Measure

(being my thoughts on the project *Killing King Abacus*)

Wolfi Landstreicher

What was *Killing King Abacus*? There are some who would answer this question with one or another banality. One such banality would be that it was a “product of its time.” But for rebels against a world without measure, this is a meaningless phrase. It says nothing more than that in a *measured* world—the world that three friends (among others) wanted to destroy—the physical expression of a creative process these three friends shared in took place coincidentally with certain other events. This is a fact of no significance except to those who, due to a religious belief, give history a purpose—christians, muslims, marxists, “post-marxists”, etc.—and so have to assume that every activity or event must reflect that purpose regardless of the intentions of the individuals who created it. This is the thinking of god-lovers. Regardless of what names they give their gods or any pretenses they might have of being “atheists” (there are myriads of pious “atheists” in the world I despise), this remains a statement of faith. I hate all gods, all faiths, all believers, and I refuse to recognize any claims they lay on anything I have done.

No, *Killing King Abacus* was not a product of its or any other time (*time*, being merely a concept, produces nothing). It was the passionate creation of three individuals. We were close friends at the time, who shared many intense moments, and who, each of us in her or his own way, rebelliously refused the measured world that had been imposed on us. As such, all three of us were *untimely* people, and anything we did was bound to be untimely.

Fiercely rebellious individuals do have to contend with the times in which they live, but they do so as *enemies*. For this reason, there is something in them and in what they do that remains beyond their time. This is why, for instance, Sade, Stirner, Nietzsche, Novatore, among others continue to provide fine, strong wines of dionysian inspiration to those of us today who rebel against having our lives measured out for us, who rebel against measuring our lives and our worlds at all.

Does *Killing King Abacus* provide such a wine? Certainly not every word in it. There are articles dealing with specific events going on in the world of that time. But there was also a certain tone that ran through the two issues of the publication that certainly goes beyond its time, a playful ferocity and creativity that called up other worlds. This is why, among our unwitting accomplices you could find the likes of Julio Cortázar. This is why the second

issue was spiced with little tidbits of playful utopian dreaming—some borrowed, some created by the three of us. Such *worlds without measure* as the Land of Cockaigne or the Big Rock Candy Mountain sparked our imaginations, and such visions seem to be timeless.

Because *Killing King Abacus* was an expression of the rebellion, the anarchy, the personal insurrections of three individuals, it couldn't avoid being untimely. So long as authoritarian structures exist, so long as *time* is used as a system of measurement, a system of *rule*, and not merely as way individuals play with each other and with their worlds, rebellion will remain untimely, anarchy will remain untimely, and the rising up of individuals against all that would define and enclose them in social, psychological, historical, conceptual and cultural limits will remain untimely. And for me, *Killing King Abacus*, like every other project I've taken up, was an expression of just such a personal insurrection.

This brings me to another of the banalities you may hear about this project: that *Killing King Abacus* was an insurrectionary anarchist publication. This is true in that the three of us who created it considered ourselves anarchists. In addition, I think that each of us felt that insurrection in one sense or another was essential to the anarchist visions we pursued. But at that point, nothing that could be called Insurrectionary™ Anarchism™ yet existed, and I don't think any of us had a desire to create such a thing. But those who have a need to belong—to be owned by something greater than themselves—prefer words as labels to conform to rather than as adjectives that describe one aspect of a self that will always be greater than any of these aspects. I am an anarchist not because I adhere to Anarchism™ or even Anarchy™, but because I refuse to accept being ruled and, to the best of my ability, fight against whatever strives to rule me, to dominate me, to exploit me. This refusal and this battle involve *rising up* for myself and against the impositions of the ruling order. And this daily rising up is my personal insurrection. Sadly, Insurrection™ seems to limit this word to just a few aspects of insurrection ... those involving collective action and violence. To be sure, I would love to see a weaving together of individual *anti-authoritarian* insurrections into a large-scale, "collective" (but only in the sense of an association of individual willful self-creators) insurrection against all authoritarian structures, and I assume that violence would be a necessary tool in any such insurrection, but the defining quality of insurrection as I have always used the term is that of individuals raising themselves up against the structures, the authorities, the ruling orders that would define and confine them. And the beginning of this insurrection is not throwing a rock or a brick, it is not rioting, it is not even blowing up a cop shop (as fine as all of these may be); it is *desertion*. Something, perhaps, far more difficult in a social world that seems so totalizing. But rising up, not for a cause, not to vie for a place in this world, but *for oneself against this world*, is always, first and foremost, a profound and uncompromising "No!" But I know from personal experience that expressing this "No!" on a daily basis often takes the form of finding the ways to sneak around the impositions of authority in order to accomplish

one's desires ... There is a sense in which every individual who rises up is an escapee on the lam who needs to cultivate the skills that allow her to remain as free as possible. In this world, freedom always exists only in battle against the ruling powers, but it is far more a battle of wits—of creativity, imagination and playfulness—than of arms.

I would like to see this desertion generalize, precisely because in its generalization it would be able to come out more into the open, each one of us would be able to come out more into the open and more readily find our accomplices, and the interweaving of creativity, imagination and play this could bring about and increase the force of these tools. But in this world where power operates more and more through the horizontal control of networks, the technological *communization* that capitalism has imposed, desertion and refusal has specific connotations, particular among them, that of *breaking ranks*, of refusing the networks, the technologically-imposed global community that insinuates itself everywhere and imposes its methods even on the most adamant rebellion. Who among us does not have a cell phone and an email address? Simply not having a Facebook page is enough to rouse the suspicions of certain upholders of the ruling order. To desert, to refuse, to rise up, is inevitably to be an anachronism, to be untimely. If certain of the current upholders of Insurrection™ (I am thinking of those who over the past ten years have claimed the term for a post-marxist, neo-blankist ideological product, who occasionally use the word "anarchy", but have no love for anarchists) would rather enlist people into their little army of well-disciplined "communist" grocers, municipal council members, and media opinion-makers, *Killing King Abacus*, precisely because it was an explicitly anti-authoritarian project, was a call for *desertion*. And desertion is an *individual* act, and would remain so even were it to generalize.

I know that I still find *Killing King Abacus* stimulating, thought-provoking, a goad to my own efforts in creating my life on my own terms. There are others who tell me the same. And I am convinced that what is stimulating in *Killing King Abacus* is its emphasis on creativity, imagination and playfulness as essential tools of insurrection, anarchy and rebellion, and on individual freedom as central to anarchy. But I have changed somewhat over the past fifteen years. At the time we did *Killing King Abacus*, I was convinced that it was possible to reconcile individual freedom and communism. I no longer think this can be done. I made the mistake of equating certain negative critiques that the most interesting and extreme communists made—the critiques of work, mercantile exchange and economic property—for communism. But communism is not essentially a *negation*. It is a positive concept, specifically the promotion of the idea of *community*, that is of *becoming one with each other*. Communist writers have spoken of this in such terms as "species being" ("*Gattungswesen*," aka "species essence," if one wants to stick more closely to how hegelian terms tend to get translated into English) and "human community." Basically, a global linking together of the human species into single unity greater than any of the individuals involved. Marx argued that the development of the productive forces under capitalism would

bring about this unity in the realm of production. If he was wrong in locating where it would happen, I would argue that the ruling order has succeeded in creating this “human community”, this “species being”, not through the technology of production (or not primarily so), but through developments in the technology of communication. The internet, cell phone technology and all that goes along with them is connecting more and more of the global population in a community based precisely on the suppression of all that is unique in each individual, all that is most intimate and personal. It is communism in the only way communism can exist, through the reduction of each individual to a mere atom in the global machine. That the ruling system of the state and capitalism has accomplished this should come as no surprise, since this suppression of every individual into a mere electron flowing through the networks of its machine has always been the aim of ruling systems. Some would argue that it is now too late to fight this. Even most so-called rebels prefer to carry out their rebellion in the terms that this system sets, preferring to be in line with “historical forces,” preferring to be timely, and so willingly participating in what they rebel against. I see a dearth of imagination, of creativity, of a fierce playfulness capable of a utopian journey that refuses all authoritarian destinations behind this surrender disguised as rebellion. In light of such a world, the spirit of refusal and desertion that infused *Killing King Abacus* seems more necessary than ever, because it is only *outside* that there is any possibility for imagination, creativity and play to flourish. And this *outside*, for now, may have to be in those most intimate, hidden realms where poetry, passion and dreams can still breathe, realms that are getting reduced more and more, drowned under a glut of information available to everyone, useful to no one but those who rule us. Against this, only you and I as self-creating individuals can rise up, and that insurgence will need to be a desertion, a break with the networked world of authority.

Section One:
Issue # 1 Spring 2000

Killing King Abacus

To Kill King Abacus is to create relations without measure. If we aim to destroy capitalism we cannot reproduce its necrophiliac logic which reduces relationships to numbers. To Kill King Abacus is to destroy the social net which privileges mediated transactions and images over direct relations. Because money is a general equivalent and thus is nearly limitless in its applications, it conquers other signifiers of value; capitalism transforms other value systems into itself. To Kill King Abacus is to disrupt this process of quantification. Money may be the most indiscriminate of whores but capitalism is not the only system which measures value. Justice, morality, law and culture itself are all value systems which weigh, judge and channel human action. We want to create relations which defy such equations. We therefore have no need for standardizing models within our struggle. In the absence of value systems desire shoots in new directions. Insurrection is desire rebelling against value.

In old England the body parts of the king were a basis for units of measurement. The king's foot was a foot. The king's hand span became a span. As the state became more standardized and impersonal so did measurement; and thus today we are ruled by an impersonal King Abacus who is without passion but always calculating.

The first clocks were built in order to regulate Islamic prayer, to make it possible to pray five times a day, at regular intervals. In colonial times the mission was used simultaneously to convert indigenous peoples and to impose the work day and week. The mission bells regulated both prayer and work. The clock was an indispensable instrument for the standardization of the work day. The rationalization of time has hurled us into a spiral of ever increasing haste. We wish to kill the king who tries to force us to pray to the god of work.

To Kill King Abacus is to create an insurrectional rupture with the existent organization of language, time and space; to speak our own language, take our own time, carve out a space for ourselves. If we can only conceive of ideas which are constructed in the language of the state or capital, we cannot break out of their restrictive logics. There can be no rupture with this society if we appeal to the authorities who perpetuate it, instead of taking action ourselves. In order to appeal to a system or an authority we must speak its language; the relations we wish to create cannot be spoken of

in the language of authority. If we live a series of moments measured by the clock which ticks to the rhythm of productivity, we live abstractly equivalent moments of bland repetition.

As public space shrinks and is disciplined we are mostly left with space whose use has been restricted to the demands of production and consumption. While social theorists, anarchist, Marxist and bourgeois, have theorized the dimension of time (history) well, space has often—to the detriment of theory—taken a back seat. This is in part due to the influence of Darwinism and theories of evolution on 19th and 20th century thought. Space only reentered Marxism with Lenin's theory of imperialism and then, only at the level of the nation-state. Debates since that time have centered around national-liberation and colonialism. While space has recently begun to play a greater role in social theory, it still often falls into the framework of nationality versus globalism. This theorization of space both reifies and naturalizes the nation-state. We attempt to deepen our historical understanding of space and our spatial understanding of capitalism, as well as look at the relation between space, capitalism and the state on a different scale than that of the nation. Simone de Beauvoir noted the importance of the café for revolt. It was a space where we can directly meet, where we can talk to friends and strangers. Capitalism has begun to figure out how to transform a meeting place into a controlled space where we can only consume and rush on to work as we look at our watch. If we do not carve out a space for ourselves we will have no place to meet, to speak or to act for ourselves. In order to do this we must be capable of imagining that which lies beyond the dominant rationalities that perpetuate the existent.

One who ventures to expand life's possibilities outside of the limited options offered by the state and capital find themselves facing the power structures and systems of control through which measured existence is imposed. Work, law, government, school, police, commodity consumption... are a maze of barriers to anyone who wants to reach beyond these limits, to live by their own rhythm and not that of the clock. So those of us who want to project toward quality, towards a measureless fullness of life are faced with the necessity of destroying this maze, of creating our life projectuality in an insurrectional manner. We are therefore in permanent conflict with this society. To destroy these obstacles to our own expansion we need all of the tools we can get; we need both ideas and fire.

Action

To choose to be an anarchist is to choose to create one's life in a certain direction. It is the development of a projectuality toward freedom, self-determination, the expansion of possibilities. Such a projectuality develops itself in action, but not the action of the activist, the politician, but action that flows from one's life and back into it. What distinguishes the anarchist revolutionary from a political activist is "the way in which the person, the comrade who carries out these actions, succeeds in making them an expressive moment of their lives, a specific characterization, meaningfulness, quality of life, joy, desire, beauty." What is absent from the actions of those who start and end with their own life, their own individuality, their own projectuality is calculation, the quantitative point of view, because it is a quality of life toward which the anarchist projects, a fullness of life opposed to the flattening this society imposes. If our solidarity with certain actions is critical, it is because we can see calculation creeping in. If we reject all cooperation with the media, it is because this power structure forces those who choose to participate in its activity to measure their words, draining them of substance, of energy of the force that refuses all compromise. Our actions create our lives and relations; for a life without measure, we must act without measure.

Anarchists and Action

by Alfredo M. Bonanno

From *Insurrection*, September 1989

If anarchists have one constant characteristic it is that of not letting themselves be discouraged by the adversities of class struggle or to be enticed by the promises of power.

It will always be difficult, often impossible, to find an anarchist comrade who has given into power. This might happen as a result of torture or physical pain, never by long spells of repression or loss of heart. There is something in anarchists that prevents them from becoming discouraged, something that makes them optimistic even in the worst moments of their history. It makes them look forward to possible future outlets in the struggle, not backwards to past mistakes.

An anarchist's revolutionary work is never exclusively aimed at mass mobilization, otherwise the use of certain methods would become subject to the conditions present within the latter in a given time. The active anarchist minority is not a mere slave to numbers but acts on reality using its own ideas and actions. There is obviously a relationship between these ideas and growth in organization, but the one does not come about as a direct result of the other.

The relationship with the mass cannot be structured as something that must endure the passage of time, i.e. be based on growth to infinity and resistance against the attack of the exploiters. It must have a more reduced specific dimension, one that is decidedly that of attack and not a rearguard relationship.

The organizational structures we can offer are limited in time and space. They are simple associative forms to be reached in the short term. In other words, their aim is not that of organizing and defending the whole of the exploited class in one vast organization to take them through the struggle from beginning to end. They should not be weighed down by ideology but contain basic elements that can be shared by all: self-management of the struggle, permanent conflictuality, attack on the class enemy.

At least two factors point to this road for the relationship between anarchist minority and mass: the class sectoralism produced by capital, and the spreading feeling of impotence that the individual gets from certain forms of collective struggle.

There exists a strong desire to struggle against exploitation, and there are still spaces where this struggle can be expressed concretely. Mod-

els of action are being worked out in practice, and there is still a lot to be done in this direction.

Small actions are always criticized for being insignificant and ridiculous against such an immense structure as that of capitalist power. But it would be a mistake to attempt to remedy this by opposing them with a relationship based on quantity rather than extending these small actions, which are easy for others to repeat. The clash is significant precisely because of the enemy's great complexity which it modifies constantly in order to maintain consensus. This consensus depends on a fine network of social relations on all levels. The smallest disturbance damages it far beyond the limits of action itself. It damages its image, its program, the mechanisms that produce social peace and the unstable equilibrium of politics.

Each tiny action that comes from even a small number of comrades, is in fact a great act of subversion. It goes far beyond the often microscopic dimensions of what took place, becoming not so much a symbol as a point of reference.

This is the sense in which we have often spoken of insurrection. We can start building our struggle in such a way that conditions of revolt can emerge and latent conflict can develop and be brought to the fore. In this way a contact is established between the anarchist minority and the specific situation where the struggle can be developed.

We know that many comrades do not share these ideas. Some accuse us of being analytically out of date, others of not seeing that circumscribed struggle only serves the aims of power, arguing that, especially now in the electronic era, it is no longer possible to talk of revolt.

But we are stubborn. We believe it is still possible to rebel today, even in the computer era.

It is still possible to penetrate the monster with a pinprick. But we must move away from the stereotypical images of the great and mass struggles, and the concept of the infinite growth of a movement that is to dominate and control everything. We must develop a more precise and detailed way of thinking. We must consider reality for what it is, not what we imagine it to be. When faced with a situation we must have a clear idea of the reality that surrounds us, the class clash that such a reality reflects, and provide ourselves with the necessary means in order to act on it.

As anarchists we have models of intervention and ideas that are of great importance and revolutionary significance, but they do not speak for themselves. They are not immediately comprehensible, so we must put them into action, it is not enough to simply explain them.

The very effort of providing ourselves with the means required for the struggle should help to clarify our ideas, both for ourselves and for those who come into contact with us. A reduced idea of these means, one that limits itself to simply counter-information, dissent and declarations of principle, is clearly inadequate. We must go beyond that and work in three directions: contact with the mass (with clarity and circumscribed to the precise requirements of the struggle); action with the revolutionary movement

(in the subjective sense already mentioned); construction of the specific organization (functional to both work with the mass and to action within the revolutionary movement).

And we need to work very hard in this direction.

Elves and Lit Up Signs

We print the most recent ELF communiqués below in solidarity with the elves of the night. There has been an upsurge of ELF activity in the past two years. These actions have been a blow to the companies targeted, raising the insurance premiums of capitalist scum!! The ELF is not a group; anyone can choose to claim an action with that name. Those who claim ELF actions may not know others who do the same. But why does anyone use the ELF name at all? When an action is claimed by the ELF a rebellious action is reduced from multiple and dynamic motivations to a single cause. This reduction is partially achieved by the person who signs ELF, in doing so she reduces an action (potentially) against capital in general to an action against particularly environmentally offensive companies: the name Earth Liberation Front states its focus as explicitly on the environment. The ELF by definition specializes its rebellion. Or the action is reduced by the media, to an action perpetrated by the most monstrous of eco-terrorists: an action becomes an image. Of course the media will do this regardless in any case of sabotage, but the ELF has a specific image and a media spokesperson that unintentionally contributes to its perpetuation. So the use of the name ELF has become part of the media circus. Their spokesperson has surely explain ELF actions from his own point of view, but not surprisingly, the media insists on the images which are most useful to its aims. ELF actions are an example of sabotage accomplished with easily accessible materials and means, yet these actions have caused considerable damage! This shows us that we could do the same.

For us the individual that rebels, the individual that revolts against this world that is too petty to contain his dreams, is not interested in limiting her own potentiality, but if possible, would extend it to infinity. Thirsty for freedom, greedy for experience, he who revolts is in constant search for new affinities, for new instruments to experiment with, which to assault the existent and subvert it from its very foundation. This is because the insurrectional struggle should find stimulus and energy in our capacity to always fill its arsenal with new arms, outside and against any reductive specialization. The gun experts are like the book experts, or squatting experts, or any others; they are boring because they always talk and only about themselves and about their favorite means. And this is why we don't give privilege to any instrument over others, we love and support innumerable actions, use the most disparate means, that daily occur against domination and its structures. Because revolt is like poetry: and should be done by everyone, not by only one person, she who is the most expert.

Recent ELF Communiqués

by the Earth Liberation Front

Greetings from the Earth Liberation Front.

We are claiming responsibility for the second attack upon CS McRos-
san's machinery. In the early morning hours of Sun. Oct 3 ('99), the ELF en-
tered the construction site on highway 55 in Minneapolis where the company
is working. Machines that were found with accessible holes had sand poured
into the oil, the draining of them. Three machines had hoses and wires cut be-
fore the elves escaped into the night. This follows an attack earlier in the week
on Mon Sept 27 when a visit was paid to CS McRossan's offices in Maple Grove,
where we slashed conveyor belts and damaged machinery. We see highway 55
as symbolic of the larger system that is strangling us of our air and water. The
NAFTA superhighway and the roads into the forests are all a symptom of the
sick capitalist system that puts profits before people or ecosystems. As long
as the trees continue to fall, so will the profits made of this project. This is just
the beginning of a new level of battling against highway 55 and car culture. We
urge the elves of MN and the world to unite against the profit hauling infra-
structures around the globe. Target machines, offices, and equipment used to
build roads. We are everywhere and we are watching. We will be back.

Boise Cascade has been very naughty. After ravaging the forests of the
Pacific Northwest, Boise Cascade now looks toward the virgin forests of Chile.
Early Christmas morning ('99), elves left coal in Boise Cascade's stocking. Four
buckets of diesel and gas with kitchen timer delay destroyed their regional
headquarters in Monmouth, Oregon. Let this be a lesson to all multinational
corporations who don't respect their ecosystems. The elves are watching.

In the early hours of February, 9 the Earth Liberation Front paid a visit
to Green Hall at the University of Minnesota in St. Paul, MN. The target was
transgenic oat research crops. The research was being done by University pro-
fessors David Sommers and Howard Rines. All the oats found in the green-
house were destroyed, messages were spray painted, and the locks were glued
on the way out. Oat research is simply one of the projects that the University
is taking part in, in partnership with gross corporations that are adding to the
destruction of the Earth. Let this action be a warning to the University of Min-
nesota and the entire biotech industry, that if you continue to destroy the bio-
diversity on the Earth your profits will continue to fall. The elves are always
watching. Stop genetic engineering or we will.

For Freedom and Wilderness,
Earth Liberation Front

A Letter Introducing Nikos Mazotis

Dear comrades,

The following text is the translation of what Nikos Maziotis said to the court during his trial which took place on the 5th to 7th of July 1999 in Athens, Greece. He was convicted and given a 15-year prison sentence for “attempted explosion with danger for human lives” and “possession of guns and explosives” for his action of placing a bomb in the Ministry of Industry and Development on December 12, 1997, in solidarity with the revolt of the villages in Strymonikos against the installation of a gold metallurgy by multinational company TVX GOLD. During the trial he again supported his choices politically, as he did from the beginning when he had sent a letter from prison with which he took responsibility of the action against the Ministry. Though he never accepted the charges the state was accusing him of, as revolutionary acts cannot be described in terms of the penal code. In that sense, this trial was not a typical procedure of convicting someone who pleads “guilty” but it turned into a political confrontation as much between Nikos and his prosecutors, as between his comrades, anarchists and revolutionaries and the state and its mechanisms. This confrontation was strongly supported by the presence of comrades from Sardinia (Costantino Cavalleri), Italy (Alfredo Bonanno) and France (Hellyette Bess) who testified in the court in solidarity with Nikos and by the letters sent in support by the imprisoned militants of Action Directe, France, by the ABC of Barcelona and by other anarchist groups from Spain. All these together, along with the presence inside and outside the court of anarchist comrades and of course the speech of Nikos Maziotis against his prosecutors, gave a sense of the international struggle for freedom and of solidarity with all the people in revolt, with all political prisoners captured in moments of the social and class war against the state and the capital.

Solidarity,

Comrades from the Anarchist Circle and the collective Anarchists in Solidarity'

Excerpts from Statement to the Athens Criminal Court

by Nikos Mazotis

First, I do not intend to pretend to be the 'good guy' here when I was forced to come. I will not apologize for anything, because I do not consider myself a criminal. I am a revolutionary. I have nothing to repent. I am proud of what I have done. The only thing I regret is the technical error that was made so the bomb didn't explode, so that my fingerprint was found on it later and I ended up here. This is the only thing I repent.

You must keep in mind that although you are judges and sitting higher than me, many times the revolutionaries, and myself specifically, have judged you long before you judge me. We are in opposite camps, hostile camps.

The revolutionaries and revolutionary justice—because I don't believe that this court is justice, it's the word justice in quotation marks—many times judge their enemies more mercilessly, when they get the chance to impose justice. I will begin from many years ago. We don't have any crime of mine to judge here. On the contrary, we will talk about crimes, but not mine. We will talk about the crimes of the State, of its mechanisms, of justice and police crimes...

The biggest lie of all time is that the State is society. I think Nietzsche has also said that the State lies. We are opposed to the division of society into classes, we are against a separation between those who give orders and others who obey orders. This authoritarian structure penetrates the whole of society and it is this structure that we want to destroy. Either with peaceful or with violent means, even with guns. I have no problem with that.

I will contradict my brother who said before, that he didn't want the guns in order to make war. They were for war. Maybe they were just kept there. But guns are for war, you don't just have them to keep them at home. I might have kept them as they were, but they are to make war and I make war... The bomb in the ministry was an act of war.

Our purpose, within the anti-State and anti-capitalist struggle, is to connect ourselves with different social struggles. Our purpose when interfering in these struggles is also to attempt to make things reach the edge, which means to culminate with the conflict of these social parts with the State and the police. To urge the people fighting to surpass the institutional frames, the trade-unions, the local administrations and all these manipulators who are enemies of human freedom. Many comrades of mine, with their small forces, were engaged in such struggles. I will tell you about them more specifically.

In 1989, in a struggle of environmental interest in the village of Aravissos, the residents of the area didn't want their water sources to be exploited by the Water Company of Thessaloniki. They clashed with the police and the riot police, they burnt water pumps, they set fires and put up barricades. And some of our comrades from Thessaloniki took part in this struggle and they were even arrested ...

Generally, wherever there are disturbances, there are conflicts we want to be in. To subvert things. For us, this is not a crime. In a real sense, these disturbances are the 'popular sovereignty' that professional politicians keep talking about. That's where freedom is expressed...

Now let's talk about the struggle of the people in Strymonikos. Long before I placed the bomb, other comrades had been to the villages, they had been talking with the people there, they had published a brochure about this revolt, about the clashes in October of 1996. But I will talk more specifically about the struggle in Strymonikos in a little while. First, I want to talk exclusively about the action.

To tell the truth, I was inspired to place this bomb for a specific reason: The people of the villages had surpassed the limits, by themselves. If it was a struggle inside institutional frames, in the way that trade unions and local administrations try to keep these struggles restricted, if it was confined in a mild, harmless and not dangerous protest, maybe I wouldn't have done anything.

But the comrades up there in the villages—who are not anarchists of course, but I don't care about that, they are citizens who also want their freedom—had surpassed every limit. They had conflicts with the police three times—in the 17th of October 1996, in the 25th of July 1997 and in November 9 1998—, they had set fire to police cars and riot police vans, they had burnt machinery belonging to TVX, they had invaded in the mines of Olympiada and destroyed part of the installations. Some of them also became a sort of guerrilla. In the nights, they were going out with guns, shooting in the air to frighten the policemen. And I thought, these people are cool, they've gone even further than us. And then repression followed, especially in 1997 when marshal law was imposed in the area.

The Chief of Police in Halkidiki gave an order according to which all gatherings and demonstrations were forbidden. They also sent special police units and police tanks, which came in the streets for the first time since 1980. And now they were sending them out again there, in the villages of Halkidiki. So, I thought, we must do something here, in Athens. It is not possible that the others are under repression and we here staying passive.

The ministry of Industry and Development, in Papadiamadopoulou and Michalakopoulou streets, was one of the centers of this case. The struggle in Strymonikos was a struggle against 'development' against 'modernization' and all this crap they keep saying. What is hidden behind all these expressions is the profits of multinationals, the profits of 'our own' capitalists, Greek capitalists, the profits of states' officials, of the Greek state, of the bureaucrats, of all those who take the money, of technical companies... There is no relation between this 'development' and 'modernization' they are talking about and

the covering of popular needs. No relation at all. So, I placed a bomb.

The purpose was the one I said in the letter with which I took responsibility for the action. In the passage of February 1998 I say: in placing the explosive device my purpose was to send a double political message. Everything is political. Even if you use such means, the messages are political. War itself is a means of political pressure. In this case, this was also a political means, a political practice.

First of all, it was a message to the people of Strymonikos that 'you are not alone, there are also others who may live 600 km away from you but they care'. Not for personal reasons... I don't know anyone from there personally. Other comrades know people from there. I haven't even been there. It was not my house that was threatened, but this is not the point.

Simply, my principle, and generally the principle of the anarchists and of other non-anarchist revolutionaries is that social freedom is one and inseparable. So, if freedom is partially offended, in essence it is offended as a whole. If their freedom is offended, mine is offended too. Their war will be my war, especially in an area where the 'sovereign people'—again an expression used by professional politicians—does not want what the state and the capital want: the gold metallurgy of TVX.

On the other hand, I have said that, OK, there would be some damage—I knew that. Yes, I had the intention to cause material damage. So, what damage would that be? On the windows, in that specific place, what kind of damage? Or outside the storehouse where I placed the bomb? According to me, the damages would be minimal. But even if they were more than minimal, for me it is not important at all. Because freedom can't be compared with the material damages of some windows, of a state car or state-property. For me, the ministry is not an institution of common benefit as the charges say. Of state benefit yes, but not of any social benefit. However, even if the device did not explode, I sent my message....

I will refer a little to the technical aspects. Exactly because I am a social revolutionary, and when you say that it is like talking for the benefit of society. Not like. It is for the social benefit. As I have this principle I couldn't harm any citizen. I could harm a policeman. I consider them my enemies. And you are my enemies too. I separate you. I make a clear class separation. On one hand we have those, on the other hand, we have the others. In this occasion though I didn't intend to harm either the policeman who guarded the ministry or anybody else; and of course not a citizen.

The procedure that is used by groups or individuals, in general, is exactly this: you first place the bomb in your target and then you call to a newspaper. In that case, I called to 'Eleftherotypia' and said: In half an hour a bomb will explode there. Exactly what is written in the evidence: In 30 minutes there will be an explosion in the Ministry of Industry and Development, for the case of TVX in Strymonikos. Whether the bomb exploded or not there was absolutely no danger for human lives. In case that it exploded, there would be only material damages. So, it would happen exactly as I intended. Objectively, if the device had exploded there was no chance of an accident,

like exploding before or after the time given

I want to refer more to what I call solidarity, to the motives that I had. What is this solidarity. I believe... that human society was created, based on three components: solidarity, mutuality and helping each other. So, that's what human freedom is based on. Any social group in struggle, in a different place and time, whether they are pupils or farmers or citizens of local societies, for me and for the anarchists these struggles are very important. It doesn't have to do with whether I am a worker and identifying my interests with the interests of that class. If someone asks for a higher salary or has a trade-unionist demand for me it is not important. For me, solidarity means the unreserved acceptance and support with every means of the right that the people must have to determine their lives as they wish, not letting others decide in their place, like the State and the Capital do.

That means that in this specific case, of the struggle of Strymonikos but also in every social struggle, for me what counts mostly is that they are struggles through which the people want to determine their fate alone. And not having any police chief or state official or capitalist deciding what they should do. It is of secondary importance if they want or don't want the factory, if the focal point of the struggle is environmental. The important thing is that they don't want the factory because they don't like something imposed to them with violence.

Concerning the matter of political violence now... From the very beginning they tried to present a case of 'repulsive criminals' and 'terrorists' who 'placed blind bombs': something that doesn't exist. If theoretically terrorism is exercising violence against citizens and an unarmed population, that definition applies exclusively for the State. Only the State attacks civilians, that's what the repression mechanisms are for: the riot police, special repression police units, the army, special forces... Mechanisms that also rob the people. They finance armed professionals, policemen. Aren't they trained to shoot real targets? Aren't the riot police armed with chemical gas? To use them where? On citizens, in the demonstrations. So, only the State exercises violence against the citizens. I didn't use any violence against any citizen. I will say exactly what terrorism is.

Terrorism is when occupations, demonstrations and strikes are being attacked. When the riot police attacked the pensioners who demonstrated outside Maximou four years ago....

Terrorism is when special police forces invade the Chemistry School and beat up anarchists and youth

Terrorism is when citizens are murdered by the police in simple 'identification controls'....

Terrorism is when Ali Yumfraz, a Pomak from Vrilisia suburb of Athens, was arrested for being drunk and later was found dead in his cell in the police station....

Terrorism is this court, here. Every trial of a militant, every trial of a revolutionary is terrorism, a message of intimidation for society. I said it again in my statements yesterday, when you called me to say if I accept the

charges, and I will repeat it. Because of my persecution being political, the message is clear: whoever fights against the State and the Capital will be penalized, criminalized and given the characterization of terrorist. The same for any solidarity to any social struggle: it will be penalized and crushed down. This is the message of this trial and by this sense it is terrorism. Terrorism against me, terrorism against the anarchists, terrorism against the people of Strymonikos, who are also receiving similar messages this period, as they have similar trials for their mobilizations. This is terrorism. The fact that I put a bomb as an action of solidarity is not terrorism. Because no citizen was harmed by this action.

What the state wants is to deal with everyone alone. You must have heard an expression that the prime minister Simitis is using a lot, talking about 'social automatism' whenever social reactions burst out... He uses this expression in order to present these social reactions—the blockades in the streets, the squatting of public buildings and all the actions of this kind—as being in contrast with the interests of the rest of society. Something that is a total lie. It is just the tactics of 'divide and rule' which means 'spread the discord to break solidarity'. Because solidarity is very important as anyone who is alone becomes an easy target. When a workers' strike takes place and there is no solidarity it is easier for it to be attacked. They talk about a 'minority.' This is the argument of the state, that it is 'a trade-unionist minority having retrogressive interests which turn against modernization, against development, against all the reforms' and all that nonsense. Well, there hasn't been one social part or social group that didn't come up in conflict with the state, especially during the 1990's, and that hasn't been faced with the argument that 'you are just a minority' that 'your struggle is in contrast with the rest of society's interests'. That is exactly what happened in all cases The same thing happened of course with the people of Strymonikos.

What is really being attacked is solidarity. And that's what is also attacked, without any disguise, through my trial. The state wants to attack everyone alone. Because when it finds them together things are much more difficult.

Finally, I am not on trial because I placed a bomb, nor because I possessed three guns and ten kilograms of dynamite. After all, the army and the police have a lot more guns than me and they use them. The one can't be compared with the other.

I have nothing else to say. The only thing I'll say more is that no matter what sentence I am convicted with, because it is certain that I will be convicted, I am not going to repent for anything. I will remain who I am. I can also say that prison is always a school for a revolutionary. His ideas and the endurance of his soul are experienced. And if he surpasses this test he becomes stronger and believes more in those things for which he was brought to prison. I have nothing more to say.

I want to complete what I was telling the public prosecutor before, about terrorism on an international level. In reality, at this moment, the US is the global gendarme and terrorist, as the only great world power left. Which means it is the worst thing on earth. And according to our perception—as

anarchists—the State, all the states and all the governments are antisocial, terrorist mechanisms, since they have organized armies, police, hired torturers. I also want to complete what I was saying about having two weights and two measures. For example, the US provides with weapons, finances and instigates every dictatorial regime all over the world. And in Greece as well. In Latin America, Chile, Argentina, Bolivia, Peru.... This is Terrorism. Terrorism is to arm dictators, to arm death squads in Argentina or in Bolivia in order to kill people of the Left, citizens, revolutionaries. Those who equip the death squads to torture, those are the terrorists. Terrorism is when they bombard Yugoslavia for ten days, killing civilians.

Excuse me, Mr. prosecutor, but the US are the ones who say who is a terrorist and who isn't. Their State Department issues official directions, advising Greece about who is a terrorist. At this time, they place pressure on the Greek state to make an anti-terrorist law, a model of law which will criminalize those who fight, to make laws which are more draconian than those already existingThese are Terrorism.

The revolutionaries and the militants are not terrorists. Terrorists are the states themselves. And with this accusation, with this stigmatizing (of terrorism) all the states and governments try to criminalize the social revolutionaries and the militants inside their countries. The internal social enemy... In fact, the State, justice and the police face me also as this kind of enemy. As an internal social enemy. On the basis of the division I described before. That's the way the state sees it. This is what is ventured in this trial. Public prosecutor: What do you have to oppose to the existent?

Social revolution by any means necessary. It is generally proven, because I am well versed in Greek as well as in international social and political history, that no changes have ever come about, never did humanity achieve any progress—progress as I conceive it—through begging, praying or with words alone.

In the text I sent to claim the action, when I said that I placed the bomb, which was published in 'Eleftherotypia' newspaper, I said that the social elite, the mandarins of the capital, the bureaucrats, all these useless and parasitic people—that should disappear from the proscenium of history—they will never give up their privileges through a civilized discussion, through persuasion. I don't want to have a discussion because you can't have a discussion with that kind of people...

I would like to add something. Exactly because I have studied a lot, (I know that) during the events of July of 1965, a conservative congressman of the National Radical Union came out and said about those who went down to the streets and caused disturbances, when Petroulas was killed, that 'democracy is not the red tramps but we, the participants in the parliament' which means the congressmen who are well paid.

I will reverse that. Popular sovereignty, sir judges, is when molotov cocktails and stones are thrown at the police, when state cars, banks, shopping centers and luxury stores are burnt down.... This is how the people

react. History itself has proven that this is the way people react. This is popular sovereignty. When Maziotis goes and places a bomb in the ministry of Industry and Development, in solidarity with the struggle of the people in Strymonikos. This is the real popular sovereignty and not what the Constitution says...

July 7, 1999

N30 Black Bloc Communiqué

by ACME Collective Dec. 4 1999

A communiqué from one section of the black bloc of N30 in Seattle

On November 30, several groups of individuals in black bloc attacked various corporate targets in downtown Seattle. Among them were (to name just a few): Fidelity Investment (major investor in Occidental Petroleum, the bane of the U'wa tribe in Columbia) Bank of America, US Bancorp, Key Bank and Washington Mutual Bank (financial institutions key in the expansion of corporate repression) Old Navy, Banana Republic and the GAP (as Fisher family businesses, rapers of Northwest forest lands and sweatshop laborers) NikeTown and Levi's (whose overpriced products are made in sweatshops) McDonald's (slave-wage fast-food peddlers responsible for destruction of tropical rainforests for grazing land and slaughter of animals) Starbucks (peddlers of an addictive substance whose products are harvested at below-poverty wages by farmers who are forced to destroy their own forests in the process) Warner Bros. (media monopolists) Planet Hollywood (for being Planet Hollywood).

This activity lasted for over 5 hours and involved the breaking of storefront windows and doors and defacing of facades. Slingshots, newspaper boxes, sledge hammers, mallets, crowbars and nail-pullers were used to strategically destroy corporate property and gain access (one of the three targeted Starbucks and Niketown were looted). Eggs filled with glass etching solution, paint-balls and spray-paint were also used.

The black bloc was a loosely organized cluster of affinity groups and individuals who roamed around downtown, pulled this way by a vulnerable and significant storefront and that way by the sight of a police formation. Unlike the vast majority of activists who were pepper-sprayed, tear-gassed and shot at with rubber bullets on several occasions, most of our section of the black bloc escaped serious injury by remaining constantly in motion and avoiding engagement with the police. We buddied up, kept tight and watched each others' backs.

Those attacked by federal thugs were un-arrested by quick-thinking and organized members of the black bloc. The sense of solidarity was awe-inspiring.

The Peace Police

Unfortunately, the presence and persistence of "peace police" was

quite disturbing. On at least 6 separate occasions, so-called “non-violent” activists physically attacked individuals who targeted corporate property. Some even went so far as to stand in front of the Niketown super store and tackle and shove the black bloc away. Indeed, such self-described “peace-keepers” posed a much greater threat to individuals in the black bloc than the notoriously violent uniformed “peace-keepers” sanctioned by the state (undercover officers have even used the cover of the activist peace-keepers to ambush those who engage in corporate property destruction).

Response to the Black Bloc

Response to the black bloc has highlighted some of the contradictions and internal oppressions of the “nonviolent activist” community. Aside from the obvious hypocrisy of those who engaged in violence against black-clad and masked people (many of whom were harassed despite the fact that they never engaged in property destruction), there is the racism of privileged activists who can afford to ignore the violence perpetrated against the bulk of society and the natural world in the name of private property rights. Window-smashing has engaged and inspired many of the most oppressed members of Seattle’s community more than any giant puppets or sea turtle costumes ever could (not to disparage the effectiveness of those tools in other communities).

Ten Myths about the Black Bloc

Here’s a little something to dispel the myths that have been circulating about the N30 black bloc:

1. “They are all a bunch of Eugene anarchists.” While a few may be anarchists from Eugene, we hail from all over the United States, including Seattle. In any case, most of us are familiar with local issues in Seattle (for instance, the recent occupation of downtown by some of the most nefarious of multinational retailers).

2. “They are all followers of John Zerzan.” A lot of rumors have been circulating that we are followers of John Zerzan, an anarcho-primitivist author from Eugene who advocates property destruction. While some of us may appreciate his writings and analyses, he is in no sense our leader, directly, indirectly, philosophically or otherwise.

3. “The mass public squat is the headquarters of the anarchists who destroyed property on November 30th.” In reality, most of the people in the “Autonomous Zone” squat are residents of Seattle who have spent most of their time since its opening on the 28th in the squat. While they may know of one-another, the two groups are not co-extensive and in no case could the squat be considered the headquarters of people who destroyed property.

4. “They escalated situations on the 30th, leading to the tear-gassing of passive, non-violent protesters.” To answer this, we need only note that tear-gassing, pepper-spraying and the shooting of rubber bullets all began before the black blocs (as far as we know) started engaging in property destruction. In addition, we must resist the tendency to establish a causal relationship between police repression and protest in any form, whether it involved prop-

erty destruction or not. The police are charged with protecting the interests of the wealthy few and the blame for the violence cannot be placed upon those who protest those interests.

5. Conversely: "They acted in response to the police repression." While this might be a more positive representation of the black bloc, it is nevertheless false. We refuse to be misconstrued as a purely reactionary force. While the logic of the black bloc may not make sense to some, it is in any case a pro-active logic.

6. "They are a bunch of angry adolescent boys." Aside from the fact that it belies a disturbing ageism and sexism, it is false. Property destruction is not merely macho rabble-rousing or testosterone-laden angst release. Nor is it displaced and reactionary anger. It is strategically and specifically targeted direct action against corporate interests.

7. "They just want to fight." This is pretty absurd, and it conveniently ignores the eagerness of "peace police" to fight us. Of all the groups engaging in direct action, the black bloc was perhaps the least interested in engaging the authorities and we certainly had no interest in fighting with other anti-WTO activists (despite some rather strong disagreements over tactics).

8. "They are a chaotic, disorganized and opportunistic mob." While many of us could surely spend days arguing over what "chaotic" means, we were certainly not disorganized. The organization may have been fluid and dynamic, but it was tight. As for the charge of opportunism, it would be hard to imagine who of the thousands in attendance didn't take advantage of the opportunity created in Seattle to advance their agenda. The question becomes, then, whether or not we helped create that opportunity and most of us certainly did (which leads us to the next myth):

9. "They don't know the issues" or "they aren't activists who've been working on this." While we may not be professional activists, we've all been working on this convergence in Seattle for months. Some of us did work in our home-towns and others came to Seattle months in advance to work on it. To be sure, we were responsible for many hundreds of people who came out on the streets on the 30th, only a very small minority of which had anything to do with the black bloc. Most of us have been studying the effects of the global economy, genetic engineering, resource extraction, transportation, labor practices, elimination of indigenous autonomy, animal rights and human rights and we've been doing activism on these issues for many years. We are neither ill-informed nor inexperienced.

10. "Masked anarchists are anti-democratic and secretive because they hide their identities." Let's face it (with or without a mask)—we aren't living in a democracy right now. If this week has not made it plain enough, let us remind you—we are living in a police state. People tell us that if we really think that we're right, we wouldn't be hiding behind masks. "The truth will prevail" is the assertion. While this is a fine and noble goal, it does not jive with the present reality. Those who pose the greatest threat to the interests of Capital and State will be persecuted. Some pacifists would have us accept this persecution gleefully. Others would tell us that it is a worthy sacrifice.

We are not so morose. Nor do we feel we have the privilege to accept persecution as a sacrifice: persecution to us is a daily inevitability and we treasure our few freedoms. To accept incarceration as a form of flattery betrays a large amount of “first world” privilege. We feel that an attack on private property is necessary if we are to rebuild a world which is useful, healthful and joyful for everyone. And this despite the fact that hypertrophied private property rights in this country translate into felony charges for any property destruction over \$250.

Motivations of the Black Bloc

The primary purpose of this communiqué is to diffuse some of the aura of mystery that surrounds the black bloc and make some of its motivations more transparent, since our masks cannot be.

On the Violence of Property

We contend that property destruction is not a violent activity unless it destroys lives or causes pain in the process. By this definition, private property—especially corporate private property—is itself infinitely more violent than any action taken against it.

Private property should be distinguished from personal property. The latter is based upon use while the former is based upon trade. The premise of personal property is that each of us has what s/he needs. The premise of private property is that each of us has something that someone else needs or wants. In a society based on private property rights, those who are able to accrue more of what others need or want have greater power. By extension, they wield greater control over what others perceive as needs and desires, usually in the interest of increasing profit to themselves.

Advocates of “free trade” would like to see this process to its logical conclusion: a network of a few industry monopolists with ultimate control over the lives of the everyone else. Advocates of “fair trade” would like to see this process mitigated by government regulations meant to superficially impose basic humanitarian standards. As anarchists, we despise both positions.

Private property—and capitalism, by extension—is intrinsically violent and repressive and cannot be reformed or mitigated. Whether the power of everyone is concentrated into the hands of a few corporate heads or diverted into a regulatory apparatus charged with mitigating the disasters of the latter, no one can be as free or as powerful as they could be in a non-hierarchical society.

When we smash a window, we aim to destroy the thin veneer of legitimacy that surrounds private property rights. At the same time, we excise that set of violent and destructive social relationships which has been imbued in almost everything around us. By “destroying” private property, we convert its limited exchange value into an expanded use value. A storefront window becomes a vent to let some fresh air into the oppressive atmosphere of a retail outlet (at least until the police decide to tear-gas a nearby road blockade). A newspaper box becomes a tool for creating such vents or

a small blockade for the reclamation of public space or an object to improve one's vantage point by standing on it. A dumpster becomes an obstruction to a phalanx of rioting cops and a source of heat and light. A building facade becomes a message board to record brainstorm ideas for a better world.

After N30, many people will never see a shop window or a hammer the same way again. The potential uses of an entire cityscape have increased a thousand-fold. The number of broken windows pales in comparison to the number broken spells—spells cast by a corporate hegemony to lull us into forgetfulness of all the violence committed in the name of private property rights and of all the potential of a society without them. Broken windows can be boarded up (with yet more waste of our forests) and eventually replaced, but the shattering of assumptions will hopefully persist for some time to come.

Against Capital and State,
the ACME Collective

Disclaimer: these observations and analyses represent only those of the ACME Collective and should not be construed to be representative of the rest of the black bloc on N30 or anyone else who engaged in riot or property destruction that day.

On Behalf of the Barbarians

by Bleu Marin

translated from *Diavolo in Corpo*

If I don't know the meaning of a language, I will be a barbarian to he who speaks it, and he who speaks to me will be a barbarian.

—Paul, First Corinthians

Civilization finishes when the barbarians flee.

—Karl Krauss

In The Heart of the City

The history of a civilization is simultaneously the history of the transformation of its language. A society develops around its knowledge, which is articulated through its language, which becomes concrete in thinking itself. Humans act on the basis of their desires, they desire on the basis of their thoughts, they think on the basis of their language. The form and content of the latter are hence at the same time the condition and result of the whole of social relations. The dominant language of an epoch is therefore always the language of those who dominate socially in that period.

If there is a concept that clearly expresses the relation between language and society it is that of the barbarian. For the Greeks the barbarian was the foreigner and at the same time he was also the “stutterer” since he who couldn't master the language of the polis, of the city, was defined with contempt. The origin of the word referred to being deprived of *logos*, i.e. of discourse. If one considers that Aristotle defined man alternately as a “political animal” and as an “animal endowed with *logos*,” it follows from this that, by confirming the identity of language with politics, the barbarian is excluded not only from the city, but from human community itself. The barbarian is a non-man, a monster.

The *Logos* of Work

The *logos* is not only discourse or language, but is also science, law, reason, order (in the sense of a regulative principle and of the plot that connects and expresses the multiplicity of the real. All of these meanings are present at the same time in the word *logos*, which is veritably untranslatable (the English term that comes closest to it is “expression”). Only by keeping all of these in mind can one grasp the meaning of the Aristotelian definition of man, as well as the nature of its opposite, the barbarian. The first trace of the

word *logos* is found in the fragments of Heraclitus (4th to 5th century B.C), which from time to time, and simultaneously, point to a cosmic principle, the order of reality with its multiple expressions, the human understanding of this order and Heraclitan discourse itself. Already in these fragments the element common to men is identified in the *logos*.

Until the times of Homeric poems common space is the assembly which the warriors put at their disposal, for the collective good, the loot of war, or discussions. This relation between the center and that which is common is transferred to the agora, that is in the city square, the place of political decisions. The categories of public discourse indicate precisely the act of bringing down (*kata*) into the middle of the assembly (*agora*) words submitted for general approval. The barbarian is thus he who is outside categories, he who, not having access to the center of the assembly, is excluded from public life. A stranger in his own house, the stutterer in the language of the city, he will thus join the foreigner outside. The woman and the slave, those banished from discourse (that is order, reason and law) these inhabitants of the internal colony, represent two steps of the staircase that ends in the worst cruelty permitted and committed towards the barbarian, the inferior, the enemy.

The power of assembly belongs to he who knows the art of rhetoric, the techniques for ingratiating oneself for the favors of the powerful goddess Persuasion. The more one has time to gain the possession of discourse, the more one is able to exercise its force, in eliminating the private reason of others, one's own discourse is imposed as common. "The power of the *logos* on the soul persuades as it is like that of the master on the slave; with the difference that the soul is reduced to slavery not by force but by the mysterious pressure exercised on his conscience." Thus wrote Plato in *Philebus*, illustrating well the dominating force of language. But that which is important is not only to recognize that, in politics, discourse is an arm of war, but also to ask oneself about the relation that links this arm to all others. Only he who has slaves that work for him can chain others with his discourse. The activity of individuals is already specialized because a hierarchical and superior role is attributed to the word. The division between manual and intellectual labor, in the meantime makes the activity of slaves accumulate in objects (and then in money and in machines) for the master, increasing the *logos* of the latter. "This is the fate of verbalized logic; where the word has all meaning, the dominant meaning loses no time in taking hold of all the words" (G. Cesarono). But the "mysterious pressure" exercised on the assent of the slave would not be possible if the language of his body were not reduced to the coercive rationality of work. It is in producing work that the economy has produced its own language. So, one better understands why controlling the language of the exploited has always been the project of the exploiters. To first give discursive logic all the power (at the expense of the barbaric reason of the body) is to subsequently give to the powerless an increasingly reduced logic. The I that speaks is a figure that represents the body of the individual (corporeality that is first of all a work force) as the state, the holder of public Discourse, represents the whole of society. The more the interior dialogue

of the individual—his consciousness—conforms to the dominant language, the greater his assent, his submission will be. In this sense, capital, the dead work of a life constrained to survival, is “discourse” “the organization of fictitious meanings, mechanical logic, the fictitious game of representation” (G. Cesarano). It makes the language of that which extinguishes passions speak to the passions.

A Flight Backwards

But let’s return to our barbarians who tell us the history of civilization, this land of *logos* and politics, better than anyone.

If the accepted meaning of the concept of barbarians bears witness to a meaning that is that of progressive ideology (the barbarian is the opposite of a reasonable, scientific, and democratic society; that is monstrosity, menacing silence, irrational violence, superstition, gloomy withdrawal etc), there is a whole tradition of thought that has seen the barbarians as more vigorous beings than the civilized because they are closer to nature. From Polibio to Cioran, passing through Tacitus and Guicciardini, Machiavelli and Montesquieu, Rousseau and Leopardi one can once again go over the idea that they are illusions, copiously distilled from nature to push men towards generous actions, while reason, the product of civilization becomes calculating, turned on the same eternal doubters themselves. Leopardi said that a people of philosophers would be the most cowardly and wretched of all, precisely because it would be the most civilized. The fall of Rome and “Hellenist decadence” are brought up in particular by Montesquieu, as examples in this sense. From the Germans of Tacitus to the modern Unni of Cioran, the conducting wire of this tradition is the connection between the affirmation of the body, the imaginative faculty, bold virtue and desire for action. Quite often within this conception of history, the time of civilization repeats in a cyclical manner, because of an excess (and not due to a lack) of civilization, the barbarian is born, this counterstroke which puts civilization in the bag, then the cycle begins again. The development of a civilization is compared to that of living organisms, in which childhood is followed by maturity and then old age and death, stages characterized by a different passionality and reflexivity. The same language would bear witness to the various degrees of vitality of a culture (it is not by chance that one speaks of the becoming barbarian of language)¹.

If the progressive criticism of the conception of civilization has been guided for the most part by a reactionary point of view (like for example in Spengler and Schmitt) with an abundance of biological and hierarchical metaphors on the struggle for survival, the attacks on the ideology of progress in the name of an enlightenment “other” are not however lacking (for example in Sorel and Adorno) or let loose at the shoulders, with the eyes of the Greeks like in the same Leopardi, in Holderlin, in Burkhardt and in Nietzsche; or still, from the angle of a artistic-craftsman know-how that mechanized work has destroyed (for example in William Morris).

1. In Italian “imbarbaramento linguistico” means both becoming barbarian of language, and the corruption of language, the pun doesn’t translate

Barbarism and Nihilism: The Demon of Analogy

The case of Leopardi is particularly significant. In him we find a Greco-Vician² vision of history (everything repeats itself, but we don't ever know for certain at what point we are in the repetition) a work of revealing—materialist but not dialectical—of the dominant political and religious lies (in its style, if you will, of truth), and a radical affirmation of the vital illusion on which modern science along with the other manifestations of calculating reason, has wreaked havoc. The concept of barbarian is taken by him with ambivalence. He expresses what civilization would be at its highest degree of evolution (for it is not sleep, but rather the totalitarian wakefulness of reason that gives birth to monsters) that vitality and that natural force that is not unharmed by the deadly sophistication of the civilized, and is thus susceptible to wonder and virtue. His concept of barbarian recalls the Nietzschean concept of nihilism, which indicates at the same time an enemy and a necessity, typical Christian resentment in the confrontations between life and the tragic and the creator—*tabula rasa*—of given values. These secret wiles of the demon of analogy should not surprise. Can one say that nihilism and barbarian are not two words that, in the mouths of the conservatives as well as in those of the revolutionaries, often change places in this way? How many times have the state and capital been defined nihilist? And even they perhaps deny, those two forbidding monsters, all values? Obedience, competition, reasonable resignation, fussy fatalism, can one say that they are not values? In the same way, that which passes for barbarian is not only the delirious short circuit of this civilization, the flip side of its dreams bottled by psycho-pharmacy and electronic narcotics. On the other hand, what is there outside the present civilization of authority and the market? The barbaric is, very often, that which we are not accustomed to and it is for this reason that it appears to us as the enemy.

Around Four Angles

Maybe the ambivalence of the concept of the barbarian is an indispensable fact, above all if one wants to conserve that intuitive sensibility towards the social fires that burn beneath the judicial bureaucratic and mercantile officialdom of an era, that is if one wants to understand what the forces on the field are.

If the barbarian is a being deprived of *logos*, it is the nature of this *logos* to clarify what its deprivation means. In the *logos* repressive order and human possibility are confused, being at the same time reason, discussion, law and community. To critique progressive ideology cannot consist of a banal overturning of values (for which all that which seems to oppose civilization becomes a positive position) since this would only make us postpone approaching the other four angles of the problem.

It is more fertile to know how to distinguish that which is hypercivilized from that which is decivilized³. Hypercivilization is the fulfillment (in

2. This refers to G.B. Vico the seventeenth century philosopher.

3. I have chosen to stay close to the original, "decivilizzato," instead of using the term uncivilized, because this more clearly expresses a process of becoming less civilized.

the double sense of realization and conclusion) of civilization, the totalitarian displaying of its technical power; the “barbarian” of a world that passes without respite from “amusements” to the purges of the masses, from domestic commodities to catastrophe. Decivilization on the contrary is all the material and spiritual autonomy that individuals manage to attain by escaping this robotized society: an anarchy of passions that shakes off domestication. It is not because a river is free from cement dams that it doesn’t let itself be conquered by other rocks, putting its waters on currents which are not its own. But it will never be an artificial lake. To return again to the *logos*, the silence of he who has no more words because electronic alienation has taken them away from him is hypercivilized; he who feels a richness inside himself that he doesn’t allow to be trapped with the verb is decivilized. Decivilized is the disorder of he who does not accept any more orders, hypercivilized is the damage caused by he who carries them out with too much zeal. It is about two opposed ways of transcending misery, two enemy forms (of *hybris*, as the Greeks used to say). A society recognizes itself above all from the way in which it represents arrogance, the de-measuring that frightens it.

Hypercivilization—that civilization calls barbarian with the goal of justifying itself—is at the same time a radical distancing from nature and the swamp of a rationality that reveals itself to bring always more coerced madness. The *logos* at the service of power has made law and reason coincide, therefore it has defined submission as reasonable. Discourse has extended its breath of death on all that which does not speak its language; it has leveled the differences, to return finally to monologue, only in the terrible silence of technics.

The “absolute persuasiveness” of technological language is no other than the landing place of a culture that has definitely banished its own barbarians, in this way making everyone a barbarian to the other. The possessors of technical knowledge, necessary to the authoritarian administration of society, strategize to become increasingly fortified against the masses of “stutterers”—foreigners of the outside and inside—that endure their new language without understanding it. Discourse has won, since everybody is silent, or they repeat the 100 words that they possess, among them the most recurrent are over, super, zero, and mythic. Through the *logos* of the market and of instant efficiency, the civilized make entreaties against the monsters that besiege the city, addressing their appeals of peace and civic education to them. But the polis is in pieces, and Persuasion has a club in its hand.

Just as the techno-bureaucrats reduce the whole of social life to the demands of the economic and administrative inorganic structure, defining everything that blocks its way as barbarian; in the same way fragmented and mechanical reason joins with technological constrictions driving out, like barbarians, the untrained impulses and voices that still inhabit social life. And they are really barbarians, as soon as they set themselves free. No invitation to calm enchants them anymore.

When there is no common language, there is no community, just as, reciprocally when common space dwindles, language can no longer exist. The most important and most obvious consequence of such a condition is

that it becomes impossible to come to an agreement. Master Dialogue is no longer among the invited. A collision without protocols or codes is thus the only way, and the contours become those of civil war.

Civil War

The civilized don't oppose anything to war except the ideology of dialogue and the peaceful resolution of conflicts. But to dialogue one needs to also have common values, just as in order to have common values a sharing of places and practice is necessary. Which is the morality, today if one indeed looks yonder where the social fabric is born and dies, namely beyond political officialdom? They claim and proclaim so-called universal values at the very moment of their disappearance.

Human and civil rights wishing to pacify all of society don't pacify anything anymore. The ideology of the two blocks that contest the global scene and the hopes of individuals is collapsed together with that of belonging to a working class capable of taking power ("social" if not political) and of reorganizing the world. The certainties with regard to the future offered by science no longer warm the tepid orphan hearts of religion. All that is finished.

Exploitation remains, but the "community" created in order to concentrate the exploited—and their images—explodes. Production, thanks to the telematic, atomizes itself in structures ever more peripheral and spreads across the territory, in the same way that the identities of wage earners are atomized, tied to competence and to pride for that vanished renown that is the craft. Memory eclipses itself before the eternal present which is fabricated in the mass media (only the news counts the rest does not exist). Human communication (in the sense of common engagement) subsequently reduces itself to the continuation of an impoverishment of that which is called culture, which is everyday more profound. Technology recuperates scientific doubt in its favor and makes programmed uncertainty a new ideology in a position to justify any frenzy of control over species and planet. "As long as it lasts", this is the motto of the powerful. And the existence of the exploited is more a holding out than really living. From the school to the workplace, from the family to the shopping mall, only one ability is required: that of adapting oneself. It is civil war: a cohabitation without common values or assurance for the future, an order that unites individuals in their very separation.

And if war is always occurring, there is not much need to declare it—as the case of the recent military intervention in the Balkans shows—to underscore the separation between "times of peace" and times of war" with formal gestures. Permanent war brings new social relations to the international level, just as the old diplomacy of sovereignty of governments extended the confines and agreements between the state and the representatives of its exploited further. The clash is no longer between national oligarchs, but between finance or Mafia groups (two interchangeable and fundamental forms of money making) that traverse the frontiers and the state apparatuses and to which the brutal atomization of society provides a copious and implacable labor. Businessman or gangster, there are only two modes of organizing

into economic bands, the only difference is that in the second case the road to riches is richer and shorter.

But this clash without respite traverses the whole of society and its individuals. The conflict sharpens between institutional order—the always more perfected guillotine of civilization—and the ferocious implosion of the relations beneath the burden of constrictions. At the same time the tension between the spontaneous activity of the human organism and the preeminence of the external stimulus characteristic of mechanized modern activity is exacerbated; abstract organizing reason engages a battle without precedents with the profound impulses of the individual. The quagmire that the *logos* has proposed to reclaim, to take back the images with which Freud symbolized the civilizing action of the I on the unconscious, is revealing itself to be more extensive and muddy than ever. The class struggle widens to frighteningly new territories.

It's a question of tendency, it is clear; it is not already uniformly accomplished in fact. Here the civil war is larval; elsewhere it is terribly manifest. But this elsewhere is nearby. Like a former Yugoslavia.

Nationalisms, and ethnic and religious demands are the authoritarian and hierarchical response to the fall of values, result in their time of the decline of ancient communitarian forces. Integralisms of various natures are first of all communitarian ideologies, attempting to restore the identity of the *logos* (that is language, laws, and order) while common space diminishes. It's about the hypercivilized reaction to that virtual community that is everywhere supplanting real reciprocity between individuals. The instruments of civilization—technological “welfare”, democratic dialogue, parliamentary legality, humanitarian and mercantile universalism—are impotent since they are part of the problem.

Destroy Everything to Remake Everything

Capitalism, in its historic development, has unified the exploited in work and in alienation, determining them as a programmatic class, that is, capable of political and social programming. The struggles of the dispossessed have found themselves linked (through places, instruments, class-consciousness) with the very structure of capital. The awareness that the worker “can destroy everything because he can remake everything” responded to his concrete possibility of making the society without masters function. It's not interesting to explore further which ideologies (determinism, productivism, reformist gradualism, scientism etc) had produced that condition, nor in which forms of self-organization of the exploited (worker's councils, agrarian collectives, etc.) it had already come to life. That which is worth noting is that an entire project of emancipation, in its bureaucratic and authoritarian falsifications like in its libertarian authenticity, depended on it; and this is part of the vision of a future society, and the methods of struggle (union activity, general strike as a cause of insurrection, armed party, etc) to destroy capitalist society. Today all that has finished, and with it also its illusions.

The problem, as it is usual to say, is complex. It would be attacked

from both sides of the social barricade: from the side of a capital that is extended to all social relations and that wants to valorize the whole day of the exploited; and from the side of the dangerous classes that no longer have political or union programs. Considering these first reflections it will be enough to say that the places of production no longer contain resistance to capital, which is becoming directly social. If that makes daily life itself the authentic place of social war, and can therefore increase the knowledge that nothing of these social relations is worth saving, the consequence is at the same time the disappearance of practical unification—the *logos* of class—from beneath the feet of the exploited. Where to meet and begin such change? Will it be a case that, wherever injured life explodes, the isolated riots are thus often substituting the old general wildcat strikes? But how can revolts dialogue at a distance, in order to snatch away how much more possible time and space as inevitable institutionalization waits?

Without direct relations there is no communication, without communication there is no social utopia. In this sense, there are always more barbarians in the world.

But not only in this sense. Authentic community is the one which is based on the autonomy of individuals, that of the community of difference, in which everyone wants to know the thoughts of the other as different from ones own. It is the feeling that a one universal reason does not exist, that pushes people to communicate, to enrich with the game of proximity and of the subtleties of their language. A language dies when thoughts no longer deserve to be communicated, by now all desolately identical, when they lose the dreams which nourish its poetry. Only a diverse life, individual, gives birth to diverse thoughts.

To Decivilized Hearts and Minds

Vitality is found today in the least civilized conditions. The “barbarian” of technical reason destroys great illusions, these eternal forces of confusion, attacking the very source of life. But illusions that push to outbursts of passion are born for the most part wherever humans conserve the instinct of the herd, that the atomized multitude has modified. For this reason nationalism and integralism offer two false solutions to lead social dissatisfaction by hand, with a mixture of ideals of purification, rituals of atonement and millenarian expectation. What is there in the greatest of ethnic and religious conflicts to create artificial enemies and in this way lock up every protest against the established order? The difference of the immigrant, of belonging to a different ethnicity, is visible and comprehensible, unlike the difference of the exploited, which don’t have a nation. In their telematic fortress, they are speaking one single Esperanto: that of the market, that nevertheless does not inflame the old ardors of faith. If it is necessary, the new propaganda can wave the old patriotic and divine rags to continue its own monologue eliminating the restless and numerous exploited. In the name of civilization naturally. But the illusions are of the barbarians always of the door, those that ruthlessly transform the violence with which they are expelled.

More and more, from such a situation of civil war—that is not an all against all but an all against an interchangeable and whole one—there are only two possible exits: ethnic and Mafia wars or the social tempest of class struggle. The nationalist or religious lie, in certain areas carefully prepared by the mass media, is only the last card that domination can play in face of the danger of a generalized revolt. In fact, contrary to the determinist fable of the end of history, or all the reformism of revolutionaries in step with the times, the possibility for immense popular uprisings does not wait for the occasion to explode. Recent examples, even those two steps away from us, are not lacking.

In face of the feeling of dispossession that many individuals experience towards a mercantile standardization that constricts everyone to dream the same lifeless dream, humanitarian universalism is as much a liar as the “differentialism”—hierarchical and interclass—of the new right. Real differences are thoroughly affirmed (well beyond those of cultural and linguistic belonging) only in the free and reciprocal game of singularity. Real equality (not legal) is the sharing of that which we have most in common: the fact of being all different. A community of unique individuals without a state or classes, or money: that is the utopia of decivilized hearts and minds. A utopia that, like each conquest of the marvelous, will be born only from destruction and filth.

The Wind of Thaw

To once again take up the thesis of the Barbarians as the men and women closest to communism today, would not brighten the powerful intuition that the anarchists Coeurderoy and Dejaque had in the last century, but would be first of all tranquilizing, a simple turning on its head of the ideology of progress. Civilization is ripe, supercession is about to hatch—this determinism would make us take sparks for fire, without this making us more determined. But perhaps this is not the point. We are not partisans of democratic integration nor of legal and reformist battles, this is sure. We foresee only free accord in the anarchic movement of social forces, in the barbaric assaults against every domestication. And still. Are we not at bottom the last civilized people, with our values, other, individual, but still values? Is not the search for perilous virtues, for us, the source of the marvelous?

It is useless to hide from ourselves that social explosions scare everyone, including the subversives. They also scare us. Above all when there aren't expectations for a diverse life, when popular uprisings mix with the worst communitarianisms or with the disconnected outbursts of a moribund society. The flip-side of calculating reason is found in the collective dreams and in the reality the salvific myths of sacrifice and of self destruction keep under cover. The “liberation of customs” after having modernized morality, transmits directly to technology, this power on this side of good and evil, the control of consciousness. All this certainly does not make us grieve the old political programs and the orthopedics of their civilization, capable of averting violence in only one way: by institutionalizing it. But this does not push us towards hidden certainties of regeneration. We do not swear

on decadence. Capital—and not the revolutionaries—has liquidated all the programs, bringing great possibilities of liberation and lamentable centralist illusions to the same tomb. As the terrorism of progress says, it does not turn back. But even to turn oneself around backwards, along the dead tracks of this senseless production of commodities and of dependence, it is necessary to find the right path. And then where to?

That which is lacking today are adequate projectual hypotheses—ideas and methods—for the new conditions of the conflict; but maybe above all what is lacking is that sense of defiance that is ethical tension and dreaming together, that great passion for free discussions and for resolute action.

If from one side one doesn't believe that History (or Wild Nature) works in its place, from the other one can see only the social freeze on the horizon that feels the powerful blowing of the wind of thaw.

A Faraway Whisper

In 1870 facing the invasion of France by the Prussia of Bismarck, History seemed at the crossroads; and the revolutionary movement was divided. Marx and those who shared the analyses seen in the Prussian victory, the most developed strengthening of capitalism in Europe and therefore, by virtue of the incantations of dialectics, the consolidation of the historical conditions for that inevitable birth of communism which lacked only the forceps, that is, a united and disciplined urban proletariat. Bakunin and other libertarians saw in militarism and the Bismarckian bureaucratic order the forecast of dozens of reactions in Europe, after France appeared to them by its tradition, as the birthplace of every revolutionary hope. For the brightest to defend France did not mean that they would collaborate with the state and with the French bourgeoisie against the enemy invader but to transform the military conflict into social insurrection, passing from armed proletarian defense to the creation and the federation of revolutionary Communes. On that disastrous situation of civil war, Bakunin, engaged a few minutes afterwards in an insurrectional attempt at Lyon, wrote one of his best analyses which concentrated on the union of workers and peasants and on the necessity to everywhere substitute the deed for the revolutionary right, popular anarchy for the Jacobean terrorism of political decrees and administrative officialdom. For him it was a matter of "the unchaining of bad passions." But it is not that story, and its lessons that we want to talk about. (To ask ourselves already what would be able to bring forth the spontaneity of the masses of young people born in the cybernetic age would bring us far). That which returns to our memories of those days is only a whisper. The same that brought Bakunin to write that the French proletariat could count on only one desperate force: that of the devil in the body. A few months later, against the predictions of the same Russian revolutionary, the devil was on the barricades of Paris.

Civil war, the "barbarian," this spectacular antithesis with which the masters of the world and their servants have always justified themselves; this blackmail that has extorted the capacity of the dispossessed, becomes

more and more our condition. The federation of revolutionary Communes seems to move further away, while the "bad passions" stay with us without any pretence of organizing unleashing. The demon does not let itself be programmed, even less so today.

Caught in the Web of Deception: Anarchists and the Media

by Wolfi Landstreicher

As long as the present social order exists, it will be impossible to avoid interaction with the various facets of the power structure. Those of us who call ourselves anarchists need to choose to make these interactions clearly adversarial and conflictual, reflecting our desire to destroy the power structure completely. Such a choice requires knowledge of the enemy. Almost every anarchist recognizes that the state and capital are facets of the power structure and has some minimal understanding of how these function as such. Increasing numbers of anarchists are recognizing that technology and ideology are also part of the network of power. One would think that from this they would draw the due conclusion that the technological *system* for the dissemination of ideology, the media (I use the word media to refer specifically to this system in its totality, not to refer to specific tools it uses to carry out its function, since some of these tools can be used in different manner, even against this function), is an inherent part of the power structure and, therefore, an enemy of all rebellion and of every attempt to create free life. Yet even in the face of the intense concentration of the media into a very few mega-corporational hands (a fact that should reveal something of its nature), there are still some anarchists who will directly—and in a nonconflictual manner—interact with it in an attempt to communicate anarchist ideas on its terrain. This shows a lack of understanding of how the media functions.

The media plays a specific role in the power structure, a role that, in a democratic state, becomes not only essential, but also central to the functioning of power. But before continuing, it is necessary to confront the illusions many have about democracy. While it is true that democracy can merely mean a decision-making process which offers all involved a say or a vote in each decision (why this is incompatible with anarchy is a subject best dealt with at another time for the sake of brevity), in the present era, democracy is also and more essentially a system of state and social power which maintains social peace by allowing the expression of the broadest possible spectrum of opinions. The democratic state is able to allow such a broad spectrum of opinion precisely because opinions are basically substanceless. Opinions are ideas that have been drained of all vitality. Separated from life and from any projectual basis, they have become harmless blathering that ultimately strengthens the democratic state by making it appear tolerant and open as compared to feudal or dictatorial states.

From this, the political function of the media should be obvious. It is

the mediator and processor of democratic opinion. It devours the complexities of life and social interaction, of international relations and insurgency, of cultural breakdown and economic necessity ... the totality of reality in the present, and mashes them to mush between its teeth, then digests them and shits out ... turds. All of the complexities, all of the vitality, all connection to real life has been leached out, and we are left to decide whether these nearly identical brown lumps stink or not. The reality from which these turds were produced is so distant that we "know" that we can't effect it directly, so instead we buy the binary logic of the democratic state, argue at the pub over the stinkiness of turds and vote for those politicians whose bullshit exudes the sweetest aroma. To be for or against this war, that law, whatever candidate, policy or program is no threat whatsoever to power. The purpose of the media is precisely to promote the predigested thinking that keeps us passive in the face of a distant reality, always ready to choose between the options offered by the democratic state, options that all end up subjecting the chooser to the power of the state and capital.

The media has another essential function. It is the creator of images for consumption. It creates celebrities and personalities for people to look up to and vicariously live through. It creates role images for people to imitate in order to invent their "identity." It creates images of events separated from and placed above life. It is through these images, ingested uncritically, that people are to view and interpret the world, formulating their opinions out of this virtual unreality. To the extent that the media succeeds, the result is a passive, predictable population consuming the trash dished out by the social order.

In choosing to seek to get one's ideas across through the media, one is choosing to feed these ideas to this masticating monster, to offer one's self to this life-draining ghoul. For anarchists this makes no sense. It is impossible for the media to portray anarchism as a living praxis or anarchists as complex multi-dimensional individuals. It is therefore not possible to express anarchist ideas in a worthwhile way through this forum. The ideas will be chewed up and shat out as one opinion among many, one more turd about whose odor the public can argue. The living individuals get chewed up and shat out as images—of freaks, of intellectual brooders, of street rioters—but essentially as *images* not living, acting beings. The media is part of the power structure, and, as such, is our enemy. We can't play their game and win.

An outstanding example of how this process works can be seen on the segment about anarchists that appeared on *60 Minutes* shortly after the demonstrations against the WTO in Seattle. This twelve-minute collage of interviews and images was probably the best that anarchists could expect from cooperating with the media. And from start to finish the media carried out its task. From over two hours of interviews and several hours of video footage from the events in Seattle, the show's editors selected what they (or their bosses) wanted to use to make up this brief segment. Using the title, "The New Anarchists," already these experts in mediation had made a separation between the viewers and these new "celebrities," this "new" subculture. The image-building specialists interviewed the one they called the "philosophical guide" separately from the other anarchists; the interviewer and this one to

whom the media attributed a guiding role sat face-to-face as peers. The other anarchists were interviewed as a group, some of them seated on the floor, the camera angle leaving the impression that all were seated lower than the interviewer. A viewer who didn't know better would be left with the impression that these "new anarchists" are followers of leaders, even if he is only called a "philosophical guide." The interviewer very clearly directed what was said with his questions—this is his specialty after all. By allowing the interview to pass in normal fashion, these anarchists played right into the hands of the media. By answering the questions, they weakened their arguments, fell into clichés such as the dull old saw about property destruction not being violence and helped to further marginalize and spectacularize themselves. I have not yet seen a media depiction of these "new anarchists," of the "Eugene anarchists" (a term that anarchists in Eugene would do well to destroy as soon as possible), or whatever term the particular journalist, interviewer or newsperson chooses to use that was not this manipulative—because that's how the media functions.

In the wake of the demonstrations in Seattle, there has been a lot of attention paid to anarchists in the media, particularly focussing on the question of property destruction. Much has come out of this that I find disturbing though not surprising. Some anarchists have begun to worry about their media image. Thus there are those anarchists who condemn property destruction because it will give anarchists a bad public image. But these are so ridiculous that they disturb me less than those who publicly insist that "property destruction is not violence." By using this argument that has come out frequently in the media, anarchists are letting themselves get drawn into the values of this society; they are measuring their words to fit them into the viewpoint of democratic dialogue. This viewpoint seeks to force revolutionary action to fit into the moral equation of violence/nonviolence. For anarchists who determine their actions for themselves, on their own terms, such equations are useless; they have no significance. Central to anarchist activity in the present is the necessity to destroy the state, capital, and all institutions of power and authority in order to create the possibility for every individual to fully realize herself as he sees fit. Such total destruction—the destruction of a world—encompassing civilization—will be violent. There is no sense in denying or apologizing for this. . What each of us does to achieve this is determined by each individual in terms of her desires, dreams, capabilities and circumstances—in terms of the life he is seeking to create for herself. It has no relationship to any sort of morality. Therefore, as anarchists, we have no use for dealing with such questions as: "Is property destruction violence or not?" "Is this an act of self-defense or offensive attack?" We have no reason to care. Our desire is to attack and destroy all power structures and this determines our actions. These other questions are based on the hypocritical moral rules of power that serve no other purpose than to place weighted chains on our ability to act. So of what use is it to us to speak to the media about these questions on its terms, using its guidelines of how to speak of these matters and following its protocol? In fact, of what use is it to us to talk to the media at all?

In dealing with the media on its terrain, one chooses to give up deter-

mining one's own actions on one's own terms. As the *60 Minutes* episode made so clear, dealing with the media on its terrain is accepting delegation. One turns one's ideas over to the masters of "communication" to be masticated into more opinions in the ideological marketplace. One gives the reality of one's life over to these experts in separation to be turned into 60-second images of isolated events. One turns the activity of communication over to those whose specialty is the one way "communication" of devitalized, pre-digested non-ideas and non-events that create social consensus. And then one complains about how badly one was *represented* in the media. Why did one choose to be represented at all? The choice to accept media representation is no less an acceptance of delegation than voting or unionism. The rejection of delegation, so central to an anarchist and insurrectional perspective, includes the refusal to deal with the media on its terms.

If we take self-determination and self-activity as fundamental bases for anarchist practise, the way to communicate our ideas is clearly to create *our own* means of communication. Graffiti, posters, communiqués, papers, magazines and pirate radio can all be used to express anarchist ideas without putting them through the masticating mechanisms of the media. These self-determined means of communication can be distinguished from the media in that they are not attempts to mediate opinions and images while claiming objectivity and dishing out pre-digested pablum to a passive audience; they are actual attempts on the part of anarchists to express their ideas not only in the words but also in the method through which they go about expressing them. Of course these methods, which we can take into our own hands, will not get out to nearly as many people as a mainstream newspaper, magazine or television show. But such considerations could only be of significance to those who want to evangelize, to those who view anarchy as a belief system to which we must convert people if there is ever to be a revolution. To paraphrase some Italian comrades: if one has no commodities to sell, of what use are neon signs? And in the era of the reign of capital, evangelism—even anarchist evangelism—is ideological marketeering. To those whose interest is creating their lives as their own and destroying the society that prevents this, such marketeering is worthless.

Unfortunately, since the anti-WTO actions in Seattle, the media has been drooling over the anarchist morsel, and there have been anarchists willing to give it what it wants. Undoubtedly, the media will continue to hound anarchists for as long as anarchy is a marketable item. It is therefore necessary that we anarchists recognize that the media is part of the power structure just like the state, capital, religion, law... In other words, the media is our enemy and we should treat it as such. In this light, the action of three Italian anarchists—Arturo, Luca and Drew—becomes exemplary. When a journalist invaded the funeral of their comrade in search of a juicy morsel of news, they beat him.

Against War and Pacifist Bliss

Translated from: *Neither their war nor their peace*, June 1999

The pacifist abhors war and blesses the state. In times of peace, he has been taught—and he has believed—that society is a vast system of communication where all controls itself by means of dialogue, in a nonviolent manner. It follows from this that only one who, living on the periphery of these communicating vessels, mocks the hopeless cornerstone of vain democratic chattering with blows is candidate to suffer brute force.

Though he implicitly recognizes in this way that this society is not only dialogue but also violence, the pacifist citizen is not excessively worried by this: the violence is destined for others, for the new savages who have not yet acquired a proper communicative humanity and who deduce from this that society is much more violent from the sweet force of words that support a round table. The pacifist elevates the nonviolent image to a supreme principle—in which the peaceful course of capitalist affairs reflects itself—which mediated society gives itself.

When a state starts a war, the pacifist citizen orders it, “in the name of the people”, to conform to this idealized representation of daily life. Imbued with that idea of Rights which the state imposes for worship, he refuses to recognize how the state monopoly on violence, that by which countries guarantee the respect *manu militari* of the law corresponds, with armies in state to state relations; and when two powers collide it is war that has the final word. Thus, as she glances with nonchalance on the police reduction of democratic dialogue in the affairs of internal politics, the pacifist citizen insists upon the exclusive use of words in foreign affairs: upon negotiation. He wants one without the other, as if one could be able to have Rights without violence, the state without war, the principle without the consequences that derive from it. Far from recovering from seeing these murderous consequences and from allowing the principle from which they emanate to be put into doubt, the pacifist invokes the principle of Rights against violence—which is the reverse side of it—and draws from this irrational process the moral superiority which he decorates himself with: “What stupidity, war!”

Thus, questioning his own rulers and accusing them of unawareness and irresponsibility, the pacifist would be candid as advisor to the prince with the purpose of shedding light upon the real interests of the nation. And the less he is listened to, the more satisfied he is to have accomplished the proper duty of the citizen: to tell the government what he thinks of pub-

lic affairs—and so much the worse for the head of state, if he finds himself condemned by moral conscience. As long as the citizen, addressing herself to government, recognizes the legitimacy of the state, the state is able to act more as it pleases because, unlike the pacifist citizen, it does not deny the possibility of compensating for the gaps in its discourse, when necessary, by putting forth its own potential for destruction, flying squad included.

It is in this way that the pacifist has drawn up a separate peace with capitalist society, in which he denounces the “drivel” without ever putting it forth for discussion. This secret complicity corresponds to a purely symbolic activity. With his feverish activity, lighting candles, signing call after call, petition after petition, taking his own opinions for a walk on the city sidewalk, the pacifist accomplishes absolutely nothing. The pseudo-activity of the pacifist and of the other propagandists of the “right to...” imitates, more or less consciously, advertising techniques: it assumes that the incessant repetitions of symbolic acts and of reduced slogans able to create an opposition to war and to “mobilize the citizens.” Notoriously, gratuitous morality sells well in times of war.

The pacifist practice is an extension, by other means, of the Live Aid Concert against world hunger. Placed outside of the production centers of capitalist society, opposition sets itself up in the sphere of entertainment, and of “political pastimes,” where the citizen believes in acting as a responsible and autonomous individual, raised from capitalist contrition to earn a living. This kind of opposition is not able to get a grasp on social reality because the encounter unfolds itself in a mediated unreality which pretends to be the only reality: while the pacifists produce the images of opposition to war, the mass media reduces this same war to a technological operation, covered with base sentimentality. There are two interpretations, two images of the clash; war and capitalist society, which in the meantime, are left alone and proceed. The curious ease with which the pacifist is transformed once again the next day into simple labor power that must carry out determined tasks results from these images. Moralizers abstain: there’s work going on here.

Thus, the atomized individual—who doesn’t have any occupation of her own except that of staying aware of the balance of their own pecuniary and emotional bookkeeping—wears the mask of the pacifist citizen from time to time. There, on the public square—or rather on the square of publicity—he proclaims his own high morality against the softness of daily life that she continues to reproduce simultaneously in private and at work. The pacifist is a moralizer in the sphere of mediated unreality and acts without any moral considerations when she is in the production centers of a state, whose warlike defects she denies. This double character of the pacifist is called impotence in the best of cases, in the worst, hypocrisy.

Kula Shells and Zombies: Notes on Value

by Leila

Power relations are played out on the stage of desire. A valued object is a desired object. Value is a means through which culture effects desire. Ideology and culture effect power relations through the medium of value, where—as raw coercion is the simple imposition of the desire of one body on another, against the grain of the latter's desire.

Culture and capitalism have become interpenetrating value systems. For capitalism to function it must penetrate culture; it must overcome value systems that contradict it. Previously, the immaterial was outside the domain of capital, however as capital's domain grows and technology changes, it inches further and further into the immaterial. Images and information are now valuable commodities. The range of objects, emotions and concepts that are reduced to a monetary value becomes greater as capital's penetration into culture grows. Our own cultural limitations on capital are shrinking. Justice as an "eye for an eye" is a moral equation which preceded capitalism. Justice is a value system that has yet to be completely subsumed by capitalist logic, but it has become adapted to capital's needs. The blood lust for punishment sold on TV cop shows may function for the benefit of capital but its driving force is distinct from profit. Capitalism was once just one value system among many; now it is the system which attempts to transform all other systems into itself.

When the British and German banana plantation owners first tried to get the Bakweri of West Cameroon to work for them, few Bakweri would submit. Those that avoided plantation work thought that workers were members of a witchcraft association. They believed that the workers killed their relatives and children by turning them into zombies and making them work on some far away mountain, where the witch masters had a modern town. In the 1950s the Bakweri cultivated bananas collectively, and the witchcraft stopped. In the 1960s when the price of bananas fell the witches came back. The elders said that no one should pick money off the ground because money was being scattered by Frenchmen to draw men to the waterside where they would be employed as zombies to construct a new harbor. These stories of zombies and witchcraft must have discouraged not a few Bakweri from engaging in wage labor and for a good reason: they are in a sense true stories. Zombies are dead and wage labor sucks the life-blood out of workers. For those that have a non-capitalist system of value circulation and production, wage labor is often incomprehensible and unnecessary. The need for money

must be imposed. People only submit to wage labor when they are no longer self-sufficient, the theft of peasant lands is often the only thing that will turn peasants into workers. Bakweris that refused to work on plantations continued to understand wage labor from the perspective of their own cultural logic and not that of capital.

Cultures that still consider that certain objects can never be sold and thus have exclusively qualitative value, reveal to us the brutal indiscriminacy of the general equivalent, by stark contrast. Money is after all the most indiscriminate of whores. In the New Guinea region, Kula arm shells and necklaces circulate among many islands and eventually return to their origin through a series of gift donations. The only time that they are traded is when a young man receives his first kula shell. On that occasion the shell can only be traded for specific restricted types of goods and services. Kula shells are gifts that cement trade partnerships, but they must eventually be reciprocated if a trade partnership is to continue. Kula shells are given names and are said to not ever die, their origin and path is remembered; they therefore bring fame to kula givers. The giving and receiving of kula shells structures a trade network but kula shells are not merely a means to acquire goods, they also generate prestige for the donor. Thus this trade network does not only produce economic value but also social value. The prestige gained by giving kula shells cannot be compared with the status acquired with the purchase of a consumer item. In New Guinea, prestige is gained slowly, through a complex of relationships, it has nothing in common with status that can be immediately bought. The day the kula shell is traded for money the entire value system and trade network regulated by the kula shell will begin to travel down the path of its own destruction.

The Tiv of central Nigeria had three categories of flows: consumer goods, prestige goods, and women and children. When the money economy intervened in the Tiv economy, money was categorized as an object of prestige. Money crossed over the traditional boundaries between categories because it began to be used to buy consumer goods by male merchants when previously only women dealt in consumer goods. This is just one of innumerable examples in which money has inserted itself into a non-capitalist economy and broken down its categories of value.

Capitalism becomes hegemonic by bending other systems of value to its logic. Capitalism is a virus but this does not mean that there aren't those who produce its antibodies. To Kill King Abacus is to destroy the capitalist equation, the mechanism of value that is trying to reduce life itself to a mere quantity. There are moments in which culture slows the spread of capital, where cultural systems of value resist their own transformation into capitalist value. But this does not mean that non-capitalist forms of value are therefore liberatory. Culture is an ineffective weapon against authority. Culture codifies relationships and is a means through which authority is constructed. Culture, capital, justice and law all have their own scales to weigh behavior. They measure, judge and channel human action; they are all coercive. In the absence of value systems desire shoots in new directions. Insurrection is desire rebelling against value.

Enter... Enter...

by *Diavolo in Corpo*

[A new magazine has recently appeared in Italy called Diavolo in Corpo. It is a magazine of anarchist ideas that is intended to get beyond the anarchist ghetto. The following text is a translation of the introduction the publishers of this magazine wrote for it. It is printed here as an introduction to the ideas of certain of the insurrectional anarchists of Italy.]¹

To have the devil within. This is an expression that has fortunately survived from its medieval origins. Since the last witch burned on the pyre of the inquisition, the devil has continued to creep into human beings to shake them from the torpor of their existence. Indeed, something of the sulfurous remains in this idiom, an odor of heresy. To have the devil within means to be in continual motion, not knowing a moment of reprieve, of quiet: refusing to lie down on custom. It has nothing to do with the frenzy to which modern life invites us. On the contrary, the fibrillation of the I—when it is not adherence to external speed, but a spark that exceeds every utilitarian expectation—is customarily looked at with suspicion, considered a pathology. Possession, obsession, fanaticism: many are the descriptions with which the defenders of that which is liquidated the lovers of that which is not. But the recourse to diagnosis without appeal first of all reveals the embarrassment of the one who finds herself facing a condition of perpetual motion that is not the fruit of logical choice, but of visceral action. This does not mean that those who have the devil within do not possess one's own reasons; on the contrary. These reasons exist and even have solid bases. So long as the solidity of the projection of desires that they would want to carry out into the future gives way to the enchantment of their lived experience, to their immediate substance. With all our knowledge and understanding, there are still not enough words together to ease the burning of that which we lack, a life to invent. Like many before us, we think that no possibility, even if it is the most unreal, can ever be outlawed or rejected beforehand, no part of life can ever be condemned to death. If that one expanse, increasingly limited, of unknown places does not remain on the earth, it is within the individual himself that a world in motion and without limits opens, the exploration of which has barely begun. Rather it runs the risk of beginning again every

1. Note: Newer/different translation from the text that appeared in *Killing King Abucus*. This was updated by Wolfi Landstreicher.

day. This thought provokes the vertigo of the absolute in anyone who has come across it. And it is to avoid falling and hurting oneself that the human being clings daily to the external reality that he knows, transforming this existential vertigo into an aesthetic thrill. Through the centuries the passion for the unknown has seized the human being, and through the centuries she has sought relief in art or in science. In such a way he accepts the dream into her own little interior kitchen, utilizing it in doses and tensions that are not themselves able to cause burns. Safety above all. This is the creed of a world that prefers the pension to adventure. Now anyone who is not satisfied with comfort that only the domestic walls of habit are in a position to give him finds herself in the unpleasant situation of having to create the other: another way to think, another way to feel, another way to live. This other is vulnerable to criticism and to drolleries from anyone who brags about having his feet on the ground, because it ventures beyond the verifiable facts. And since the accountability of giving and of having that scans our days on earth demands that we all balance our accounts, it often happens that one willingly dedicates only the season of adolescence to the persistent search for freedom. The desire to rebel is an infantile disorder: how many times we have heard it repeated. Yet in every epoch, in every circle, the tyranny of objective reality has known its own ageless outlaws. Individuals and ideas that, referring to Utopia, or to the Impossible, or to the Unknown, or to the Marvelous—the name with which they have christened the thirst that devoured them matters little—have sought to escape the (un)quick sand* in which they were trapped by the means that they had at their disposal. Today, a fine example of the (un)quick sand is furnished to us by the dominant way of thinking. It's inactivity cannot amaze anyone: it is the necessary consequence of a perspective dictated by the indispensable need to preserve the foundations of the world in which we live, the world of authority and of the commodity. In order to mold the world to its own image and profit, power must make the existing order appear natural. It must present and impose today's social relations as eternal, define them as proper to all societies, for the purpose of establishing Progress, Money, Work, Democracy, State, as if it were a question of absolute concepts. The purpose is to spread the inner persuasion everywhere and within everyone that the world has always been this way and always will be, and that it will never know a rupture, an upheaval, a revolution. The world in which we live is thus presented to us as the ripe fruit of a linear progress that has brought us from the hell of primitiveness to the paradise of civilization, and no one has the right to bring this up for discussion. As for the alternatives to this one-way thought, they appear to us to portray the unfaithful shadow. They limit themselves to demanding a different outline of the form within the substantial identity of content: a left government as an alternative to a right government, thirty-five hours of work as an alternative to forty hours of work weekly, organic merchandise as an alternative to adulterated merchandise, and so forth. Realism is the tomb of Utopia, but the last hope of politics, of work, of the market. And to us—to us who, to stay with the example, wish the end of every government, all work, every

market—nothing is left but to build castles in the air. Or else to try to demolish those that are on earth. It has already been said many times that a theory critical of society possesses no concepts that can build a bridge between the present and the future, offers no promises, shows no outcomes, but remains destructive. Indeed if we could formulate a concrete idea of the alternative, it would not be that of an alternative: the possibilities of the other world are so remote and incongruous with respect to the universe of today as to defy every attempt to identify it within the boundaries of this universe. This is why, at the very moment that we take the floor to question everything, whoever listens to us is certain to hear nothing. But nothing else is possible. Anyone who is deafened by the roar of identical days and signs that follow one after the other will never succeed in catching our murmur. If we trust our flow to superficially banal reflections, it is because we have not yet reached to all of the depths. If we recite apparently mysterious formulae it is to awaken the demons that reside in most of us. Here we will record the incarnations. Here we will retrace the appearances. We will try to evoke the strength from them as well as the reasons.

[—]*(Un)quick sand is the closest I could come to expressing the Italian word-play. The term in Italian was sabbie (im)mobili. Sabbie mobili is quick sand, but literally means moving sand—thus, here the speak of unmoving sand which nonetheless traps one.

Drowning...

by Wolfi Landstreicher

A death in which one is completely overcome by a natural force too great for one to fight ...

But what deaths do not involve such a force?

I think drowning has its special significance because the force surrounds the victim, encompasses her, ingests and plays with him. Particularly in the sea, it is as if infinity has swallowed the one who has drowned, has taken him in and turned her into a part of itself. While there are similarities to death by fire, which also consumes its victims, fire lacks the apparent infinity of the sea, and the victim has freedom of motion limited only by her own fear, at least until asphyxiation causes him to lose consciousness. But one who drowns finds himself to be the plaything of the sea, forced to partake in its fluidity of motion. Certainly the drowning one will struggle against the power of the sea. But to what avail? Her motions are conformed to the desires of the sea; his struggles merely lead to exhaustion and limpid acceptance. The motions, the currents, the fluid tidal dance possess one's body and take it where they will. I imagine one's mind is also slowly possessed by the aqueous dream and slowly drifts along toward inevitable oblivion. Who does not imagine the drowning victim dreamy-eyed and languid? Do not forget that we are mostly water. Doesn't it make sense then that such a death would seem, in our imaginations, to simply be a return to our source? Maybe this is why we attribute calm and peace to the last moments of one who drowns. I have heard people speak of this as if it were a known established truth, even a scientific fact. But of course, no one knows. The drowned do not return to tell the tale of their last moments. So such a "truth" must be understood poetically, as a reflection of our view of the sea and of our own unperceived fluidity.

We are strange creatures. We desire ... we need ... to separate ourselves from the infinity, to find our own uniqueness and color all the infinite worlds with it, in this way making them our own. But such a task is daunting. And more so as social constructs developed by those in power in their attempts to dominate this process channel our endeavors into mere reproduction of this social system which drains the infinity of color and of its infinitude, leaving us with lifeless matter and lifeless lives.

Then the appeal of losing ourselves once more in the infinite, of drowning ourselves, comes to the fore—the appeal of religion. Surely by

this time, the absurdity of religion has been exposed a million times over, both practically and through intellectual argument. Yet in these desolate and dreamless times, its appeal is on the rise. The anguish of living as a unique individual without the possibility of creating the universe in one's own image, of coloring the infinite marvelous from which one has extracted oneself, with a beauty that enhances the world and one's own life, makes oblivion attractive. And the oblivion offered by religion, drowning in the waters of baptism, is far less frightening to most people than the absolute and final oblivion of suicide. But those who choose the oblivion of religion are not merely cowards, but traitors to themselves and to all who strive for self-realization, because religion—however soft and malleable its form (even in the guise of spirituality, that insidious thief which steals the marvelous from the physical world and encrusts it with belief, destroying its fluid and convulsive beauty)—is part of the social system that stole our creativity from us to construct the monstrous, gray nightmare that surrounds, this mad civilization that replaces creativity with production, free activity with work, vibrant living interactions with technological and bureaucratic mediation. This explains how religion is an opiate: it makes us oblivious to the anguish of our suppressed uniqueness and creativity, allowing us to forget the damage without curing it. It numbs us to the point where we accept the damage and its cause, civilization in its totality. One can see how certain forms of atheism—its stalinist and maoist forms as well as the 19th century rationalist forms touted by the American Atheist followers of Madelyn Murray O'Hare—can be religions. Atheism only avoids religiosity by having an existential as opposed to a dogmatic basis—that is as a willful decision to refuse god rather than a belief in no god. And the willful refusal of god has its basis precisely in the decision to extract ourselves from the infinite—that is the mass—and to live to the full singularity of our being, drawing the universe into ourselves as our own and, thus, creating the marvelous in all its poetic beauty ... the decision to pull ourselves from the sea so that we may come to know and love it with the fullness of our own unique being as only those who refuse to drown can.

Necrophiliac Logics and the Revolt of the Imagination

by Leila

A split between the rational and irrational is constructed by every rational system; each rationality creates a corresponding irrationality, that which does not fit inside of it. Therefore each rational system has inherent limits. To break out of a dominant rationality one must also be capable of conceiving of that which lies beyond the limits of that system. Rational systems can be useful tools but they can also become mental prisons.

Some wish to reject all rational systems because they detest specific types of rationality, such as capitalist rationality. We live in a highly mechanized society where nearly everything has been ascribed a monetary value, where urban and rural spaces are ravaged by the needs of capital while human beings are left in arid lifeless environments drinking chemical laden drinks in cafes with subdued music. This leads some people to crave the irrational: the chaotic. One can only listen to muzak so long, before becoming filled with a desire to burn down the places that play fast music so that we will drink our drinks faster and leave. But it is not the irrational that can subvert capitalist rationality, capitalism also has its irrational side and, like all rational systems capital creates its own irrational limit. We can find a more powerful source of subversion in our minds' imagination than in artificial splits created by the rationalities we wish to destroy. Imagination can show us well thought out ways to burn down that Starbucks and not get caught. Imagination breaks out of habitual and necrophiliac logics: imagination is anti-hegemonic.

The surrealists experimented with imaginative flights outside of necrophiliac logics. Alejo Carpentier was a Cuban novelist that was friends with the Surrealists while he lived in Paris in the 1920s and 1930s. His writing reflects a surrealist influence but he found the surreal in history and everyday life, specifically American life and history¹. Miguel Angel Asturias wrote fantastic versions of Mayan myths upon returning to Guatemala from Paris. The French surrealist and Latin American surrealist influenced writers attempted to break out of "Western" rationality in fundamentally different ways. The French surrealists emphasized the imagination of the subconscious whereas Carpentier and Asturias set the subconscious aside. These two writers looked to the indigenous and African cultures in their own countries and regions, to

1. "Lo real-maravilloso se encuentra en casa paso en la vida de hombres que inscribieron fechas en la historia del continente"—Carpentier. In Spanish, America is one continent from the Arctic to Terra del Fuego. America does NOT mean the U.S.

cultural logics which were less subsumed by the “Western” rationality the surrealists so criticized. Both Asturias and Carpentier were white, educated, city dwellers who were looking at these cultures from the outside and thus often romanticized them. Each culture’s logic leaves openings that other cultures close. This is most obvious in the case of moral logic; one culture restricts that which another condones. However, this method of subversion is inherently limited since it is merely replacing one code with another. These two writers looked to other cultures for openings, for opportunities closed by their own cultures.

Carpentier thought that life contained realities that were much more shocking than the dreams of the surrealists. He looked away from the subconscious and found the marvelous real in the creative choices of human life. The ways in which the conscious imagination can subvert established rationalities are more willful and thus more powerful than what we can extract from the subconscious.

In the novel *The Kingdom of this World*, Carpentier tells us a story of the overthrow of the French rule in Haiti and its aftermath. He went to the archives in Haiti to research the novel yet the story is written with trajectories into the physically impossible. He shows us the rule of Henri-Cristophe (after the removal of the French) as deranged yet following political logic. His abuses of power are perpetrated by a deranged man who is mad yet upholds the state’s logic of repression and exploitation enough to function as a statesman. The state, like capitalism appears to be hyper-rational but is sometimes terrifyingly irrational. Carpentier’s conception of the marvelous real challenges the separation between the real and unreal as well as between the rational and irrational.

Carpentier also uses fights of marvelous realism in which humans fly or turn into animals but he bases this in voodoo beliefs, it is indistinguishable whether he is saying that a man flew away when he was about to be executed or if people merely believed this to be true. He therefore describes the physically impossible as rational, as fitting within voodoo’s logic. The physical metamorphoses of Mackandal, an instigator of the insurrection, are accepted as normal by the characters. The novel is about the first anti-colonial insurrection that overthrew European rule in America, which was also a generalized slave revolt. The slaves find the insurrection more unbelievable than humans turning into animals. Voodoo was already generally accepted as having real power, while insurrection brought what was previously inconceivable. Property was temporarily effectively abolished and what had been the slave-owners’ assets became the loot of the slaves.

After bathing their arms in the blood of the white man, the Negroes ran toward the big house, shouting death to the master, to the Governor, to God, and to all the Frenchmen in the world. But driven by a longstanding thirst, most of them rushed to the cellar looking for liquor. Pick blows demolished kegs of salt fish. Their staves sprung, casks began to gush wine, reddening the women’s skirts. Snatched up with shouts and shoves, the demijohns of brandy, the carboys of rum, were splintered

against the wall Laughing and scuffling, the Negroes went sliding through pickled tomatoes, capers, herring roe, and marjoram on the brick floor, a slime thinned by a stream of rancid oil flowing from a skin bag.

—Carpentier, *The Kingdom of this World*.

Revolt creates situations that are as outside of established reality as is magic.² Revolt is marvelously real because it demands the impossible. Only willed imagination has the power to crush the conceptions and relations that perpetuate the status quo.

Capitalist logic is necrophiliac because it reduces life itself to a quantity. This logic brought to its extreme conclusion would result in the annihilation of life on this planet. The crudest examples of this reduction are the selling of forests or human organs for a price, more insidious is the reduction of time to a monetary value. Selling time for a number brings living death. Homogenous time brings abstractly equivalent moments; a flat expanse of seconds and minutes and hours spreads out in front of us. According to the clock every 5:33 PM is the same. The logics of law and morality creep their way into our heads restricting and repressing, but rationalization is never total, human desires and actions perpetually elude domestication and classification. There is always a tension between desire and the logics which constrain it, whether they be economic, political or moral. The revolt of the imagination rebels against necrophiliac logics as well as their most obvious results, such as police and the state.

2. Marvelous realism is also referred to as magical realism.

Civilization and the Creative Urge

by Wolfi Landstreicher

I do not accept the concept of an essential “human nature”—of any essential feature that unifies all humans and separates “us” from other creatures. However, I do think that for humans, the full enjoyment of life depends upon creative activity and experimentation by which we transform our environment. We lack speed and innate weapons like claws, fangs and horns, etc., but we have a brain capable of imagining amazing things. Clearly the greatest enjoyment in life for the human individual can be found in the least restricted, most open experimentation with one’s creative urges.

Unfortunately, much of the anti-technology, anti-civilization tendency has gotten itself entangled in an environmentalist/radical ecologist ideology that condemns the free expression of our creative and experimental urges. In light of the disastrous effects of the technological system, this is an understandable reaction, but that’s all it is—a *reaction*—not an intelligent response. This wedding of anti-civilization theory to radical environmentalist ideology has nearly drowned the possibility of making this theory intelligently in a quagmire of moralism and self-sacrifice. Our creative and experimental urges are to be suppressed and subjected to “Nature”—that metaphysical and very *civilized* conception we have of that which exists outside of civilization. According to this morality, “natural” is good and “artificial” is evil, and the artificiality of this dichotomy is completely missed. But is our urge to create and experiment to blame for this mess we call civilization? Or is it a victim of constraints that have chained us to a system of authority that suppresses all creativity that it cannot channel into social reproduction?

When self-created interactions between individuals are displaced by social relationships based upon roles which designate functions within a society, it seems inevitable that certain roles would take on increasing responsibility for, and so greater control over, social reproduction. In other words, authority develops. It may well be that authority develops precisely because unconstrained expressions of the urge to create and experiment threaten social stability. In any case, creative energy, though continuing to reside in the individual, no longer belongs to the individual, but rather belongs to society—which, in practise, means the authorities who control that society, who direct this energy, this urge, toward social reproduction.

Technology is a huge system, an entire social landscape, which constrains the creative urge of individuals keeping it in rein. The urge to ex-

periment moves individuals to create tools and methods that allow them to get what they want with the greatest ease or pleasure, but such tools and methods do not make a technological system, because they are in the service of the individual. Within a social context, tools and methods will develop that have nothing to do with fulfilling the wants of individuals as such, but rather serve to reproduce the social context. In order to serve this purpose, they coalesce into a system of interactive and mutually dependent tools and methods. It is this system and its products that can rightly be called technology. Although this system does not exist in order to fulfill the needs of individuals, it does create a dependence within individuals upon it for survival, because this is necessary to keep individuals in thrall to social reproduction. And this survival becomes separated from and ultimately opposed to intense and enjoyable living. (Agriculture doubled the time which had to be dedicated to production of basic needs and put these activities on a strict seasonal time schedule, making them unquestionably *work*. The industrial revolution drastically increased work time and intensified the rigidity of its schedule.) The tedium produced by this system, which begins by constraining creative energy, finally suppresses it, transforming it into mere productivity. Technology and civilization do not have their origin in the urge to create and experiment, but rather in the need of the authorities to constrain this urge in order to maintain social reproduction and control.

But the civilized social order with its technological material basis cannot completely suppress this experimental, creative urge both because it needs domesticated, channeled creativity in order to reproduce and expand itself, and because some individuals simply do not let their creative urges be completely suppressed. As civilization has expanded into a globally dominant totality, it has become necessary to find a place for these individuals. Art was originally a technology—an integrated system of tools and methods used in the process of social reproduction. It was mostly used in ritual and political propaganda. In the early modern era (the 16th and 17th centuries), the function of art began to change. Though artists continue, even now, to create works to order for churches and political institutions, as well as for those with the wealth to buy their skill and creativity, art is now generally viewed as area for individual creative expression. Artists imagine that their creative urge has been liberated from its subjection to social reproduction. But this “liberated activity” is only permitted to exist in a separated, specialized realm, a realm apart from daily life. In their daily lives, artists continue using money, paying rent, usually holding down “straight jobs”—living as assimilated members of society. And what of this separated realm, art? Artists (including poets and musicians) generally view themselves as a creative elite, exhibiting a sense of self-importance that can make them unbearable. This is not just a personality quirk. It goes with the social role of “artist,” for although its function has changed, art remains an activity of social reproduction. It maintains creative activity as a realm of specialists—other people may dabble in it as a hobby, but only the “truly creative” few can actually be artists. Thus art produces a tendency in most people to suppress their own

creativity as inadequate or to channel it into the production of irrelevant artifacts for passive consumption by the “talentless.”

The alienation of individuals from their creative urges that is necessary for the rise and maintenance of civilization has another manifestation. The creative energy that is suppressed comes to be attributed to a “higher realm.” Within the context of society as we know it, this energy only seems to express itself very occasionally and in very directed ways. The myriads of tiny, daily expressions of creativity by which we all take back as many moments of our lives as we can are not recognized as creative because they are not separated from life. So it is very easy to attribute creative energy to inspiration, to supposed revelation from a spiritual realm. It is this realm, under the title “god” that is credited as creator—the source of all creation. Our creative, experimental urges are not our own, but allegedly a gift from god to be used in accordance with his/her/its will. Experimentation outside the divinely determined parameters is hubris, arrogance, sin or diabolical crime. Religion (including “spirituality,” religion’s hipper, mellower face) developed as a means for enforcing the constraints necessary for social reproduction. Within any given social context, what “god” allows will be what is deemed necessary for or helpful to the reproduction of that social context. So, for example, many christians see nuclear weapons as a gift from god, but consider creative methods of theft or unusual sexual practices to be sinful and arrogant. Many radical environmentalists are also religious, embracing neo-pagan or animistic belief systems. In their belief systems, “god” becomes “nature.” Hubris consists of creating “against nature.” For the followers of these nature religions, much is forbidden that is not forbidden in mainstream religions and *vice versa*, but both agree that creative energy does not belong to the individual to use as she chooses, but is to be exercised only in service to the deity.

In order to claim that it is possible to use the creative urge “against nature,” the radical environmentalist must turn “nature” into a metaphysical entity that we can defy. But “nature” is just a convenient shorthand for the sum of the beings, actions and interactions that make up this world. Therefore, civilization and its technology are not “unnatural.” The problem with civilization and the technological system is that they exist only by suppressing the individual urge to create and experiment, forcing it into the narrow conduit of social reproduction. The civilized social system has always been a detriment to the full development of individuals as creators of their own lives and interactions—it has in fact always suppressed this development through a combination of vicious attacks and subtle but thorough manipulation. But now it has reached the point where civilization threatens our health and our very existence and is robbing us quickly of an amazing wealth of diverse interactions by turning the world into a homogenous machine—a machine that may soon have no need for actual creativity at all, but may be able to let it be subsumed completely into productivity and commodity consumption.

The urge to create, explore and experiment most certainly exists in all humans and in many other mammals. It may exist in every living being

on some level. Yet many human societies never developed into civilizations with complex technological systems. No other mammal has ever developed such a monstrosity. This shows that the creative urge can be exercised in ways that do not produce such systems. In fact, those of us who want to be able to fully create our lives and interactions as our own, who do not want to spend our lives as cogs in a social machine, and who, therefore, want to destroy this machine in its totality, turning civilization and its technology into ruins, must grasp this urge, this energy, as *our own*, possibly our most essential weapon in the war against society. Unconstrained creative activity and experimentation in the hands of individuals, used for their own pleasure, does not need to be feared. Such activity did not create the present civilization and will not create any future civilizations. And the destruction of civilization, this system of social control that is smothering the planet, and the creation of our lives and interactions as so completely our own that they cannot be socialized, systematized or otherwise alienated from us will require explorations and experimentations with the possible that go far beyond anything we have yet tried.

From Thought into the Unknown

by Leila

How is thought cut from its root?

When we think of the imagination what comes to mind? We might think of human creativity at its source, of a living and thinking person. We also might think of the imaginary, a realm that is separate from this world we live in, daydreams that are divorced from our lives: fantasies that serve only as escape mechanisms, fantasies that are filled with mass media produced images of other planets, green aliens with 14 fingers, or sex with bionic humanoids with geometric silicone features. The word imagination has been corroded along with its root word: the image. The images that confront us everyday appear to have no human origin. They are created for the market, and have the qualities of the market, they leave little trace of their human creators. When we see an ad for Apple computers we do not think of the person who put the advertising image together. That person is probably thousands of miles away. That distant worker expressed little of their personality in the image they created. So, as was intended, we think only of apple computers. That image was the expression of a thwarted and recuperated creative impulse of someone sitting an office far away. Creativity that increases one's own life possibilities is now rarely respected. When someone comes up with a particularly inventive idea, people have the gall to say, "you should market that." Capitalism is such an effective system because it so effectively channels and uses human creativity for its own aims. In the process, it reduces creativity to as colorless a process as the money transaction. It reduces the individuality of creativity to a minimum. This uniformity is also a result of the monotony of life in a society filled with mass produced objects, images and spaces; as life becomes more uniform thought follows closely behind.

The fact that the imaginary can be thought of as divorced from an imagining subject reflects the degree to which the fragmentation we experience in our daily lives has implanted itself in our very thought process. When every creative impulse has been severed from its subjective source and channeled into the markets of technological and cultural production, when there is no one to share our insights with because only marketed creativity is given a place to be seen or heard, there is no need for censorship. This dismembering results in thoughts that lead away from the subject, it crushes the will, produces atomized desires for commodities, and results in actions that do not expand our own lives but the life of the vampire that feeds upon

us. Instead of increasing our own power, our thoughts lead us to travel a straight line between the place where we puke out fuel for the market, stop by supermarket to buy its refuse, and go home where we eat its shit. In order to interrupt this process it is necessary to change our very thought process, we need to reconnect thought to its source: the thinking subject. In order to do so we must expel the poltergeists that haunt us, poltergeists that bear a suspicious resemblance to those in a Steven Spielberg movie.

For thought to become an instrument to the expansion of one's life projectuality, it is helpful to find others with whom to speak a language other than that of the market, with whom one can explore life's possibilities outside the limited choices offered by capital. If there is no language with which to express ones thoughts, and no one to speak to, thought will not be a sharpened tool but a dull implement. In this society, one who along with a few likeminded companions aims to increase life's potential, will quickly run into obstacles in her path. This society is a maze of barriers to anyone that wishes to function outside of it, anyone who wishes to live by their own rhythm and not that of the clock. To destroy the obstacles to our own expansion we need all of the tools we can get; we need both ideas and fire.

Where do we go from here? The utopian imagination

To move towards the destruction of this society and the creation of new relations, we need to have a clear conception of how to proceed from here, but we do not need a concrete model of where we will end up. Although any future world would contain traces or ruins of this society, that world may be beyond our present capacity to imagine. It is important to ask ourselves whether or not an idea increases or decreases our possibilities. When does an idea become a fossilized model that limits us? Utopian visions can be useful openings out of the present order but they can also confine us. The Paleolithic has been a useful reference because it breaks us out of the dominant idea that human beings by nature need to create institutions of authority. Living hunter-gatherers have also shown us that anarchy is a real possibility, not merely a utopian dream, and that in fact it is most probable that humans lived in anarchy for most of their past. But when we begin to create a utopian image on the specific practices of hunter-gatherers we are creating a primitivist model with inherent limitations; such an image limits our vision of what a future world could be. Besides, it is improbable that people throughout the world during the Paleolithic actually behaved predictably enough for any model to be based on such multifarious relations. Living hunter-gatherers have a variety of types of social relations. What these people have in common is the absence of odious institutions of authority, the absence of exploitation. Beyond that each group has its own characteristics, its own choice of social relations. Perhaps the greatest lesson that living hunter-gatherers as a whole teach us is found in their lack of predictability: a variety of relations that cannot be contained in precise models.

The Machiguenga of the Peruvian amazon are unusual in their strong preference against living in any community larger than the immedi-

ate family¹. When outsiders visit the Machiguenga, it is common for them to explain “no somos muy unidos aqui.” They expect outsiders to be surprised that they prefer to live away from concentrated settlements. The Machiguenga are settling in towns more and more often in order to send their children to school and because they are becoming increasingly dependent on iron tools which they need access to outside markets to acquire. In the 1970s, interviews with Machiguengan town dwellers revealed that most people begrudgingly made this change. Previously most Machiguenga hunted, gathered and farmed with their immediate families. They met up with nearby families for beer feasts and for fishing expeditions. When asked why they preferred not to live in a community they generally had two answers: they had greater access to forest resources in smaller groups, and community living brought unwanted restrictions. The Machiguenga language lacks terms for social categories. Other Amazonian groups have complex political ranking systems but the Machiguenga borrow social terms from nearby groups. They have no term for family. There is a word for kin but only egocentric kin, and they use a borrowed word *noshanika* or *my people* for those that live nearby. Some anthropologists have suggested that the Machiguenga live in very small groups because of a dispersion that occurred after the epidemics of colonial times. But their lack of social terms suggests that this is not the case. There is no evidence that the Machiguenga ever had political terminology.

The Machiguenga are not only hunter-gatherers (they also farm), and they are certainly no longer “pristine” primitives, but this is not the point. I am offering them as an example that primitive communism may have existed during the Paleolithic but exclusively as an absence of private property. Living peoples show us that in all probability Paleolithic peoples lived in various types of social formations ranging from the more communal to the more dispersed. This is of course all speculation, but the case of the Machiguenga challenges the utopian image of primitive communism, the idea that human beings naturally prefer to live collectively. This idea is a reaction to the fragmentation we experience in a society dominated by capital, we crave the relations we lack and assume the opposite of capitalism is the collective.

Let’s keep the utopian visions that expand our possibilities and discard the rigid models that limit us. To proceed away from the established into the unknown we must have a thought process which is expansive. We must direct our thought back towards its subjective root and away from the scarcity of options dished up for us by capital. To explore life’s possibilities outside these narrow confines we need to have the courage to discard impoverished visions of that which lies beyond the existent.

1. References to the Machiguenga are based on the unpublished manuscript: *The Machiguenga: In Nature and Culture* by Allen Johnson at UCLA

Clocks

by Julio Cortázar

A fama had a wall clock, and each week he wound it VERY VERY CAREFULLY. A cronopio passed and noting this, he began to laugh, and went home and invented an artichoke clock, or rather a wild artichoke clock, for it can and ought to be called both ways.

This cronopio's wild artichoke clock is a wood artichoke of the larger species, fastened by its stem to a hole in the wall. Its innumerable leaves indicate what hour it is, all the hours in fact, in such a way that the cronopio has only to pluck a leaf to know what time it is. So he continues plucking them from left and right, always the leaf corresponding to that particular hour, and everyday the cronopio begins pulling off a new layer of leaves. When he reaches the center, time can not be measured, and in the infinite violet-rose of the artichoke heart the cronopio finds great contentment. Then he eats it with oil, vinegar, and salt and puts another clock in the hole.

The Persistent Refusal of Paradise

by Penelope Nin

translated from *Canenero*

It is rumored that we (a “we” not well-defined whose lack of definition suits the rumor-mongers) have nothing to do with anarchism, being in reality nihilists disguised for the purpose of penetrating into the sanctuary of anarchy with bad intentions. It is noted that one who takes up the task of guarding the temple ends up seeing thieves everywhere, and maybe the hour has come to quiet “our” troubled detractors.

First of all, they must explain what they mean by nihilism. Personally, I view anyone who extols the joys of nihilism to me with suspicion because I consider nihilism, as the substantiation of nothing, to be a deception. When the incompleteness of all is cultivated with a feeling of fullness, it is difficult to resist the temptation to replace the old absolute with its most abstract moment in which nothing is immediately transformed into all and is therefore totalized. Ultimately, nihilism seems to me to be a crafty form of reasoning, that drives the whole structure of knowledge into the darkness of Nothingness only to receive, through this spectacular, radical negation, still more of the light of the All.

But probably the rumored “nihilism” consists of something much simpler, that is, of a supposed absence of proposals. In other words, one is nihilistic when one persistently refuses to promise a future earthly paradise, to foresee its functioning, to study its organization, to praise its perfection. One is nihilistic when, instead of taking and valuing all the moments of relative freedom offered by this society, one radically negates it, preferring the drastic conclusion that none of it is worth saving. Finally, one is nihilistic when, instead of proposing something constructive, one’s activity comes down to an “obsessive exultation of the destruction of this world.” If this is the argument, it is, indeed a meager one.

To begin, anarchism—the Idea—is one thing, and the anarchist movement—the ensemble of men and women who support this Idea—is another. It makes no sense to me to say of the Idea which in reality only a few anarchists assert. The Idea of anarchism is the absolute incompatibility between freedom and authority. From this it follows that one can enjoy total freedom in the complete absence of Power. Because Power exists and has no intention of disappearing voluntarily, it will be necessary indeed to create a way to eliminate it. Correct me if I’m mistaken.

I don’t understand why such a premise, which no anarchist “nihil-

ist" has ever dreamed of denying and suppressing, must lead necessarily to postulating new social regulations. I don't understand why, in order to "be part" of the anarchist movement, one must first undergo a doctoral examination in the architecture of the new world, and why it isn't enough to love freedom and hate every form of authority with all that entails. All this is not only absurd from the theoretical point of view, but also false from the historical point of view (and the anarchist rumor-mongers show so much fervor for History). One of the points about which Malatesta and Galleani clashed regularly was precisely the question of whether it was necessary to plan what would be created after the revolution or not. Malatesta argued that anarchists must begin immediately to develop ideas of how to organize social life because it doesn't allow for interruption; Galleani, on the other hand, argued that the task of anarchists was the destruction of this society, and that future generations that are immune to the logic of domination will figure out how to rebuild. In spite of these differences, Malatesta did not accuse Galleani of being nihilist. To make such an accusation would have been gratuitous because their difference was only over the constructive aspect of the question; they agreed completely about the destructive aspect. Though this is omitted by many of his exegetes, Malatesta was, indeed, an insurrectionalist, a confirmed supporter of a violent insurrection capable of demolishing the state.

Today, however, one merely needs to point out that anyone who holds power does not give up their privileges voluntarily and draw the due conclusions to be accused of nihilism. Within the anarchist movement, as everywhere, times change. Whereas once the debate among anarchists dealt with the way of conceiving the revolution, today it seems that all discussion centers around the way to avoid it. What other purpose could all these disquisitions on self-government, libertarian municipalism, or the blessed utopia of good sense have? It is clear that once one rejects the insurrectional project as such, the destructive hypothesis begins to assume frightful contours. What was only an error to Malatesta—limiting oneself to the demolition of the social order—for many present-day anarchists represents a horror.

When pious souls hear the bark of a dog, they always think that a ferocious wolf is coming. For them the blowing of the wind becomes an approaching tornado. In the same way, to anyone who has entrusted the task of transforming the world to persuasion alone, the word destruction is upsetting to the mind, evoking painful and unpleasant images. These things make a bad impression on the people who, if they are to be converted and finally flock into the ranks of reason, must have a religion that promises an Eden of peace and brotherhood. Whether it deals with paradise, nirvana or anarchy is of little importance. And anyone who dares to place such a religion into question cannot be thought of as simply a non-believer. In the course of things, such a person must be presented as a dangerous blasphemer.

And this is why "we" (but who is this "we"?) are called "nihilists." But the nihilism in all this, what is the point?

Capitalism at the Crossroads and the Opportunity of the Yugoslav Crisis

by sasha k

The Yugoslav crisis has spanned the entire post-cold war transition period for capitalism. This crisis has given the US an opportunity to reshape world institutions and rebuild its hegemony over the world capitalist system. The war over Kosovo was the high point in US strategic operations to maintain its hegemony over Europe so far in the post-Soviet era. This article looks at the Kosovo situation from two perspectives, that of US hegemonic interests and that of localized struggles within the context of global capitalism. In doing so it attempts to undermine the dominant mystifying stories told about the Yugoslav crisis and our present world system, many of which are often acritically accepted by anarchists and those on the left. The rhetoric that frames globalization as a lessening of government control misses the obvious reality that this lessening of control applies only to capital and not to people. The process of 'globalization' of capital is achieved through an alliance between state and capital, just like its close cousins, imperialism and colonialism—only now the state is retooled.

Global context

With the fall of the Soviet Union, the old global institutions set up to manage capitalism and the international state-system were no longer tuned to operate smoothly with global capitalism. While the US was certainly in the dominant position economically and militarily in the post-Soviet world, US political hegemony over Europe was weakening. The Soviet threat had provided the US with the role of protector of Europe and this allowed the US to gain political control in Western Europe in order to maintain and extend its interests (especially the direction of accumulation strategies) on the continent. Thus NATO was the institutional key to US hegemony in Europe. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990 brought about a radical shift in the balance of power. The US lost its primary role in Europe. At the same time, European countries, Germany in particular, began to pursue a more independent policy. US allies were beginning to threaten US interests. Germany, for example, was well placed to take advantage of the opening of Eastern Europe to capitalist investment. The UN Security Council was another institution of the old post-war order that the US needed to reconfigure. In response, the US has taken on an activist policy in order to reshape its role in respect to Europe and the global economy. The crisis in Yugoslavia has been

the primary terrain on which the US has attempted to carve out a new, but still dominant, position. In particular, the US has undermined the role of the UN Security Council and expanded US authority to act independently of any international mandate. European countries also tried to stake out a position independent of the US on what action to take in Kosovo, but they were out-flanked by the US. Not only did Kosovo offer the US an opportunity to reassert its hegemony, but, in doing so, the US also managed the situation so as to maintain the need for NATO. Therefore, we have to be weary of arguments that make the US war in Kosovo seem like an inept or evil response to local events. The reality is that the US used the Yugoslav crisis as an opportunity to reorganize and reinvigorate its role in the world. For the US, the war was a strategic response to a much greater problem, that of maintaining its hegemony over the global economy. It was, therefore, part of the same process that created the World Trade Organization and the revamping of international trade laws.

The retooling of global institutions within this new context includes the retooling of the nation-state. It does not mean that the nation-state is disappearing—it certainly still has an extremely important role in the new-world order—only that its role is changing. This is something that anarchists and anti-authoritarians must theoretically map out. We must also not fall back on a simplistic position of supporting the old system of nation-states against the new—as some anarchists have proposed—as if the state could ever be used to overthrow the capitalist economy.

The IMF, capitalist rationalization and the mediating force of Nationalism

The story of Serb and Albanian nationalism is usually told in terms of an eternal conflict that periodically bubbles to the surface. The explosion of nationalism in the late 1980s and 1990s is explained as a natural outpouring of nationalism that had been suppressed by the Communist State. Here, we tell a different story. One that shows that there is nothing natural about nationalism, but instead, that the violence that occurred in Yugoslavia was the combined result of global capitalist forces, local working-class action, and Serb state reaction. The US took advantage of this situation to pursue its global strategic goals. In order to denaturalize the recent Yugoslav ethnic conflict in recent years, we have to place the story in this context and spell out the history of these combined forces.

In the 1970s, the specter of nationalism rose in Yugoslavia. This was due largely to the contradictions of 'Market Socialism,' which allowed a very uneven development of the Yugoslav economy. Tito responded in 1974 by recentralizing the state and economy. However, at the same time the Yugoslav economy was in trouble; it was much more exposed to the international economy than other 'Communist' countries and was running a huge deficit that was paid for by foreign borrowing. Due to the high cost of money since the 1976 oil crisis, the cost of financing this debt shot up tremendously. By 1980, Yugoslavia had a foreign debt of \$14 Billion, they joined the IMF that year in order to finance their debt. Therefore in the early 1980s, the govern-

ment tried to cut imports and raise exports. At the same time, more and more corporations began operating at a loss. The less developed regions of Yugoslavia (Kosovo, Montenegro and Macedonia) suffered the worst. Unemployment began to rise.

In the early 1980s, the IMF imposed strict conditions on Yugoslavia in return for a postponement on a small portion of the national debt. (This process that the IMF began must be seen as part of a conscious strategy by the US and probably Europe to bring the Yugoslav economy firmly under the control of global capitalist institutions.) Under these conditions, most prices were to be set by the market, interest rates were hiked, the Yugoslav currency (the dinar) was devalued, and the level of consumption by the average Yugoslav was to be cut drastically. The terms for foreign business investment were also relaxed. And, with the devaluation of the dinar, labor power became very cheap. Foreign businesses, especially from West Germany, Italy and Austria, set up small factories there to exploit the situation created by the IMF. The rise in interest rates meant that many more companies fell into bankruptcy and unemployment rose even further. As with all IMF restructurings, in Yugoslavia it was the working class that was to pay for the debt. Wage controls, which squeezed the working class, were set by the federal government. This was the final blow to the already weakened 'self-management' system.

The IMF operated through the central government and encouraged the centralization of control over the economy at the federal level. And it was through the federal government that the IMF decided which region was going to prosper and which region was not, perpetuating preexisting inequalities between republics. This was one cause for the resurgence of nationalism in the mid-to late 1980s. By 1984, many workers were being paid primarily in food. There was not much more that could be squeezed out of the workers. As one Yugoslav economist put it, "It is true that the workers have not eaten the accumulation; but they will nevertheless have to pay for all the wrong investment made by borrowing abroad. Somebody must pay, and it must be industry." Meanwhile, the Party was at a loss what to do. They were stuck between the working class—which was where their legitimacy came from—and the IMF. In their vacillation, the IMF took charge. As the center of the Party was split from what working-class support it had, it began to fracture.

As the Party increasingly committed itself to a liberalization of the economy under the pressure of the IMF, the social welfare of the working class was ignored. Strike activity increased in 1987 in response to wage cuts, particularly in Zagreb and Belgrade, bringing the whole party-class alliance into to an end. 1988 saw the largest wave of strikes yet. In Eastern Croatia, Croatian and Serb workers united to strike but by two years later, in 1990, this alliance had been broken. By the end of 1988, the massive strikes had forced the leaders of the federal government to resign. Under this tension, the federal and republic states came into greater and greater conflict. And it was nationalism that provided the clearest tool for the republican governments to channel the worker revolt to their advantage. With the loss of the

legitimizing party-class alliance and in a bind between the IMF and a combative working class it was ethnic nationalism that provided legitimacy for republican governments.

By 1987, Kosovo, Macedonia, and Montenegro were bankrupt. Bosnia-Herzegovina was also in trouble. And with the vacillation of the center, power shifted into the hands of the leaders of Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia. The economic crisis pushed the republic and provincial parties to entrench themselves in local nationalist constituencies. In a period of economic collapse, the Macedonian party channeled the despair of the working class into a nationalist, anti-Albanian form. Slovenia, where the economic situation was not so bad, took a turn towards democracy. In Serbia, a sharp intra-party struggle and a very combative working class led to a very nationalist reaction by some within the Serbian Communist Party in order to contain the worker revolts and take control of the Republic.

The Serbian Republic contained two Autonomous Provinces, Vojvodina (over 50% Serb) and Kosovo (90% Albanian). As the Serb Party tried to centralize its control and move to a more nationalist stance, both provinces, but Kosovo in particular, stood in its way. At the same time, Kosovo offered certain factions of the Serb elite an opportunity to channel worker revolt. As economic conditions worsened (unemployment was over 50% for the working class), Serbs in Kosovo played the nationalism card. In 1987, Serbs in Kosovo began to create Serb only factories to protect against the massive lay-offs of workers in the province. The 1981 Albanian movement for Republic status was described as a 'counter-revolution' and Serb leaders in Kosovo who sent delegates to Belgrade to lobby for 'protection.' This situation became central to the power struggle within the Serbian Communist Party. Two factions had developed: the 'liberal' faction led by Stambolic and the conservative-nationalist faction led by Milosevic. Milosevic built his support by channelling worker discontent into Serb nationalism, especially against the Albanians, and, in 1987, Milosevic won the Party struggle and Stambolic was out. In 1988, Vojvodina lost its status as an autonomous province and Kosovo was brought under the rule of the Serbian Party. Milosevic's party and the media under his control encouraged huge nationalist protests in Belgrade. The federal government called on the Serbian Party to end the demonstrations, but Milosevic refused. When the Serbian party imposed its own officials on Kosovo's assembly in February 1989, Albanians, under pressure from both nationalist Serbs and terrible economic conditions, began a general strike led by miners in order to demand the reinstatement of Kosovo's autonomy. Support for the strike came from workers in Croatia and Slovenia. A state of emergency was declared, troops were sent in, and the leaders of the strikes were arrested. At the same time, Serbs began to form paramilitaries. In March 1989 when the Kosovar assembly agreed to accept direct rule from Belgrade, Kosovar workers rioted until they were violently suppressed. By 1989, Milosevic was in control of the Kosovan, Vojvodinan, and Montenegrin, as well as Serbian, votes at the federal level. The center was losing hold and the nationalist republics were competing with the working class to fill the void.

Unlike in the 1960s, when radical students and intellectuals joined the worker's movement, in the late 1980s intellectuals joined the Serb nationalists—those of the Praxis group, for example. Serb intellectuals participated in this process of “nationalizing” the crisis by rewriting Serb history. The anti-communist Chetniks were rehabilitated. Sympathy for pre-World War II, Serb bourgeois politicians was invoked. More serious, the Yugoslav State was painted as being hostile to the natural nationalism of the Serb people. The prime enemy, however, was the Kosovo Albanians, who were represented as attacking Serbs and interrupting the integrity of the Serb state. The conflict with the Albanians was also represented as part of an eternal conflict between ethnic groups. These views were broadcast widely as Milosevic took firm control of media.

In 1989, the federal government continued its economic reforms still trying to deal with its large debt. The reforms targeted large industries for privatization or bankruptcy. These reforms, under the guidance of the IMF and World Bank, tightened the money supply and, thus, speeded up the bankruptcy process. In 1989, almost 100,000 workers were fired out of an industrial work force of 2.7 million. In 1990, a new IMF/World Bank program was adopted that funneled even more money into debt payments and put another 500,000 workers out of work and 1.3 million more were targeted for future layoffs. Even more firms attempted to avoid bankruptcy by not paying wages. The 1990 program also deregulated trade, allowing a flood of imports. There were violent strikes throughout the republics in response to these changes forcing a postponement of both the privatization of enterprises and the abandonment of the so-called self-management apparatus.

While these latest reforms ate their way through the lives of Yugoslavia's workers, separatist coalitions ousted the Communists in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Slovenia. The German government, with its eyes on cheap workers, quickly recognized Croatia and Slovenia and pushed the EC¹ to encourage “ethnically based” nations. Slovenia and Croatia were the wealthiest of the Yugoslavian republics. This was a result of the fact that they had both been a part of the Austro-Hungarian empire, they endured less infrastructural damage during WWII, and they had had strong ties with German and Italian Capital. This wealth was one of the main reasons these two republics tried to secede first, and it explains the growth of nationalism among the Slovenian and Croatian elite. The Yugoslav State demanded money for development funds for the poorer republics, whereas independence promised increased trade with Germany and therefore economic gain for the Croatian and Slovenian elite. Soon after Germany recognized the republics the wars between these states and Serbia began. These wars destroyed what was left of working class solidarity. At the same time, Milosevic's position was strengthened over Serbian workers: he was now able to deepen his attack on their living conditions. The results for US hegemony were far more ambiguous: US policy in the Balkans had not defined a clear and dominant role for the US in the

1. EC is the European Commission which is the executive of the European Union and promotes its general interest. [Editor]

management of global conflict. But the growing conflict over Kosovo offered them a new opportunity to rebuild their hegemonic position in Europe.

The Kosovo War

For over a year before the Kosovo war, Europe and Russia conflicted with the US over Kosovo policy. In particular, the US sabotaged every attempt at peaceful settlement of the issue up to the point that it launched the war and invited the killing of Kosovo Albanians. Through this, the US was able to cut Russia out of the decision making process and channel the Europeans into supporting its policy. After the Dayton accords, the US had supported the maintenance of the borders of what remained of Yugoslavia. In 1998, the US administration's policy with regard to Kosovo was reversed. This was due in part to the 1998 financial crisis which had destabilized Russia, creating an increased possibility of an ultra-nationalist/communist alliance. Russia was also a threat to the further spread of NATO allied states in Eastern Europe. Beginning in 1998, the US sent conflicting signals to Serbia. The US stated publicly that it thought the Serbians were going to do in Kosovo what they did in Bosnia and that the US would not let that happen. At the same time, the US stated that it believed the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) was a terrorist group, thus encouraging Serbian counter-insurgency measures. Also in 1998, the Serbians indicated that they would agree to a negotiated solution to the Kosovo situation including a degree of autonomy for the region. This solution was being pushed by Europe and Russia, and the Rugova Albanian opposition in Kosovo came to support it as well. Only the KLA and the US (especially Albright) opposed the plan. While Richard Holbrooke, Albright's rival in the Clinton administration, did negotiate a cease-fire in October, the White House undermined it. They reorganized the "monitoring force" in order to use it to survey the infrastructure of Kosovo to facilitate a future NATO attack. The KLA stepped up its attacks as noted by the Europeans.

Meanwhile, the French pushed for negotiations which began in Rambouillet, France in February, 1999. But real negotiations never occurred. Before they were to begin, the US brought the French and the British in line. The Serbs wanted face to face negotiations as, it seems, did the Rugova (Albanian) government of Kosovo. Yet the US replaced the elected Rugova government with the KLA at the last moment, and instead of negotiations, the Serbians were given an ultimatum. They were told they had to sign the US written agreement or it would be war. Even though the agreement wouldn't have been legally binding under international law as it would have been made under threat of aggression, the Serbs didn't sign it. The US knew the Serbs couldn't sign. Under the "agreement" NATO, not the Albanians, would have controlled Kosovo. After a few years, Kosovo would have the chance to become independent. The agreement also stated that NATO could move forces over the whole of Yugoslavia and alter the infrastructure of Yugoslavia as it saw fit. The agreement gave NATO the right to control the economy of Kosovo and stated: "The economy of Kosovo shall function in accordance with free market principles," and that there must be complete compliance

with the dictates of the IMF and World Bank.

On the 19th of March, Clinton announced that the bombing would begin soon (it started five days later). Thus, the Serbs were given five days to do what they liked in Kosovo. The first week of bombing was aimed at targets outside of Kosovo, giving the Serbs even more time to clear strategic villages of the KLA. Why did NATO do this? It wasn't bad planning on the part of NATO; they had been planning the attack for 14 months. NATO was letting the Serbs give them justification for their bombing which would bring European public opinion in line with the campaign. As the bombings wore on, the Serbs didn't tow the US line and commit wholesale genocide. Nor did they quickly cave in to US demands. At that point, the Germans and Russians tried to end the war through diplomacy, threatening to undermine the US hard-line. This process was ended, however, when the US bombed the Chinese embassy (it has since come out that the Chinese were retransmitting radio signals for the Serbian Army, and the bombing certainly seems to have been no mistake at all). When NATO finally brought the war to an end, the US had reexerted its control over NATO policy and rebuilt the role of NATO in managing global conflict. In addition, through the conflict the US had extended the authority of NATO to act independently of the UN and the Security Council, thus sidestepping Russian and Chinese attempts to counter US hegemony.

After the war, the US agreed to the same conditions that the Serbs had proposed before the war. The two conditions of the US ultimatum that Milosevic had originally opposed—NATO access to Serbia and a NATO only occupying force in Kosovo—were dropped. So the motivating factor for the war must be looked for beyond the terms of the Rambouillet accords, beyond the terms of a local conflict. The war must be understood in terms of a conjunction of both global and local forces: the restructuring demands of global capital through the IMF, the workers' resistance to attacks on their livelihood, the factional struggle for power within the Yugoslav state, and the attempt by the US to maintain hegemony.

As IMF rationalization began to bite into the Yugoslav economy in the 1980s, a strong working class responded with a wave of strikes. Caught between the institutions of global capital and a rebellious populace, the Yugoslav central government was weakened leaving a space for rising nationalist politicians, who took on a new form of mediation between capital and the working class. These politicians generated a nationalism that split the working class and channeled their revolt. Nationalism, therefore, was less a reaction against global capitalism than a form of mediation that allowed a new elite to come to power and to implement drastic economic measures. At the same time, the Yugoslav crisis afforded the US an opportunity to reconstitute its role in Europe and, thus, maintain its hegemonic position vis-à-vis Western Europe and Russia.

Of course, working class and anti-systemic revolt continues, which brings up the issue of solidarity. In Krajlevo, Serbia there was mass draft refusal in March, 2000. Residents greeted draft officials with sticks and agri-

cultural tools. Only 15% of reservists from that town showed up when called to duty. In the neighboring town of Cacak, residents took over the local TV station and placed a 24-hour-armed guard there and bear traps around the station. There have been several similar acts of defiance recently in other Serbian cities. Solidarity with these acts of insurrection should not be only verbal, for such solidarity is empty. We need to attack capital in solidarity with the struggles of Serbs who refuse nationalism and refuse to measure their lives with the ruler of international capital.

Further Reading:

Aufheben "Class Decomposition in the New World Order: Yugoslavia Unravelling."

<https://libcom.org/library/class-yugoslavia-aufheben-2>

Bjekic, Vesna. Serbs opt for Rebellion. (BCR No. 129, 31-Mar 00).²
www.iwpr.net/index.p.15?archive/bcr/bcr_20000331_4_eng.txt

Flipovic, Miroslav (BCR No. 128, 28 Mar-00).³
www.iwpr.net/index.p.15?archive/bcr/bcr20000328_2_eng.txt

Gowan, Peter. Counterpunch "Twilight of the European Project
<http://www.counterpunch.org/1998/06/15/the-twilight-of-the-european-project/>

Magas, Branka. *The Destruction of Yugoslavia: Tracking the Breakup 1980-92*. Verso: London, 1993.

Mojzes, Paul. *Yugoslavian Inferno: Ethnoreligious Warfare in the Balkans*. Continuum: New York, 1994.

Wildcat "Yugoslavia: from wage cuts to war"
<https://libcom.org/history/yugoslavia-wage-cuts-war-wildcat>

2. No longer a live link. [Editor]

3. No longer a live link. [Editor]

Freedom

By Albert Libertad

Many think that it is a simple dispute over words that makes some declare themselves libertarians and others anarchist. I have an entirely different opinion.

I am an anarchist and I hold to the label not for the sake of a vain garnishing of words, but because it means a philosophy, a different method than that of the libertarian.

The libertarian, as the word indicates, is an adorer of liberty¹. For him, it is the beginning and end of all things. To become a cult of liberty, to write its name on all the walls, to erect statues illuminating the world, to talk about it in season and out, to declare oneself free of hereditary determinism when its atavistic and encompassing movements make you a slave...this is the achievement of the libertarian.

The anarchist, referring simply to etymology, is against authority. That's exact. He doesn't make liberty the causality but rather the finality of the evolution of his Self. He doesn't say, even when it concerns merest of his acts. "I am free." but "I want to be free." For him, freedom is not an entity, a quality, something that one has or doesn't have, but is a result that he obtains to the degree that he obtains power.

He doesn't make freedom into a right that existed before him, before human beings but a science that he acquires, that humans acquire, day after day, to free themselves of ignorance, abolishing the shackles of tyranny and property.

Man is not free to act or not to act, by his will alone. He learns to do or not to do when he has exercised his judgement, enlightened his ignorance, or destroyed the obstacles that stand in his way. So if we take the position of a libertarian, without musical knowledge in the front of his piano, is he free to play? NO! He won't have this freedom until he has learned music and to play the instrument. This is what the anarchists say. He also struggles against the authority that prevents him from developing his musical aptitudes—when he has them—or he who withholds the pianos. To have the freedom to play, he has to have the power to know and the power to have a piano at his disposition. Freedom is a force that one must know how to develop within the

1. I use the word liberty and freedom interchangeably throughout the piece. In all cases the word *liberte* was used in the original. The English word freedom is closer to Libertad's use of the word but because of the connection between the word *Libertaire* (Libertarian) and *Liberte*, I sometimes switch to Liberty.

individual; no one can grant it.

When the Republic takes its famous slogan: "*Liberte, Egalite, Fraternite.*" does it make us free, equal or brothers? She tells us "You are free." These are vain words since we do not have the power to be free. And why don't we have this power? Principally because we do not know how to acquire the proper knowledge. We take the mirage for reality.

We always await the freedom of a State, of a Redeemer, of a Revolution, we never work to develop it within each individual. What is the magic wand that transforms the current generation born of centuries of servitude and resignation into a generation of human beings deserving of freedom, because they are strong enough to conquer it?

This transformation will come from the awareness that men will have of not having freedom of consciousness, that freedom is not in them, that they don't have the right to be free, that they are not all born free and equal ... and that it is nevertheless impossible to have happiness without freedom. The day that they have this consciousness they will stop at nothing to obtain freedom. This is why anarchists struggle with such strength against the libertarian current that makes one take the shadow for substance.

To obtain this power, it is necessary for us to struggle against two currents that threaten the conquest of our liberty: it is necessary to defend it against others and against oneself, against external and internal forces.

To go towards freedom, it becomes necessary to develop our individuality. When I say: to go towards freedom, I mean for each of us to go toward the most complete development of our Self. We are not therefore free to take any which road, it is necessary to force ourselves to take the correct path. We are not free to yield to excessive and lawless desires, we are obliged to satisfy them. We are not free to put ourselves in a state of inebriation making our personality lose the use of its will, placing us at the mercy of anything; let's say rather that we endure the tyranny of a passion that misery of luxury has given us. True freedom would consist of an act of authority upon this habit, to liberate oneself from its tyranny and its corollaries.

I said, an act of authority, because I don't have the passion of liberty considered *a priori*. I am not a libertarian. If I want to acquire liberty, I don't adore it. I don't amuse myself refusing the act of authority that will make me overcome the adversary that attacks me, nor do I refuse the act of authority that will make me attack the adversary. I know that every act of force is an act of authority. I would like to never have to use force, authority against other men, but I live in the 20th century and I am not free of from the direction of my movements to acquire liberty.

So, I consider the Revolution as an act of authority of some against others, individual revolt as an act of authority of some against others. And therefore I find these means logical, but I want to exactly determine the intention. I find them logical and I am ready to cooperate, if these acts of temporary authority have the removing of a stable authority and giving more freedom as their goal; I find them illogical and I thwart them if their goal isn't removing an authority. By these acts, authority gains power: she hasn't done

anything but change name, even that which one has chosen for the occasion of its modification.

Libertarians make a dogma of liberty; anarchists make it an end. Libertarians think that man is born free and that society makes him a slave. Anarchists realize that man is born into the most complete of subordinations, the greatest of servitudes and that civilization leads him to the path of liberty.

That which the anarchists reproach is the association of men—society—which is obstructing the road after having guided our first steps. Society delivers hunger, malignant fever, ferocious beasts—evidently not in all cases, but generally—but she makes humanity prey to misery, overwork, and governments. She puts humanity between a rock and a hard place. She makes the child forget the authority of nature to place him under the authority of men.

The anarchist intervenes. He does not ask for liberty as a good that one has taken from him, but as a good that one prevents him from acquiring. He observes the present society and he declares that it is a bad instrument, a bad way to call individuals to their complete development.

The anarchist sees society surround men with a lattice of laws, a net of rules, and an atmosphere of morality and prejudices without doing anything to bring them out of the night of ignorance. He doesn't have the libertarian religion, liberal one could say but more and more he wants liberty for himself like he wants pure air for his lungs. He decides then to work by all means to tear apart the threads of the lattice, the stitches of the net and endeavors to open up free thought.

The anarchist's desire is to be able to exercise his faculties with the greatest possible intensity. The more he improves himself, the more experience he takes in, the more he destroys obstacles—as much intellectual and moral as material—the more he takes an open field, the more he allows his individuality to expand, the more he becomes free to evolve and the more he proceeds towards the realization of his desire.

But I won't allow myself to get carried away and I'll return more precisely to the subject.

The libertarian who doesn't have the power to carry through an explanation, a critique which he recognizes as well founded or that he doesn't even want to discuss, he responds "I am *free* to act like this." The anarchist says: "I think that I am right to act like this but come on." And if the critique made is about a passion which he doesn't have the strength to free himself from, he will add: "I am under the slavery of this atavism and this habit." This simple declaration won't be without cost. It will carry its own force, maybe for the individual attacked, but surely for the individual that made it, and for those who are less attacked by the passion in question.

The anarchist is not mistaken about the domain gained. He does not say "I am *free* to marry my daughter if that pleases me. I have the *right* to wear a high style hat if it suits me" because he knows that this liberty, this right are a tribute paid to the morality of the milieu, to the conventions of the world; they are imposed by the outside against all desires, against all internal determinism of the individual.

The anarchist acts thus not due to modesty, or the spirit of contradiction, but because he holds a conception which is completely different from that of the libertarian. He doesn't believe in innate liberty, but in liberty that is acquired. And because he knows that he doesn't possess all liberties, he has a greater will to acquire the power of liberty.

Words do not have a power in themselves. They have a meaning that one must know well, to state precisely in order to allow oneself to be taken by their magic. The great Revolution has made a fool of us with its slogan: "*Liberte, Egalite, Fraternite*" the liberals have sung us above all the tune of their "*laissez-faire*" with the refrain of the freedom of work; Libertarians delude themselves with a belief in a pre-established liberty and they make critiques in its honor... Anarchists should not want the word but the thing. They are against authority, government, economic, religious and moral power, knowing the more authority is diminished the more liberty is increased.

It is a relation between the power of the group and the power of the individual. The more the first term of this relation is diminished, the more authority is diminished, the more liberty is increased.

What does the anarchist want? To reach a state in which these two powers are balanced, where the individual has real freedom of movement without ever hindering the liberty of movement of another. The anarchist does not want to reverse the relation so that his freedom is made of the slavery of others, because he knows that authority is bad in itself, as much for he who submits to it as for he who gives it.

To truly know freedom, one must develop the human being until one makes sure that no authority has the possibility of existing.

Obsession

By Albert Libertad

Durand, leaving his hotel, a smile of contentment on his lips, took a small step back, to read a tiny poster:

*While we perish in the street,
the bourgeois has palaces to live in
Death to the bourgeois!
Long Live Anarchy!*

Then, he sneered, and yelled to the concierge "You will take these idiocies off of the door."

And his calm smile came back when he noticed, glorious in their incapacity, two officers on the beat. But he stopped at the same time as them, red flyers stuck out on the stark white of the wall:

*Cops are the bulldogs of the bourgeois
Death to cops!
Long Live Anarchy!*

The cops used their nails to scratch off the posters and Durant left anxious. While at the corner of the avenue, he heard the sound of bugles and drums and from afar two battalions appeared. He felt protected and breathed a sigh of relief.

As a troupe passed in front of him, he discovered; at that moment, like a flight of butterflies, a multitude of squares of paper floating in the air; indifferently, he read:

*The army is the school of crime
Long Live Anarchy!*

Some of the papers fell on the soldiers, others covered them; his obsession resumed, he felt crushed by the light butterflies.

When he sat down in his usual place to have a beer or the usual aperitif, on the table laid another flyer:

*Go on, gorge yourself, the day will come when hate will turn us into cannibals.
Long Live Anarchy!*

He sneered, but this time he didn't fill up saucer after saucer.

Getting up, he headed quickly toward the corner of X street, where

the exploiters asked for workers and mechanically searched for the propaganda poster, he discovered it and read:

*The exploiter Thing or Machine asks for your sons to degrade them,
Your daughters to rape them, you and your wives
to exploit you
Watch out Parisians.
Long Live Anarchy!*

He shook his head and headed towards his office. He read on a plaque: Durand and Cie, Society in a capitol of two million, but, below, the exasperating critique said its piece:

*Capital is the product of work
stolen and accumulated by the idle.
Long Live Anarchy!*

He tore himself away quickly. He took care of some business, and to distract himself, thought of seeing his mistress. On his way, he bought a bouquet of flowers to offer her.

She smiled, seeing amidst the flowers what appeared to be a love letter: "Some verses, now, says she?"

*Prostitution is the outlet of too many bourgeois.
One turns the son of the poor man into a slave and his daughter into a courtesan.
Long Live Anarchy!*

She threw the bouquet in his face and sent him away.

Ashamed and tired, he returned home, the door had once again taken on its usual appearance.

Now, upon entering the living room, his wife said to him: "Look at this vase that I just bought, what an occasion." He took it, turned it around, and turned it around again; a piece of paper fell out:

*The luxury of the bourgeois is paid for by the blood of the poor man.
Long Live Anarchy!*

This "Long Live Anarchy!" and its harsh claims, all this hovered around him, and that very evening, he didn't see go to see his wife, in fear of finding, in a discreet and camouflaged place, a flyer where he would have read:

*Marriage is legal prostitution.
Long Live Anarchy!*

Le Libertaire
26/08/1898

The Particular and the Universal

by Julio Cortázar

A cronopio was about to brush his teeth standing next to his balcony, and being possessed by a very incredible gayety to see the morning sun and the handsome clouds racing through the sky, he squeezed the tube of toothpaste prodigiously and the toothpaste began to emerge in a long pink strip. After having covered his brush with a veritable mountain of toothpaste, the cronopio found he had some left over, starting to flap the tube out the wind still squeezing away the strips of pink toothpaste fell over the balcony into the street where several famas had gathered to discuss municipal scandals. The strips of pink toothpaste landed all over the fame's hats, while up above, the cronopio was singing away and filled with great contentment was brushing his teeth. The famas grew very indignant over the incredible lack of self-consciousness on the cronopio's part, and decided to appoint a delegation to upbraid him immediately. With which the delegation, composed of three famas, tromped up the stairs to the cronopio's apartment and reproached him addressing him like this:

—Cronopio, you've ruined our hats, you'll have to pay for them.

and afterward with a great deal more force:

—Cronopio, you shouldn't have waisted your toothpaste like that!

Fixed Abodes

by Leila

Domestication and sedentization are not processes that were only imposed on “primitive” peoples; these processes occurred in Europe as well. Latin American nomads and European vagabonds experienced similar repression but by different means. Missions and prisons served similar functions: they settled the roamers and put them to work. Now, there are many all too familiar ways to regulate or fix movement. Here in the US, incarceration rates are skyrocketing. The computerization of biometrics is a new weapon in the State’s arsenal that greatly increases the accuracy with which they can identify human beings: this facilitates incarceration and immigration control. The above technologies and institutions of control share a common aim: to regulate movement and direct human action into the repetitive rotation of production and consumption.

Domestication in Latin America

Throughout Latin America during the colonial period Spanish style towns and cities were built with a central plaza, church and municipal building. American settlement patterns had been generally much more dispersed than Spanish towns. The Colonial administration forcibly concentrated dispersed settlements into such towns (*reducciones*). Once in towns it was much easier for individuals to be reduced to subjects of the crown and coerced into giving tribute.

The Missions settled, converted and hispanicized previously nomadic or semi-nomadic groups. They also eliminated hunting and gathering in order to enforce the production of a substantial agricultural surplus (Hu de Hart 1981: 36). This system destroyed the economic autonomy that was based in hunting and gathering and attempted to instill the discipline of daily work, so that residents would produce with less resistance. One crucial aspect of this was the imposition of the time of the mission bell and the Christian work week. Obviously profit cannot be maximized if workers are left to work on their own time. The logic of productivity needs to organize time as well as space.

Apache warfare and raiding were very successful and managed to repel Spaniards from a 250-mile area, near the present day Mexico-US border. The Colonial administration had still not gained control of this area in 1821, at the time of independence. The Spaniards simply could not dominate

the Apache militarily. Apaches were familiar with the area and traveled on horseback, they often raided Spanish settlements and disappeared without a trace. Colonial policies with regards to nomadic and semi-nomadic people always made sedentization a priority for this very reason. How could they control or exploit people that they can't even find?

After all else had failed, the Spanish administration lured some Apaches into "Peace Establishments" (settlements near presidios) in 1786 by simply promising them weekly rations. One interesting difference between these settlements and Missions is that these settlements were a financial loss to the crown, they did not manage to exploit residents except when males were forced to serve militarily. That is, in this case control was more important to them than exploitation. They resorted to this method because Apaches simply would not submit to settling in missions. Residents of these settlements were forbidden from traveling beyond 30 miles from settlements unless authorized and were required to carry passports in those cases (Griffin 1988: 99). But this law was often ignored and Apaches continued to travel where they wished. Apaches were encouraged to use guns instead of bows and arrows so that they would be dependent on the market for the acquisition of gun-powder, and they were encouraged to use liquor for the same reason. These measures were moderately successful for 25 years. But when rations started to dwindle raiding increased and when the Mexicans ran out of rations in 1833, the situation returned to that of 1770 with as many Apaches roaming and raiding as before the "Peace Establishments" were built (Worcester 1979). In short, these measures failed, the nomadic Apache continued to elude the Spanish. These Apaches fiercely resisted domestication and refused to settle down permanently. Only later, Mexico and the US finally forced to settle or exterminated them but this achieved only after a long struggle.

Reducciones, Missions and 'Peace Establishments" all put residents where they were locatable so that they would be more easily exploitable. The vagabonds of Europe were as much a threat to the powerful as the nomads and semi-nomads of Latin America, they were therefore also submitted to regimes of domestication. While the residents of Missions were converted to Christianity, they were taught the discipline of daily labor, European vagabonds were forced out of idleness and enclosed within four walls.

Confinement and European Domestication

During the early 1600s the first "houses of confinement" were built in Europe, to still the wandering and to put the idle to work.

In 1607 an ordinance called the archers to the gates of Paris to shoot at any vagabonds or beggars who dared try to enter the city. In 1656 the Hopital General was created, this was more a prison than a hospital and it was used to confine the idle, the vagabonds, beggars, sick and insane. Its openly claimed aim was to prevent idleness. The edict of 1657 was a vagrancy law that was enforced by archers who herded people into the Hospital. This is an interesting mutation of the 1607 policy and an example of

an increasing reliance on confinement. These changes in punishment corresponded with an increasing social instability due to a growth in unemployment and a decrease in wages. This instability created an increased mobility of classes. In response to these changes, there were three large uprisings in Paris in the early 1600s and guilds were formed in many trades. Obviously this new emphasis on confinement did not disappear with the end of this particular economic crisis. Confinement continued to be used as a source of cheap manpower after the crisis. In subsequent periods of unemployment it was again used as a weapon against social agitation and uprisings.

It is noteworthy that the first houses of confinement in England, France and Germany were built in the most industrialized cities of those countries. In England houses of confinement were opened in 1610 to occupy the pensioners of certain mills and weaving and carding shops. This was done during a recession, in other words, in a time where there was a high risk of rebellion. Industrialization had a great impact on class structure, it created new classes and thus allowed for individuals to change class. It also created new particularly appalling working conditions. As I have mentioned these drastic changes were, not surprisingly, met with resistance and revolt. Confinement was either a response to revolt or a means to prevent violent resistance to industrialization and its results. The history of confinement and other institutions or technologies of control is not a one-way linear process of increasing repression but a series of jumps, a conflict ridden complex of resistances and the state's responses to resistance.

Measuring Life: Biometrics

Identification is a key technology of control used to keep immigrants out and supposed "criminals" locked in. Computerized biometrics are now the most effective technologies of identification. Finger printing is an older form of biometrics. The Human Genome Project is trying to map out the genes of every citizen of Iceland and put this information into a database. This leads us towards a world in which, according to the system, the most valuable thing about the human body is the digital data which it provides.

Biometrics are being used to restrict access to anything from a building to the nation-state. It is useful to know what specific technologies they are using against us. For example, Iris scanning is a very accurate technology of identification but luckily it has its limitations. It is less effective when used on people with very dark brown eyes. This is a very fortunate coincidence in countries like the US and Britain with racist cops! Retina scanning, on the other hand is said to be infallible. "Counterfeit resistant" Laser ID cards are used by the US INS for Green Cards and for the Department of State's Border Crossing Card. The EU is considering using this technology as well. Their spread to Europe would be tragic news for illegal immigrants. Data (biological and otherwise) which is written onto the Laser Card's optical memory cannot be altered, therefore it is nearly impossible to forge this technology. This technology is obviously a vast improvement over the passports given to Apaches in the late 1700s, those passports were easy to forge. However,

it is fitting that the Apaches resisted this technology not by forging it but by ignoring it and traveling beyond the areas controlled by Spanish. Unfortunately there are now fewer deserts to roam where such things can be ignored, but such places do still exist. The combined use of these technologies and increased surveillance (such as the millions of dollars budgeted for wiretapping in the 2000 Federal Budget) are of great benefit to the budding prison industrial complex.

These technologies give those in power more effective means to keep people in their designated place in the world of sanity: the measured, disciplined, educated, treated, productive world that functions according to the logics of capital and the state. There are always those who escape, defy or resist these logics, this is precisely why the state goes to such lengths to contain us. They are used in tracking systems that give governments and companies the means to find people and put them where they are 'useful' to the powerful, such as within the prison industrial complex, or to exclude people from access to privileged domains (gated communities, company buildings, rich countries etc.). While restrictions on human movement are increasing, restrictions on the movement of capital are diminishing. However, the free movement of individuals has always been a threat to productivity; these new technologies are merely a more efficient means to achieve the same repressive goal. They are used to prevent us from acting on our desires unless our desires have become perverted and trapped within the cycle of production and consumption. Reducciones, missions, "Peace Establishments" and confinement were and are all forms of rationalization: they fix and contain human bodies

The free movement of individuals has always been a threat to productivity, the willfully idle vagabond uses mobility to escape the grind of work and the wandering worker can use mobility as an advantage over his boss. The free movement through space is a threat to the state because it threatens any control over space. Completely free movement through space would not only threaten the nation-state but all private property. Mobility is our power.

Sources:

Griffen, William B. *Apaches at War and Peace*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1988.

Hu De-Hart, Evelyn. *Adaptacion y Resistencia en el Yaquimi*. Mexico City: Traducccion Zulai Marcela Fuentes Ortega, 1995.

Rabinow, Paul ed. *The Foucault Reader*. New York: Random House, 1984.

Worcester, Donald E. *The Apache*. Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1979.

In the Distance: Suburbia Against the Barricades

by Leila

Haussmann and City Planning: the birth of the human tide

"Having, as they do the appearance of walling in a massive eternity, Haussmann's urban works are a wholly appropriate representation of the absolute governing principles of the Empire: repression of every individual formation, every organic self-development, 'fundamental' hatred of all individuality."

— JJ Honeger 1874 (Benjamin, 122)

"But by the any standpoint other than that of facilitating police control, Haussmann's Paris is a city built by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

—Guy Debord

Haussmann did not invent city planning, the Romans and ancient Chinese planned cities. Modern cities were planned and built in the British and French colonies earlier than in Europe. Washington DC was planned and built on an empty field decades before Haussmann refashioned Paris. What was different about Haussmann's Paris is that he built his new national capitol on top of the old Paris, a pre-industrial city. Haussmann's Paris reveals more about the architecture of capitalism and of the nation-state than L'Enfant's DC because it shows us what Haussmann chose to destroy as well as what he chose to build. In his demolition of poor neighborhoods and narrow streets we can see what he considered a threat to the new state and economy.

Boulevards were already replacing narrow streets in Paris two decades earlier than Haussmann took office, but on a much smaller scale. During the July revolution of 1830 an ironic twist befell government soldiers. The large squares of granite that were being used to pave new boulevards were dragged up to the top floor of houses and dropped on the heads of soldiers. These stones became a common source of barricade building materials. In 1830 there were 6,000 barricades. Haussmann took office after both the 1830 and 1848 insurrections, in 1853. In an attempt to prevent other insurrections, Haussmann tried to eliminate the construction of barricades by destroying narrow streets and replacing them with wide boulevards. He also built boulevards in order to allow for the easy transport of troops "connecting the government with the troops and the troops with the suburbs" and allowing troops to surround neighborhoods in the city (Benjamin, 137-8). By paving boulevards

Haussmann facilitated the regulated and regular movement of troops.

Haussmann's Paris was more than just a city. It was a symbol; its monuments and boulevards created an image of the capitol of a powerful empire. The fancy new boulevards that were part of this image pushed rents up just like recent "urban revitalization" projects. In 1864 Haussmann gave a speech venting "his hatred of the rootless urban population" (Benjamin, 12). The construction of boulevards drove the proletariat into the suburbs and increased the population of wandering homeless. Working class neighborhoods were destroyed to literally pave the way for boulevards, and when this didn't drive workers out of the city rising rents did. Haussmann's destruction and construction placed neighborhoods that were likely to revolt outside of the city. Boulevards allowed traffic to flow to the center of the city. The movement of workers' homes to the suburbs meant that 'commuting' to and from work was born on a mass scale.

"Hundreds of thousands of families, who work in the center of the capital, sleep in the outskirts. The movement resembles the tide: in the morning the workers stream into Paris, and in the evening the same wave of people flows out. It is a melancholy image...I would add...that it is the first time that humanity has assisted in a spectacle so dispiriting for the people." A. Gravneau, L'ouvrier devant la societe — Paris, 1868 (Benjamin, 137)

Haussmann aimed to detain and fix the rootless and to channel workers into linear movement: from home to work, from work to home, a precursor to *metro, boulot, dodo*¹.

Haussmann planned the construction of railway links between the center of Paris and its outskirts during a period in which the European railways expanded considerably. "Space is killed by the railways and we are left with time alone" Heinrich Heine (Rice, 207). Space may not have been killed by the railways, but high-speed travel has made travel time a greater consideration than travel distance. What Georg Simmel said of money can be said of the modern city. They both allow connections between previously distant things but make that which is close more difficult to reach. While distances were conquered by the railways, the nearby slipped further away. That is, at the same time as transportation and communications allowed one to reach far away places in a short period of time, one's neighbors became more distant: industrialization demanded more hours of work and more travel time to and from work, there was less time to socialize.

Let's not forget that the separation between work and leisure time is accompanied by the separation between living and working spaces. Industrialization and the subsequent proletarianization of large sectors of the population created this separation on a mass scale. Peasants had worked at or near home, those that had worked and lived in separate quarters generally found that the distance between these two points increased with industrial-

1. This is a French expression for "from the metro, to work, to sleep." It is used to refer to the daily grind of work and commuting.

ization. The increasing partition of time into working and living in separate spaces effected customary meal times, household labor and its sexual division, family relations and leisure activities. This separation began a process of increased dependence on consumer goods for previously home-produced items. The creation of suburbs increased the distance of this separation. This separation corrodes the type of relationships that could form a basis for attacks on the established order. This separation organizes the spatial and temporal imposition of consumption and production. The prevalence of the spatial and temporal separation between work and 'life' was born with industrialization but has come to appear timeless and natural. The naturalness of this separation kills the passion for freedom by limiting our capacity to imagine any other organization of space and time than the repetitive construction which capital imposes on us.

North American Suburbs: the paved dream

Before World War II, the U.S. was already a highly industrialized country. Thus, the conditions I describe above were already common to North American cities. From the 1930s on, the distance dividing living and working spaces increased exponentially as millions of Americans moved to the suburbs—highways were built and millions of Americans bought cars in an attempt to close this increasing distance.

The federal government employed millions in the 1930s to build a new landscape. After WWII the Veteran's Mortgage Guarantee Program provided low cost housing to millions of people. From the late 1940s to the mid-1960s developers built 23 million new homes. Industry followed these mostly white new suburbanites out of the city, partly because unions were weaker there. In the 1940s and 1950s, the government invested millions of dollars on the suburban infrastructure: gas, electricity, roads, sewer systems and highways. They built thousands of roads and highways allowing for easy movement between suburbs and city centers. Poor neighborhoods were unable to resist the construction of highways through their neighborhoods whereas rich neighborhoods had the clout to prevent this from happening. One more recent example of this is the construction of a highway in South Central Los Angeles while the rich of Beverly Hills were able to stop the construction of a highway in their neighborhood.

The defense department spent millions of dollars on freeways after the war. Just as Haussmann's boulevards were strategically useful to the military, highways could potentially be used as runways to land bombers. More significant though was the alliance between, car companies, the oil and rubber industries that lobbied for the construction of highways, and the state. These companies used the coercive power of the built environment to insure the consumption of their products. Suburbanization was a perfect accompaniment to the construction of roads, highways, and mass produced automobiles. Greater distances between work and home along with terrible public transportation (again thanks to the friendship between government and car and oil companies) created a need for automobiles.

Alienation is built into the city and into the suburbs, in its concrete and asphalt. Take the example of Los Angeles, the city built to accommodate cars but not walking human beings. In LA, many people think nothing of driving 45 minutes just to go to a bar to have a drink. Instead of having neighborhoods where one finds a whole street of bars or cafes, places to socialize are spread out over the city. North American cities lack any pre-capitalist history; they were built from the beginning by the dictates of capital, with government help. The result: urban blights that are more adapted to the automobile than the human being.

Unfortunately cities that predate capitalism can be also transformed into concrete monsters. In Torino, Italy, the gigantic FIAT plant began assembly line mass production based on Ford's model decades before the rest of Europe. The result is the same as occurred in US cities: mass production needed mass consumption to perpetuate itself, a cityscape was built that conformed to the requirements of accumulation. Someone had to buy the cars, to make this possible the car companies made sure that roads were built. Torino is a rare European example of the results of the dominion of a car company and its allies over a cityscape. Concrete partitions between seemingly endless apartments and a proliferation of roads have surrounded the walkable narrow streets of the old city. The FIAT plant employed a large percentage of Torino's residents for many decades. The employees were scattered throughout the city while the FIAT was in one location, the result: *auto, boulot, dodo*.

Back in the US, the suburban lawn and backyard were offered to a section of the working class and to the middle classes. The alienation from nature they experienced in their new automobiles and at work was compensated for and then hidden by an equally alienated but much more pleasant relationship to nature at home. Forced to buy what they could easily make at home if there were time, watching adventure on TV, the suburbanite resorts to control over nature where he lacks control over his own life. Therefore we observe bushes trimmed into squares, a neurosis for mowing lawns and meticulously planted rows of flowers. Garden stores have proliferated and the suburban yard has become nature as commodity. The suburban yard, the lies on television and 17 choices of toothpaste all helped perpetuate the illusion of the American dream. The American dream is lifeless and as uniform as the suburban lawn; it is produced by the television instead of by subjects that intervene in life in order to transform it. The American dream hides the degrading reality of a processed life from those "lucky" enough to afford it. Where private property reigns the ownership of one's living space, work-space, and just about every other space by capitalists the property poor individual is perpetually constrained. Suburbs conceal alienation from nature and other human beings as well as the lack of power that suburbanites exercise over their own lives at home and at work.

The separate ownership of living and working spaces divides opposition to Capital into labor and rent struggles. On the other hand, the illusion of homeownership (getting bank loans to buy a house) gave millions of workers a vested interest in the system of private property, and diffused

any potential struggle against landlords. This has resulted in community action to protect the property values in a given area. Workers have organized to keep other workers out of their neighborhoods. When millions of blacks moved to northern cities, white neighborhoods tried to prevent blacks from moving into their neighborhoods in order to protect their property values. This "community" action is in many cases the action of illusory communities. The average suburbanite or city dweller doesn't know many of her neighbors. When she chooses to take community action to protect her property value, this is a "community" connection based on money, and seldom on direct human connections.

While Haussmann's Paris served to create an image of the capitol of a powerful empire, city revitalization projects create an image of the new "beautified" city that is sold to us under the guise of community pride. In both of these examples this was achieved through the displacement of the poor. The "community" is sold to us with citywide celebrations, city fairs or official Millennium celebrations. The State and the media help create and perpetuate these imagined communities, that is, communities which lack commonality based on direct human relations but are instead based on an abstract conception of common identity, the most obvious example of this is the Nation. Capitalism destroys human connections but it replaces this vacuum with imagined communities.

Haussmann built boulevards to prevent the construction of barricades and completely destroyed the neighborhoods where insurrection was most likely to occur. These neighborhoods reappeared in a different form in the suburbs. North American suburbs are built so that few direct relationships of the sort that Haussmann paved over ever develop. Communication is as much a threat to state control as barricades. In the suburbs, houses are far from shopping areas, places to socialize, and work places. Meanwhile the suburbanite is sold the idea that she likes this on TV, and is bought off with excessive consumption. The suburbanite is lost alone in a labyrinth of reflections. Unable to find anyone to discuss anything of substance with, she is left with only images for companions. While the suburbs were being designed to placate and stupefy, the inner cities were becoming increasingly marginalized economically. Haussmann destroyed slums to prevent insurrection, but in the U.S. slums sprouted up right in the shadow of the American dream. During the Rodney King Riots, suburbanites watched the adventure on TV.

Sources:

Benjamin, Walter. *The Arcades Project*. Trans. Eliand, Howard and McLaughlin, Kevin Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Cambridge: Blackwell, 1990.

Rice, Shelley. *Parisian Views*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1997.

The Continuing Appeal of Nationalism among Anarchists: A review of Hakim Bey's *Millennium*

by sasha k

According to Hakim Bey, he wrote *Millennium* to answer to the question of whether he still holds the position he staked out in *TAZ*. By reading *Millennium* we can both understand Bey's current theoretical position and how he placed *TAZ* in the first place. First off, Bey notes that between the two books the world changed: the Soviet Union fell apart. This has radical implications for anarchists. Before the fall, anarchists were the "third way" (not to be confused with Tony Blair's Third Way) and the real opposition to Capital was the Soviet Union. With the Soviet dissolution, anarchism has become the other of Capital. Where as when anarchism was the third way, anarchists could hang out in the cracks creating Temporary Autonomous Zones and not really confronting Capital or the State, we no longer have that luxury. Bey admits that it took him some time to realize the difference that this made; in fact, in the early nineties he still counseled anarchists that the present was like the Dark Ages and, as with the mystics and monks Bey so loves, we should hang out and meditate in the monasteries until they are over. It seems that it took the Zapatistas to wake Bey to the implications of anarchism becoming the primary opposition to Capital. In *Millennium*, Bey concludes that *TAZ* is no longer an option, now we must leave the monasteries and begin the Jihad (the revolution).

But what is this Jihad Bey has declared? With a jumble of badly digested academic, post-colonial theory, the writings of Deleuze and Guattari, Islam and the sound-bytes of Subcommander Marcos, Bey paints a colonial picture of our 'newly' globalized world. In Bey's world, capitalism and the state are no longer the central enemies (in fact, they begin to drop out of Bey's analysis, as capital no longer exploits or alienates, it only produces 'sameness'); instead, colonialism in the form of globalization that produces 'sameness' (homogenization) is what we must confront with a revolution of 'difference.' With this logic, the form revolution must take to protect difference, to fight colonialism, is national liberation. Thus, Bey's acritical support for the EZLN revolt (a revolt Bey joyfully calls the first postmodern revolution).

For Bey, difference is constituted by ethnic nationalism. Accordingly, we need to understand the "revolutionary implication of culture" (43). Or, more directly, Bey states, "...true organic integral difference is revolutionary, now. It has to be, because it's opposed to the single world, the mono-world, the mono-culture of capital" (25). We have to ask, however, what is "true"

or “organic” about ethnic nationalities? One of the central problems with Bey’s anti-colonial outlook is that it tends to naturalize nationalities and thus nationalism. It makes them seem natural and eternal instead of historically specific and socially constructed. Contra Bey’s reading, nationalities are produced at certain times and by certain forces. And, instead of just assuming they are eternal and fixed, as Bey simplistically does, we need to pay attention to how such ethnic differences come to be created and articulated by political and social actors for particular reasons.

Bey does allow for “positive” and “negative” difference or particularities (nationalities). Positive or “true” nationalities are those that aren’t imperialistic (those that stay in their borders and don’t dominate their minorities). Bey offers the examples of the Zapatistas, Bosnia, Slovenia, Macedonia, the Ukraine, the Kurds and the Chechens as positive nationalities and nationalisms; and, he cites the Serbs and Russia as negative or hegemonic particularities. Yet in fine *New York Times* style, these nationalities in and of themselves remain unquestioned. This is the weakness of Bey’s sameness/difference dichotomy, in which, he tells us, we have to choose one or the other. Thus instead of acting in revolutionary solidarity with the struggle against the state and capital, we should choose difference or nationalism (versus globalization), and try to influence it to take the non-imperialist, nice form of nationalism.

The Poverty of Choice

Bey’s either/or choice is an expression of the poverty of imagination inherent in much anti-globalization rhetoric: sameness or difference, globalization or nationalism. Thus Bey says, “... one cannot help but supporting Chechnya and the Kurds” (100). We can’t help it, or as he also says, “we have to choose....” In Chechnya nationalists have begun to institute Shariat law and the death penalty (of course, for Bey, law and the Shariat have been re-defined as no less than “the open road of the aimless wanderer” (41)). Kurdish nationalists have been crushing all internal dissent for years; perhaps Bey should speak with Kurdish anarchists before jumping on the nationalist bandwagon. One wonders where Bey would stand in relation to the war in Kosovo. He has already stated that Serbian nationalism is bad and Bosnian is good, so I suppose he would stand with the KLA nationalist government in waiting (for Bey, there is the added benefit that the Kosovo Albanians are for the most part Muslims). Unfortunately for Bey, the KLA are now aligned with NATO, a force for ‘sameness’ if there ever was one. The contradictions of nationalism begin to mount.

The State versus Globalization

Bey’s anti-globalization ideology goes as far as to set up a facile opposition between globalization (‘sameness’) and the nation-state (‘difference’??). Bey states: “Like religion, the State has simply failed to ‘go away’—in fact, in a bizarre extension of the thesis of ‘Society against the State,’ we can even reimagine the State as an institutional type of ‘custom and right’

which Society can wield (paradoxically) against an even more 'final' shape of power—that of 'pure Capitalism'" (96). While in *TAZ* Bey, unlike many other anarchists, was simply waiting for the state to 'go away' on its own, in *Millennium* he has decided that, since it didn't disappear, we could use it to fight Capitalism. Of course, in order to do so, we need to take over the state, to control it: Hakim Bey for President! Once our trusted comrades are firmly in power they will dismantle Capitalism and shore up the nationalist venture. Yet, while Clastres' *Society Against the State* shows that society developed customs to oppose the concentration and institutionalization of power, the nation-state grew up working with capital from its birth. Unlike the customs of gatherer/hunter societies that work to defuse power, the nation-states laws and institutions are organized to facilitate and protect the accumulation of capital.

One of the central myths that much of the current talk about 'globalization' propagates is that the state is opposed to the global accumulation and expansion of capital. Somehow there exists a "pure Capitalism" which needs no state to protect its property system, guarantee its currency, mediate its disputes and contain social conflict. But to realign ourselves with the state and nationalism is to align ourselves with the reproduction of capitalism as a system and against a certain set of capitalists. There is no "pure Capitalism" that wishes the state would disappear. The logic of capitalist accumulation continually works to refashion the state as it develops and changes its needs. Bey seems to think that globalization is about to do away with borders and the state. Yet the reality is quite the opposite. While borders are becoming more porous to the movement of goods and capital, they are becoming more controlled in terms of the movement of people. This works to capital's advantage as capital needs to control and divide labor in order to increase exploitation. Without borders the poor could move from the third world where the rate of capitalist exploitation is highest and to areas where the living standards of the working class are much higher. Thus Bey's nationalism actually works hand-in-hand with capitalism to insure the maintenance of borders and the control and division of labor. It is no surprise, therefore, that ethnic-nationalism has become one of the organizing narratives of the 1990's. It is the flipside of the narrative of globalization. These hegemonic narratives limit the imagination's capacity to think of a different world. Thus they contain and recuperate oppositional forces. It is for this reason that we must always be careful of setting up such simple dichotomous choices such as Bey's 'sameness' versus 'difference' or globalization versus nationalism. We must demand what has been made to seem as impossible instead of falling into ready-made categories of thought.

Poetic History

Bey's theories are grounded in history; unfortunately, his post-modern "poetic history" has more akin to myth than to a radical, critical history. The pirates of North Africa become "pirate utopias" without mention of the fact that their ships were, for the most part, powered by slaves at the oar (sounds like Bookchin's utopic slave society of the Ancient Greek city states).

Col. Qaddafi's "Green Path" is part neo-Sufism, part anarcho-syndicalism (44). The hierarchically organized, ethnic-nationalist Tong in China becomes an inspiration. And religion becomes revolutionary. Bey goes so far to state that "... it seems clear that without religion there will be no radical revolution" (84). The history of the Tong is rewritten or badly read by Bey to make them Taoists who supposedly collaborated with anarchists in the 1911 revolution in China (84). The weak connection between the Tong and Taoism is about as weak as the connection between the Tong and the anarchists. We also shouldn't forget that the 1911 revolution was a nationalist revolution, something that doesn't bother Bey at all. And from this argument we are supposed to realize that religion is necessary to revolution. It is by such poetic rewriting of history that Bey claims to be able to save the concept of 'volk' or 'nationality.' "This concept was looted by base reaction and distorted into hegemonism of the worst sort, but it too can be rescued (an 'adventure' in itself). [We need to re-read Proudhon, Marx, Nietzsche, Landauer, Fourier, Benjamin, Bakhtin, the IWW, etc.—the way the EZLN re-reads Zapata!]" (45).

Bey's poetic history romanticizes cultural difference. Bey has called for a romantic Orientalism (are there other types?) that stresses the difference of the 'Orient' from the West. They were spiritual and we are secular and rational. This is the same argument that European Orientalism made over 100 years ago to justify its conquests. Bey's favorites are romantic Islam and Taoism. In this poetic history of firm cultural difference, the individual tends to disappear, as do some of those annoying facts.

Such romanticization, however, has little to offer a truly revolutionary movement. Instead, we need a critical history that exposes such romanticizations that help nationalist history maintain its dominance. Poetic history works with nationalist, mythic history in making ethnic-difference seem natural, fixed, and eternal. Critical history denaturalizes hegemonic history and allows us to imagine a truly different world as opposed to setting up the simplistic choice between globalization and nationalism. We must think outside of the dominant narratives that capitalism puts forth to us, and blinds us with.

Unfortunately, just as *TAZ*, with its implicit suggestion that anarchists wait in the cracks for the state to crumble, was an expression of the weakness of the anarchist movement in the late 1980's, *Millennium*, with its more explicit demands that anarchists align themselves with nationalism, religion, and the state, is a measure of its weakness in the early 1990's. Hopefully, with the recent upswing in direct action by anarchists such expressions of weakness may be left behind as historical relics of a movement that had temporarily lost its ability to imagine and demand the impossible.

**Section Two:
Issue # 2 Spring 2001**

Killing King Abacus # 2

Here we give you another of our yearly jigsaw puzzles without edges or end and whose pieces are not set in stone. The present social order reproduces measured relations and necrophiliac logics through its institutions and mechanisms, its money, science, schools, police, work, consumed leisure.... To Kill King Abacus is to create relations without measure, relations of affinity produced in struggle to destroy the state and capital, to destroy our separation from the conditions of our existence. As rebellion and mutiny spread, the passive attitude begins to be transformed into its opposite, the process itself becomes uncontrollable. And it is only through uncontrollable struggle that social order disintegrates, and a true rupture can take place. For this we need both fire and ideas.

This isn't a politics, a claim on alienated power. We offer our ideas for discussion and hope to get replies, the most interesting of which will be printed in the next *Hot Tide Discussion Bulletin* [Section 3 on this book] with our comments. For this reason, in this issue we begin with a Notes and Comment section with briefer articles not intended to be the last word on a subject, but our thoughts on how to move forward with this project of freeing ourselves from our present conditions of enslavement and creating free relations without measure. We hope to hear from you....

Some notes on Insurrectionary Anarchism

by sasha k

Insurrectionary anarchism is not an ideological solution to all social problems, a commodity on the capitalist market of ideologies and opinions, but an on-going praxis aimed at putting an end to the domination of the state and the continuance of capitalism, which requires analysis and discussion to advance. We don't look to some ideal society or offer an image of utopia for public consumption. Throughout history, most anarchists, except those who believed that society would evolve to the point that it would leave the state behind, have been insurrectionary anarchists. Most simply, this means that the state will not merely wither away, thus anarchists must attack, for waiting is defeat; what is needed is open mutiny and the spreading of subversion among the exploited and excluded. Here we spell out some implications that we and some other insurrectionary anarchists draw from this general problem: if the state will not disappear on its own, how then do we end its existence? It is, therefore, primarily a practice, and focuses on the organization of attack. These notes are in no way a closed or finished product; we hope they are a part of an ongoing discussion, and we most certainly welcome responses (interesting responses will be printed in the next issue of *Hot Tide*). Much of this comes from past issues of *Insurrection* and pamphlets from Elephant Editions (see the *Insurrection Page* on our website or write us if interested).

1: THE STATE WILL NOT JUST DISAPPEAR; ATTACK

—The State of capital will not 'wither away,' as it seems many anarchists have come to believe—not only entrenched in abstract positions of 'waiting,' but some even openly condemning the acts of those for whom the creation of the new world depends on the destruction of the old. Attack is the refusal of mediation, pacification, sacrifice, accommodation, and compromise.

—It is through acting and learning to act, not propaganda, that we will open the path to insurrection, although propaganda has a role in clarifying how to act. Waiting only teaches waiting; in acting one learns to act.

—The force of an insurrection is social, not military. The measure for evaluating the importance of a generalized revolt is not the armed clash, but on the contrary the amplitude of the paralysis of the economy, of normality.

2 SELF-ACTIVITY versus managed revolt: from insurrection to revolution

—As anarchists, the revolution is our constant point of reference, no matter

what we are doing or what problem we are concerned with. But the revolution is not a myth simply to be used as a point of reference. Precisely because it is a concrete event, it must be built daily through more modest attempts which do not have all the liberating characteristics of the social revolution in the true sense. These more modest attempts are insurrections. In them the uprising of the most exploited and excluded of society and the most politically sensitized minority opens the way to the possible involvement of increasingly wider strata of exploited on a flux of rebellion which could lead to revolution.

—Struggles must be developed, both in the intermediate and long term. Clear strategies are necessary to allow different methods to be used in a coordinated and fruitful way.

—Autonomous action: the self-management of struggle means that those that struggle are autonomous in their decisions and actions; this is the opposite of an organization of synthesis which always attempts to take control of struggle. Struggles that are synthesized within a single controlling organization are easily integrated into the power structure of present society. Self-organized struggles are by nature uncontrollable when they are spread across the social terrain.

3. UNCONTROLLABILITY versus managed revolt: the spread of attack

—It is never possible to see the outcome of a specific struggle in advance. Even a limited struggle can have the most unexpected consequences. The passage from the various insurrections—limited and circumscribed—to revolution can never be guaranteed in advance by any method.

—What the system is afraid of is not these acts of sabotage in themselves, so much as their spreading socially. Every proletarianized individual who disposes of even the most modest means can draw up his or her objectives, alone or along with others. It is materially impossible for the State and capital to police the apparatus of control that operates over the whole social territory. Anyone who really wants to contest the network of control can make their own theoretical and practical contribution. The appearance of the first broken links coincides with the spreading of acts of sabotage. The anonymous practice of social self-liberation could spread to all fields, breaking the codes of prevention put into place by power.

—Small actions, therefore, easily reproducible, requiring unsophisticated means that are available to all, are by their very simplicity and spontaneity uncontrollable. They make a mockery of even the most advanced technological developments in counter-insurgency.

4. PERMANENT CONFLICTUALITY versus mediation with institutional forces

—Conflictuality should be seen as a permanent element in the struggle against those in power. A struggle which lacks this element ends up pushing us towards mediating with the institutions, grows accustomed to the habits of delegating and believing in an illusory emancipation carried out by parliamentary decree, to

the very point of actively participating in our own exploitation ourselves.

—There might perhaps be individual reasons for doubting the attempt to reach one's aims with violent means. But when non-violence comes to be raised to the level of a non-violable principle, and where reality is divided into 'good' and 'bad,' then arguments cease to have value, and everything is seen in terms of submission and obedience. The officials of the anti-globalization movement, by distancing themselves and denouncing others have clarified one point in particular: that they see their principles—to which they feel duty-bound—as a claim to power over the movement as a whole.

5. ILLEGALITY; insurrection isn't just robbing banks

—Insurrectionary anarchism isn't a morality on survival: we all survive in various ways, often in compromise with capital, depending on our social position, our talents and tastes. We certainly aren't morally against the use of illegal means to free ourselves from the fetters of wage slavery in order to live and carry on our projects, yet we also don't fetishize illegalism or turn it into some kind of religion with martyrs; it is simply a means, and often a good one.

6. INFORMAL ORGANIZATION; not professional revolutionaries or activists, not permanent organizations

From party/union to self-organization:

—Profound differences exist within the revolutionary movement: the anarchist tendency towards quality of the struggle and its self-organization and the authoritarian tendency towards quantity and centralization.

—Organization is for concrete tasks: thus we are against the party, syndicate and permanent organization, all of which act to synthesize struggle and become elements of integration for capital and the state. Their purpose comes to be their own existence, in the worst case they first build the organization then find or create the struggle. Our task is to act; organization is a means. Thus we are against the delegation of action or practice to an organization: we need generalized action that leads to insurrection, not managed struggles. Organization should not be for the defense of certain interests, but of attack on certain interests.

—Informal organization is based on a number of comrades linked by a common affinity; its propulsive element is always action. The wider the range of problems these comrades face as a whole, the greater their affinity will be. It follows that the real organization, the effective capacity to act together, i.e. knowing where to find each other, the study and analysis of problems together, and the passing to action, all takes place in relation to the affinity reached and has nothing to do with programs, platforms, flags or more or less camouflaged parties. The informal anarchist organization is therefore a specific organization which gathers around a common affinity.

The anarchist minority and the exploited and excluded:

—We are of the exploited and excluded, and thus our task is to act. Yet some

critique all action that is not part of a large and visible social movement as 'acting in the place of the proletariat.' They counsel analysis and waiting, instead of acting. Supposedly, we are not exploited alongside the exploited; our desires, our rage and our weaknesses are not part of the class struggle. This is nothing but another ideological separation between the exploited and subversives.

—The active anarchist minority is not slave to numbers but continues to act against power even when the class clash is at a low level within the exploited of society. Anarchist action should not therefore aim at organizing and defending the whole of the class of exploited in one vast organization to see the struggle from beginning to end, but should identify single aspects of the struggle and carry them through to their conclusion of attack. We must also move away from the stereotypical images of the great mass struggles, and the concept of the infinite growth of a movement that is to dominate and control everything.

—The relationship with the multitude of exploited and excluded cannot be structured as something that must endure the passage of time, i.e. be based on growth to infinity and resistance against the attack of the exploiters. It must have a more reduced specific dimension, one that is decidedly that of attack and not a rearguard relationship.

—We can start building our struggle in such a way that conditions of revolt can emerge and latent conflict can develop and be brought to the fore. In this way a contact is established between the anarchist minority and the specific situation where the struggle can be developed.

7. THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE SOCIAL: individualism and communism, a false problem

—We embrace what is best in individualism and what is best in communism.

—Insurrection begins with the desire of individuals to break out of constrained and controlled circumstances, the desire to reappropriate the capacity to create one's own life as one sees fit. This requires that they overcome the separation between them and their conditions of existence. Where the few, the privileged, control the conditions of existence, it is not possible for most individuals to truly determine their existence on their terms. Individuality can only flourish where equality of access to the conditions of existence is the social reality. This equality of access is communism; what individuals do with that access is up to them and those around them. Thus there is no equality or identity of individuals implied in true communism. What forces us into an identity or an equality of being are the social roles laid upon us by our present system. There is no contradiction between individuality and communism.

8. WE ARE THE EXPLOITED, we are the contradiction: this is no time for waiting

—Certainly, capitalism contains deep contradictions which push it towards procedures of adjustment and evolution aimed at avoiding the periodic crises which afflict it; but we cannot cradle ourselves in waiting for these crises. When they happen they will be welcomed if they respond to the require-

ments for accelerating the elements of the insurrectional process. As the exploited, however, we are the fundamental contradiction for capitalism. Thus the time is always ripe for insurrection, just as we can note that humanity could have ended the existence of the state at any time in its history. A rupture in the continual reproduction of this system of exploitation and oppression has always been possible.

Notes on Alienation

by sasha k

A whole series of alienations has spread to separate us from all that surrounds us; social alienations, so commented upon by anarchists and Marxists alike, include private property, exchange, and the division of labor: all that separates us from our conditions of existence. Within capitalism, social alienations interpose themselves between humans and their activity. Most directly, alienation is the gap between desire and what is socially valued (for capitalism, valued as productive of surplus value). Yet alienation occurs on another level as well: that of the alienation of power, our power to act, which is separated from us and instituted in the State form. The young Marx commented on this, although in later Marxists a critique of alienated power is painfully absent. The maintenance of alienated power is what politics is all about: it is the apportioning or arrangement of alienated power. Parties are political in that they try to claim a portion of alienated power by claiming to represent the interests of a section of society. An anti-politics is a self-organization of people's power not a claim on alienated power; it is the self-activity of people reclaiming their power by using their power and the fight against its realiation into permanent institutions.

Unfortunately, many anarchists today also seem to lack any critique of alienated power: this has become especially clear during the recent sweep of anti-globalization protests. Some anarchists are calling for a shift to a form of alienated power different from the one we have at present, and yet not questioning the alienation of power in general: this usually takes the form of a vague call for more democracy, which maintains and institutionalizes a separation between decision and action (See our article 'The Anarchist Ethic in the Age of the Anti-Globalization Movement'¹ in this issue for a more in depth discussion of alienated power and the current anti-globalization protests). Secondly, it is important to understand value as an activity and pertaining to activities; in this society, economics usually defines value as pertaining to objects, thus activities and processes are ideologically reified into things. Therefore, capitalist valorization also alienates us from our power to act, from our activity, and from our desires.

Yet some anarchists take the critique of alienation much further. Social alienation, in the form of private property, exchange, the division of

1. "The Anarchist Ethic in the Age of the Anti-Globalization Movement" by sasha k and Leila. In this Edition pages 133 [Editor]

labor, and alienated power, can be thought of as second order alienation. These are specific forms that first order alienation takes in our society. The split between Subject and Object is a first order alienation; it is based in a consciousness which is self-reflexive in its understanding of itself. This alienation of Subject and Object, of human and nature, is mediated by productive activity and language. However, rejection of all mediation and alienation in general is close to a mysticism in its idealization of the identity of the Subject and Object. This is an idealization of nature and demands forgetting species consciousness, language, etc.

While we certainly believe it is important to have a more critical perspective on these second order alienations, we think it is a mistake to believe that social revolution can bring about a unity between Subject and Object, between self and nature, in the fullest sense. Overcoming first order alienations, of course, is impossible without first overcoming second order alienations, and if a successful social revolution were to finish off the State, and private property and the division of labor were to disappear, individuals may wish to attempt the task of overcoming first order alienations. Those who try to overcome the first order in the present usually wander off into the realm of the mystical, Hakim Bey being a notable example (this is not to suggest this is something individuals should avoid—it is, of course, entirely up to them whether to undertake such a task—only that to begin with the first is to attempt a mystical unity and to depart from humanity and from any attempt to overcome second order alienations socially). It seems like the focus on first order alienations is in part derived from an extreme pessimism towards the possibility of any fundamental change in our society; in this sense it is a symptom that is closely related to New Age philosophy.

Primitivism distinguishes itself in part by its thorough critique of all forms of alienation of first and second order. Yet as a critique it tends to concentrate its force on first order alienations. Most primitivists clearly understand that the first order of alienations could not be overcome without a social revolution, but a focus on the first order instead of the second offer little insight to how we are to overcome either orders of alienation: this is because most of these critiques grow out of philosophical reflection rather than a theoretical reflection upon practice.

If we are to develop an insurrectionary anti-politics, we need to be clear and thorough in our critique of alienation without falling into mysticism or politics, and without idealizing a unity that may never have existed and to which social revolution cannot return us.

Notes Toward a New Analysis of Institutions of Domination

by Wolfi Landstreicher

As recently as 65 years ago, it was common to find analyses in anarchist literature of the institutions in which the various forms of domination were manifested. If one wrote of the oppression of women, the family and marriage would be examined and exposed. If the repression of pleasure and the joy of life was the question under discussion, religion and law would be put under the gun. The institutional framework upon which this society has been built was recognized as the source of exploitation, domination and alienation.

It seems that in recent times this institutional framework has been largely forgotten. Of the various institutions into which our alienated creative potential has been accumulated to our detriment, only the state and capital (and occasionally technology) seem to get mentioned to any significant extent any more and even these are frequently treated more as states of mind than as concrete social institutions. Thus, we discover that anarchists are against statism (whatever that is) rather than the state. So Bookchin can claim to be anti-statist while promoting the ancient Greek city-state as a model for his democratic version of "anarchy".

Every other form of oppression also becomes an "ism" (*racism, sexism, etc.*) or worse (homophobia implies a psychological disorder needing therapy, not a form of social repression calling for revolt). Of course, we do not deny the reality of the ideologies of bigotry and their penetration into the thoughts and feelings of the exploited and oppressed. But without an understanding of the institutional framework of oppression and domination, it is not possible to understand how the ruling class uses these ideologies to divide those they exploit.

Even the seemingly most radical (because their rhetoric is most extreme) in the anarchist milieu do not escape this. The critique coming from primitivist and anti-civilization circles far too often aims its verbal attack at a nebulous, poorly defined civilization. Certainly, "for the destruction of civilization" sounds radical. On my own terms, I even agree with it. But on my terms, civilization is not some nebulous, largely mental, category springing from rationalism or the western mindset or whatever undesirable way of thinking; it is a network of concrete social *institutions* that I confront in my daily life: the state, the economy, religion, the family, technological systems, and so on, all very real entities that no mind games will eradicate.

And here is where the current tendency falls short. When an analy-

sis of the institutional framework of oppression, exploitation, domination and alienation are forgotten, therapy replaces revolution. We are forced to deal with the pathetic, whining confessions of a Chris Crass or the bad pop psychology of the writers of "Stick it to the Manarchy" (using terms like "manarchy" is a sure sign that someone is saying nothing worth hearing) as they try to work out their insipient "sexism", "racism", "homophobia" and "classism" which are no longer ideologies of bigotry, but low-level mental illnesses suffered by the self-proclaimed "privileged" of all classes.

Any serious revolutionary anarchist has to see all of this as just another ploy by the cowardly and by those who still have some stake in the present order to put off the real decision about which side they are on in the struggle against this society. Those of us who are serious about destroying the present world in order to create our lives as our own have no time for these self-indulgent mind-games reminiscent of 12-step groups ("My name is ... and I am an addict of my own repression"). Our task is before us: to expose and attack the institutions that have stolen our lives from us and, in the process, to reappropriate our lives. Whatever small bits of oppressive mentality might survive this process can be dealt with when we've accomplished this task.

Civilization and History: a comment on John Conner's *The Rise of the West* by sasha k

Much of the more recent primitivist and anti-civilization writings have taken a very idealist turn, holding up "Reason" and "Progress" as the root of our present condition and, often, motors of history. Thus the Enlightenment comes to be largely responsible for our predicament. These anti-civ writings step in line with conservative histories, except that they revalue such history negatively.

John Conner's *The Rise of the West: A Brief Outline of the Last Thousand Years* is meant to bring up questions and not be the last word of anti-civilization history. And it is in that light that this brief comment should be taken as well (this is in no way a review or critique of Conner's piece in general).

In Conner's narration of the rise of the west, his answer to the first, difficult question—of whether we can talk of the rise of the west without talking about the rest of the world—is telling of how he understands the historical process. He writes off China in a couple of sentences: China was "too politically stable and centralized for its own good." In other words, China was too civilized, so the west economically passed China. This is a bit of a confusing argument for the anti-civ perspective—too much civilization kept Chinese civilization from progressing. And this is indeed an old argument—Conner cites Max Weber—although, in general, most historians of China discount it today; those prone to repeat it are conservative historians of the west. China supposedly had little progress, or as Conner puts it, "It just so happens that within the last thousand years or so, the focus of Progress in the world has been the West" (p.4). So is it that civilization breeds stability or progress? Conner doesn't tell; but once he turns to the west it is Progress—with a capital 'P'—that is the driving motor of history. (Presumably, like Weber, therefore, China has no history until the west arrives—another common Eurocentric view of China, and for that matter the rest of the world).

What do we lose with this conservative (albeit revalued) Eurocentric historical narrative? We lose an understanding of the importance of colonialism to the rise of European capitalism. It is American silver that give the west an edge in Asian trade, without which history would have been markedly different. Capitalism has always been globalizing, and it cannot be understood as a national phenomenon. Those who choose to view the rise of the west in isolation from the rest of the world often fall into an idealist perspective on history; this is just what happens to Conner. To the question of what

unique element was internal to the west driving it to develop, Conner basically answers with "Progress." From an isolated and reductionist view, the material basis for the west's rise over Asia comes to be hidden.

In their explanation of the rise of the west, the argument of most conservative, Eurocentric historians revolves around European uniqueness, the restless spirit of Europeans, or an ideal of Progress that drives the west to develop, and likewise drives them out into the world. It is usually explained, that Asia, Africa and the New World lacked this spirit (the same spirit that drove scientific inquiry in the west). Conner's narrative doesn't stray far from this argument. Following the development of the ideology of Progress, Conner maps out the battles between the church and Medieval heresies, the church and renaissance thought, the church and the Enlightenment with the development of science and materialism, and the church finally being vanquished by evolution. Because we have Darwin's theory of evolution, we have social Darwinism, "thus" we have imperialism—a very simple explanation indeed. And with this logic we can understand Nazi mass-murder as "a product of Progress, a fruit of the Enlightenment and what came thereafter..."(p.46). And so the west drives on to its own sure death, its beating heart Progress.

Conner states, "My concern ... is not with the past, at least not for its own sake, but for the future" (p.54). Yet, unlike Fredy Perlman's *Against His-story, Against Leviathan*, which focuses heavily on the resistance to civilization, in Conner's account resistance only gets minor mention. So what of practice? How do we attack an ideal? Through rebelling the veil of illusions will drop and we will see clearly: "Once we have sensed what it is to be without Civilization, beyond the veil, we must never surrender this vision and the connecting together of all things it supplies. When we know this, Civilization is but an illusion, a ghastly one to be torn down as soon and as well as we are able" (p.57). Here civilization itself becomes an illusion.

So why this turn to idealist history? In part it seems to stem from primitivists' desire to differentiate themselves from Marxism. It is a critique of the ideology of progress that most clearly marks the line between primitivists and Marxists or leftists. But it is unnecessary to slide from a critique of ideology into an idealist conception of history. Unfortunately, that is exactly what happens in John Conner's *The Rise of the West*.

Parody and Subversion: Notes on Roles

by Leila

Roles are the repetitive performance of a particular set of power relations. The incentive for playing a role is a shred of power; even when one plays a submissive role there must be some sort of incentive even if this is only a negative incentive, the avoidance of a worse fate. To say that roles are performances doesn't make them unreal, roles are real acts, acts that are repeated until they harden into habit. Roles do not appear from nowhere, they are perpetuated by institutions such as the family, the workplace, businesses, bureaucracies, schools, and roles in turn perpetuate the power structures of these institutions. There are objective social structures and institutions that perpetuate roles, this does not mean that they are set in stone. There are subjective desires to subvert and destroy these roles, this doesn't mean that this is easy or that subversion will succeed. In the tension between the structures of power and the desire to rebel, the game of subversion is played.

Ethnicity, gender and class existed before capitalism but in very different forms. Ethnicity has been changed drastically by the rise of the nation-state, gender roles have been changed by the proletarianization of women, and it is quite obvious that the rise of capitalism changed class structure. Nevertheless roles based on gender, ethnicity and class were used to perpetuate power relations by the structures of power both before the rise of capitalism and after. Nationality is something that people often don't historicize, people simply don't realize how young the nation-state is and that this has effected the very idea of cultural identity. Our present concept of ethnicity (this word comes from the Greek word for nation) is shaped by the nation-state. Some imagine that nationality existed in its present form long before the rise of the nation-state and others imagine that patriarchy existed in a stronger form in the past, that it is now slowly fading away into nothingness. Patriarchy is one of the more obvious examples of a process that perpetuated roles of domination and submission long before capitalism. I would argue that some forms of patriarchy have indeed lessened but that overall patriarchy is not fading away, it has been merely reconfigured by capital into a different form, those aspects that limited the flow of capital and the proletarianization of women were changed. Patriarchy is not one global monolithic structure; it is cultural, and has varied forms. It starts in the family, spreads to other institutions and is thus reproduced throughout society. Capitalism reproduces new mutated forms of patriarchy, it uses gender difference just as it does class and ethnic/

racial differences, to exploit the labor force to the greatest degree possible.

How do we use categories of identity to understand the society we live in without perpetuating the very roles that we wish to move beyond? This is tricky, if we simply throw away the categories that describe gender, race, and ethnicity we lose important tools that we need to understand how this society functions, how these categories effect and structure our relations. On the other hand, it is easy to fall into perpetuating the very roles that we wish to transcend. This is a problem that often surfaces within identity politics, which start with an identity category as a point of departure. Since such politics are based in identity categories which are fundamentally tied to roles, unless there's a conscious attempt to subvert roles, one instead reinforces them. Recently the article 'Stick it to the Manarchy' referred to women and people of color in the same lists of categories as the elderly and children as if being female or not white made a person less capable of dealing with demonstrations and riots. The argument is that people of color are prosecuted more harshly, this is true, yet I have never noticed this being a deterrent. In fact, in my experience it is those who come from more privileged backgrounds that are more scared in such situations. What their reason is for including women on this list I can't figure out. In any case they fall into a patronizing tone in spite of any intentions to the contrary. There is a danger that discussion about gender can fall into patronizing tones that reinforce the role of the woman as victim. On the other hand, this doesn't mean that we should avoid discussion about sexism which is very real, or that women shouldn't complain about getting fucked over because they want to avoid perpetuating an image of the woman as victim. We can only throw away the categories of gender, race, class and so on when we are dancing on the ruins of this society and have learned to relate to each other without these roles in a classless stateless society. Until then we can't just pretend that we are all treated equally, simply proclaiming the death of these social divisions by refusing to refer to them does nothing except forfeit a means to confront the problems that they create.

Race (or at least racism), unlike ethnicity, is based on a person's appearance and not necessarily their culture. I do not mean to imply that race is biological, it is a social construction, but that for example a black person raised by white people, who is culturally indistinguishable from whites, still experiences racism. Gender is generally structured around biological sex (a person has to drastically change their appearance to be treated as a different gender); the traits that are described by these categories are partially biological (or based on the assumption of the presence of a certain biology) and thus it is impossible to completely break with these categories as long as the present society remains since they will effect how people treat you no matter how you act. That is, race and gender consist of more than just roles.

Roles are social because they are relations, they are performances in which there is always an interaction with the audience. They cannot simply be broken with on an individual level; by changing or breaking with a role one is necessarily changing a relation. However, this does not mean that they can only be broken with collectively, or only by society as a whole. To

change roles is to change relations, such change can occur on many scales, it is not only a question of collective change. There are innumerable intermediate scales to social change that lay between the individual and the collective or the individual and the societal. Therefore we do not need to wait until some 'collective break' seems imminent to move beyond the roles that shape our relations. It is precisely by not waiting and starting to subvert these relations now at whatever scale possible that a break might eventually spread throughout society as a whole. I am not referring to a collective break in the sense of a homogenous simultaneous break with roles but a multifarious rupture that spreads throughout society; the concept of roleless relations necessarily implies multiplicity for to act without a role is to act without the very power relations that create homogeneity. Of course it is not that easy, it is not just a question of everybody trying to make change in their daily lives and this change adding up to a sum total of revolution. A large-scale break with roles implies a large scale break with the power relations that roles perpetuate—in other words capital and the state must be destroyed in all of their manifestations, the multiple micro ways in which they filter into our relations, and their macro institutional forms.

To break with a role is not something that can be achieved immediately or easily, often one must first go through a process of subverting and bending roles, playing with them, making the unnaturalness of roles obvious through parody. How do we expose the unnaturalness of gender, race or nationality? Parody can expose a role as unnatural. When someone misappropriates a gender role, when a man badly copies female behavior or vice versa we may be forced to think about whether there is a 'genuine' female and male behavior. Is the transvestite copying true femaleness or maleness or is s/he copying a copy? Suddenly everything gets confusing. Is she a real woman? Is there such a thing?

How do we organize ourselves in a qualitatively different manner without the constraints of roles? How would we organize ourselves if the most powerful and repressive structures which reproduce our present social roles were absent? It is important to be able to imagine such a situation and attempt to organize ourselves differently, without the roles that constrain us and perpetuate the state-capital machine, to the degree possible, here and now.

Never Cry Wolf

by Wolfi Landstreicher

The nature of revolutionary solidarity lies in recognizing one's own struggle in the struggle of others, in the actions they choose to take, the risks they confront in their battle against the social order. Thus, it does not mean uncritical support, but rather includes an intelligent analysis of each action in terms of aims, tactics and repercussions. Every act of revolt, every attack against the rule of the state and capital is part of the struggle for freedom and life, and every response that condemns these acts is a rejection of the solidarity that is a necessary part of our struggle. The practice of solidarity must necessarily reject the binary logic in which one must either uncritically embrace an action or else condemn it.

On March 31, 2001, unknown people set fire to 36 SUVs at the Romania car dealership in Eugene, Oregon. A few days later a communiqué was published explaining the action. The communiqué referred to two people accused by the authorities with doing similar actions: "... Romania Chevrolet is the same location that was targeted last June, for which two earth warriors, Free and Critter, are being persecuted. The techno-industrial state thinks it can stop the growing resistance by jailing some of us, but they cannot jail the spirit of those who know another world is possible. The fire that burns in Free and Critter burns within all of us and cannot be extinguished by locking them up..."

Upon hearing of this action, my immediate response was that of solidarity—this was an expression of my struggle as well. At the same time, I recognized the untimeliness of the action, particularly in the light of the wording of the communiqué. Jeffrey "Free" Luers' trial was to begin in less than a week and the wording of the communiqué could easily be taken as implying that he had been involved in the arson of the previous June even though he hadn't yet claimed responsibility for this act. (Craig "Crittter" Marshall had already begun to serve a five and a half year sentence for the first Romania arson.) Certainly, this action was likely to have an effect on the trial. Nonetheless, it is essential to remember that, however important strategic considerations may be, they can never be the first considerations in acts of revolt. The need to rebel and attack the order that dominates and oppresses us is always the primary consideration.

Unfortunately, the moment Free's lawyer had his trial postponed, the wails of condemnation against this more recent attack began. While some

merely condemned the attack as stupid and blamed those who did it for increasing state repression, others went as far as to claim that this action was carried out by police or the FBI. Those who made these latter allegations had no evidence whatsoever; they were simply unhappy about the timing of the action and its possible consequence.

Those who carry out attacks against the present social order are never to blame for the repressive acts of state. The state, of course, will use such attacks to justify its repressive activity, but when anarchists begin to use a mirror image of this state logic to condemn those acts of revolt that don't fit their ideal, it is a nauseating case of cowardice. The state, and *only the state*, is ever to blame for state repression. It has the power of monopolized violence and can use it whenever it sees fit—as quickly, at times, in the face of a word as in the face of a deed. The act of rebellion is always a gamble. Of course, one can examine the situation, estimate the odds and then decide to take the risk or not. But one can never know the outcome with certainty, particularly since the circumstances in which one acts are largely in the hands of one's enemy. In this light, every condemnation of an act of revolt based upon real or potential repressive responses of the state is absurd from the standpoint of the enemies of the state.

The attribution of acts of revolt to police agencies—particularly without proof—is potentially quite harmful. Those who set the fire on March 31 may one day face trial for this action—this is one of the many possible consequences of their gamble. The chatterers spreading these groundless rumors are creating an atmosphere that works against critical solidarity in a situation where this might be prove essential. It is an all too common story, reminding one of those anarchists who parroted the media's claim that the Unabomber was a madman and thus pushed the discussion of his actions and ideas into the binary logic of condemnation and disassociation on the one hand and uncritical praise (at times verging on a disturbing near-canonization as portrayed in the "He tried to save us" fliers). One is also reminded of the case of Marinus Van der Lubbe who was transformed from a council communist insurgent into a dupe or an agent of the nazis by a stroke of the stalinist and social-democratic pen in spite of the fact that even in the face of nazi torture and his impending execution, he refused to lie and say that his attack was a communist conspiracy. Anarchists would do well to avoid rumors regardless of the circumstance, but rumors that could undermine the foundations of revolutionary solidarity are truly dangerous. In a situation where the odds are already against us, those who spread such rumors are creating yet another circumstance that favors the state.

On June 11, 2001, Free was sentenced to 23 years in prison for his alleged participation in the first attack against the Romania car dealership and an attempted arson at Tyree Oil Inc. During the course of his trial, he claimed responsibility for burning the three cars at Romania Chevrolet but denied having anything to do with the attempt against Tyree Oil. Of course, the judge, worthy servant of the state that he is, found Free guilty on all counts. To our knowledge neither Free nor Critter have commented on the most

recent attack at the Romania car lot. But as we see it, Free, Critter and the night-adventurers of March 31 are all our comrades in struggle. The actions claimed by Free and by these more recent illuminators of the night reflect our own hatred for this society and its poisonous effects. We do not know who started the fire on March 31, but we do know that in the face of acts of revolt we who are enemies of the state would do well to remember this advice: never cry wolf.

YaBasta: Politics Dressed in White Overalls

by Sandra K.

translated from *Umanità Nova*

There has been much talk about the Italian group YaBasta—and even imitations!—in anarchist circles. And while it should be clear to anyone paying attention that YaBasta (a.k.a. “Movement in White Overalls”) isn’t an anarchist organization, the problems with YaBasta go much deeper. Not only does YaBasta openly dialogue and work with the state (including supporting and running candidates in elections), but they even collude with the state to suppress anarchists and anarchist projects. Yet it is not only YaBasta as a particular organization that anarchists should be wary of, but as a method of organization and a model of struggle—the focus of most anarchists’ acritical jubilation—YaBasta is highly problematic. They have explicitly moved away from self-organization and towards politics, away from conflictual action towards mediated, public spectacles (often arranged with the police in advance). Thus we include the article below to clarify where YaBasta stands in relation to the state, anarchists, and social revolution. But don’t take our word for it, look at the quotes from YaBasta themselves at the end of the article.

UNMASK SIMULATIONS IN WHITE OVERALLS

The birth of the so-called “Movement in White Overalls” (W.O.) traces back to 1998, when the Social Centers referring to the “Charter of Milan” decided to break away—in their image as well—from the rest of the antagonist movement that didn’t adopt the political positions expressed in that document.

The “Charter of Milan” welled up in an assembly held in that town on September 19, 1998, at the Leoncavallo Social Center. It appears to be the converging point of various paths within the area of social centers, such as Leoncavallo, the “Melting” of social centers in North-East Italy (Padua, Venice-Mestre etc.) and some in Rome (Corto Circuito, Forte Prenestino). Later on centers of Liguria and Marche also flowed in.

The paths followed weren’t on the whole homogeneous, but had been growing in the former period around the tendency marked by militants seeking re-definition and a new political role; the practice was carried out through connections with the institutional “left” as well as with sectors of volunteer associations, catholic ones in particular. At the same time negotiations had been undertaken with mayors—right-wing ones as well—to obtain political recognition, and legalize squatted centers with the claim that they

were offering public services and entertainment, organized through social cooperatives, tied to the “non-profit” sector.

In Mestre (Venice) in particular, negotiations resulted in the town-council purchasing the squatted center “Rivolta”—formerly a factory—at the approx. cost of 1 million US dollars paid with public funds, favored by Benetton’s economic group, followed by legalization. Such a political “turn”—applauded both on left-wing press and TV—was then presented as the consequence of a theoretical revision assuming that the period of class struggle and communist subversion had expired, recognizing a not well defined “civil society” as a new interlocutor, and pointing out as a strategic goal a “conflictive reform of welfare” through the claiming of universal rights, in the first place “citizen’s revenue.”

In order to support these views, the social centers of the Milan Charter discovered a queer federalism: municipalism and self-government were no longer seen as radical alternatives for social self-organization, but rather as a “new” model of democratic participation and political representation within institutions such as local administrations. Thus Leoncavallo ended up supporting a Christian Democrat like Martinazzoli running to be elected mayor of Milan. While peeping from behind the flag of neo-zapatism, the next step was participation of members of this area in local elections in the ranks of the Green Party or Rifondazione Comunista with an attitude expressing all but opposition to the center-left governments. Luca Casarini, a spokesman (but really, leader) of the W.O. was assigned as advisor of Livia Turco, minister of Social Affairs whose name is bound to the law that introduced concentration “kamps” for paperless or non legalized immigrants, waiting for expulsion. Since 1998, as a consequence of this “new” political course, a deep rupture has taken place within the antagonist movement, with on the one side W.O. more and more involved in institutional and social-democratic context; on the other, social centers, squatts and experiences of social and syndicalist self-organization that keep their points of reference in “Autonomia di Classe” or the variegated expressions of anarchism ranging from squatters to the Anarchist Federation (FAI). During street demonstrations, one item occurred to worsen fractures—so-called “civil disobedience.” On more than one occasion it appeared plainly that some clashes between W.O. and police had been agreed beforehand, as denounced in the daily-paper “il Manifesto” (Feb. 1, 2000) in an article by Livio Quagliata titled “Urban guerrilla? But please!” Moreover, on several occasions and different places (Bologna, Aviano, Treviso, Trieste, Venice, Rovigo), W.O. have been responsible of physical aggressions, threats and informer behavior against autonomous, anarchists, revolutionary communists and other sections of the movement for self-organization who reject political hegemony that W.O. pretends to impose on the entire opposition movement with the complicity of the media.

STATEMENTS AND INTERVIEWS

“The State isn’t anymore the enemy to throw down, but the counterpart with

whom we had to discuss things.” (Interview of Luca Casarini, leader of the W.O., supplement of the daily *Il Gazzettino*, 23 April 1998).

“...Excuse us, comrades, but for us your intransigence regarding principles and refusal of any mediation with the institutions are more bonded to anarchist thinking and populist maximalism, like that of the former left wing organization Lotta Continua, than to our political formation of activists. There is nothing wrong with it, just clear up the question. Do allow us just to observe that the neo-anarchists propagandists of the direct action and the fundamentalist and orthodox neo-communists have in common the same extremism in pseudo-revolutionary language.” (Taken from the declaration “Camminiamo interrogandoci”, written by Radio Sherwood in Padova, responding at the Movimento Antagonista Toscano, October 1996).

“In the North East part of the country in the social centres, we have produced new cadres, serious people like Luca Casarini. They are ours or aren’t they!? Now some social centres are orienting themselves as an independent enterprise. They have Cacciari (the Mayor of Venice) as an intelligent interlocutor, they are thinking as a democratic lobby” (Interview of Fausto Bertinotti, secretary of Rifondazione Comunista Party, in *Il Manifesto* of 16 July 1998).

“The day that they won’t call us anymore “autonomi” will be a feast [...] Ideology has been outrun” (Interview of Max Gallob, spokesman of the social centre Pedro in Padova in the daily *Il Gazzettino* of 15 March 2000).

“A Davos we have, along with Josef Bove, the leader of the French farmers, taken the megaphone inviting to isolate those who were chopping windows. We did succeed, with the help of the youngsters of the social centres of Mestre [...] I did meet the boys of the social centres of Mestre and Padova who were taken by Manconi (ex-secretary of the Green Party). I spoke with them, I told them that at the first violent action they would be chased away; after that I did listen to their reasoning. As a matter of fact in Davos they stood at our side, they didn’t throw any molotovs” (Interview of Grazia Francescato, parliamentary and leader of the Green party in the daily *Corriere della Sera* of 25 May 2000).

“In the antique shop we find the remains of revolutionary traditions that passed by in the history of the XXth century: the communist one, the anarchist, the workerist and other ones. Let’s look at them, disilluminated because of what they are: fragments of a time passed by that, with all their splendor and misery, victories and defeats, can’t return anymore, can’t be reconstructed” (from an statement on line by the redaction of Radio Sherwood, spring 2000).

Brittle Utopias

by Leila

In the Istanbul of the Ottoman Empire, there was a palace with seemingly endless corridors; where those outside had little idea what happened inside and those in one department didn't know what happened in the other. At least that's how it was in the imagination of Ismail Kadare, the Albanian novelist who wrote *The Palace of Dreams*. In his novel, the protagonist is given a job as a dream reader. He is sent to a room that he has difficulty finding, and told to read the dreams of others, sorting them into those that are of no interest, and that need to be investigated further: those that could be prophecies of events that will be threatening to the state. People throughout the empire submitted written accounts of their dreams to local offices in hope that their dreams would be selected, sent to Istanbul, and later proven to be prophetic. Little did they know that some dreams would be labeled as exposing threats to the state and that this didn't bode well for the dreamers. Kadare knew what we also know: that dreams have the potential to threaten the structures of power.

Without dreams, visions that reach beyond the death marches of this society, war, industry, pollution, boredom, we cannot destroy that which tries to doom us to a passive yet stressful ambulant numbness. I recognize the stench of rotting flesh, but I'm not sure how to freshen the air. But is it necessary for us to conceive of a detailed plan of the world that we will build in the place of the putrefying corpse? Or is it more necessary to first perform the cremation rites? It is more important to know which path to take away from this social order than to be certain what one will do upon arriving at the end of it.

In *The Conquest of Bread*, Kropotkin laid out a detailed account of how, at that time, communism could be achieved without government. He even included statistics of production levels. These are long-outdated of course, but I don't think that his vision was meant to be a strict model for communism even at the time that he wrote it, for in the same text he said: "Now all history, all the experience of the human race and all social psychology, unite in showing that the best and fairest way is to trust the decision to those whom it concerns most nearly. It is they alone who can consider and allow for the hundred and one details which must necessarily be overlooked in any merely official redistribution" (Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread* p. 94). When we draw upon the utopian dreams of others we must be careful not to stick to narrow-minded imitations of dreams that are born from other situ-

ations, on the other hand dreams that come from drastically different situations at times ignite a spark of inspiration that allows one to approach the present situation in a dynamic way. Some dreams are supple and resonate with the ever renewed present, others become fossilized, they are so dry and brittle that they crack and shatter to pieces when they try to move from the dream into reality.

Some utopias are visions of places in which humans can be truly present, places that lack the ever proliferating forms of mediation of this society. Others are non-places, these are dreams that are old even if just conceived of though they don't crack, they are too unified, too pristine. Ethnic cleansing, Communism with a big C, the nation, pure capitalism, these utopias can never be fully brought into practice, but that is not the problem. The problem is that there are powerful structures which try to bring these grand-plans into being, to the letter and with scientific precision. I don't want to live in a non-place where social problems can be solved with mathematical formulae and human beings become Xs and Ys. Social relations are unsolvable, we can only appear to solve them by temporarily forcing them into a relatively static position, at the cost of great human misery. Anarchy cannot be a great leap forward. Anarchy is not a non-place where human beings must bend to fit a mold.

Some dreams create people that are inscribed upon like a scratched record, they go around in circles always returning to the same point. Cracked dreams fall into the actual world in pieces, bite sized easily digestible bits, like a situationist slogan in a computer ad. Cracked dreams become the motor of a history that produces only novelty and nothing new. The frustrated dreams of one generation are reflected back at society in the slogans of the status quo of the next. These reflections are distortions, twisted mockeries of the dreams of those who itched to blast out of history into an utterly other utopia.

The distorted reflections of unrealized dreams inspire reaction. Unrealized desires cause frustration; when blocked from action people become reactive. They react to the limited choices that are relentlessly thrust upon them, an endless string of lesser evils. We have all experienced unrealized desires that have become resentment. Cracked dreams are ever recycled by resentment, by their lack of realization and our incapacity to act, by a society which limits our actions so severely that we are often left to merely react to its repressive mechanisms.

There are those who disdain all talk of destruction, who hold that creation is the essence of action, that destruction is the antithesis of any accomplishment or social change. But creation and destruction are twined processes like life and death. Modern science describes energy as being neither created or destroyed but merely transformed. Transformation is simultaneous creation and destruction, for one state to be created another must be destroyed. Hindu mythology describes Shiva as a creator and destroyer. It

seems logical to me that they should attribute both functions to one god¹. So how is it that so many of those who call for social change above all else shrink away from the very idea of destruction, as if a new social reality can be created without destroying the state-capital leviathan? It is interesting to look at what kinds of activities many of these people hold up as being creative deeds. There are the progressives who think that it is important to work within the system, to vote, to be a good citizen. These people are often very busy re-creating the present social order. Busy work is elevated to a high deed by those who value reaction over action. Unable to act willfully, left with Pepsi challenge like options, one becomes frustrated but is compensated by a large quantity of possible reactions, the busy work of writing letters to congressmen, going to demonstrations, filing lawsuits. The frustrated desire to act becomes answering an opinion poll on a news show. Stand up and be counted, but what does all this counting add up to?

This mentality also surfaces among radicals. Miscellaneous forms of busy work, attending meetings, circulating pamphlets, running the local radical infoshop are considered necessarily superior to all forms of sabotage because these are viewed as constructive tasks, while sabotage is viewed as destructive. While some of what is held up as creative, the creation of places to meet, discussions and publications and flyers that open communication, are important parts of any social struggle, others are but 1001 types of busy-work that only serve to reproduce the present social relations. Those that broke windows in Seattle, the ELF, neoluddites and other saboteurs, they don't do anything but break things. Meanwhile back at the collective, the same person who makes such accusations is splitting hairs to achieve a consensus decision about how to set up a fund-raiser. A brick through the window of Niketown, a firebomb in the GOP headquarters, these acts of destruction create more than the brilliant cascade of glass shards or sparks, more than the joys of redecorating that which we abhor. Behind the barricades and in the dead of night something else is born, our own active powers burn as brightly as Vail, when private property is no longer private nor property we have created new relations with each other and to the spaces that we have been locked out of for so long.

In this necrophiliac society, reactive busy work bears many still births amidst the smokestacks and concrete.

The frustrated desire for change produces the novelty of seasonal fashions—Windows, 95, 98, 2000—these things are qualitatively similar to their previous versions. Windows 2000 is only quantitatively different than previous versions. How many bytes do you have in your hard drive? Novelty is incomparable with the renewal of life, the difference between a mother and a daughter, a green shoot and a seed. The renewal of life in fundamen-

1. I use this example to illustrate a point. I do not intend to glorify Hinduism itself, which is a force of oppression in India today; the caste system being just the most obvious example. When I was in India, I noticed that many western travelers romanticized Hinduism without taking even a second to look at its effects, even when they brutally stared them in the face

tally connected to death. This society drains a little life from us every day in the same way that it hides death. Joyous cries on the subway are about as rare as a dead body on the road. A friend of mine came to visit me in China from the US, he was shocked to see all of those little animals in cages waiting to be slaughtered. He had eaten meat for 30 years before that without being particularly bothered by the idea. In the richer countries, though we breathe in cancerous fumes, death is hidden away, wiped clean. Where death is packed in Styrofoam, one has to wonder what kind of life can be lived. Creation which doesn't include a little death isn't part of life, it is instead the clonelike reproduction of the same. The cycles of software and fashion and other clones born from busywork, escape, death and were therefore never part of life. Our struggle should be a creative destruction, not the reproduction of living death.

We do not wish to become agents of the reproduction of the same. We dream of other ways of relating, of a utopia that is a real living dying rotting breathing place, a utopia of process not a brittle non-place. We wish to blast out of this history, a history of reaction. Hindu mythology conceives of creation and destruction as paired processes, life coming with death. It also envisioned that this age is part of the kali yuga, the black age, the last age, the cow is on her last leg and when the kali yuga ends she will be legless. The cow will go splat, the world will end. Maybe the ancient Hindu scholars saw it this way because since creation and destruction are paired, the world is a process of constant transformation, there can be no social order that is eternal, it too must eventually die. Maybe then it is not the realists who see things most clearly, since their vision is trapped in the present, but those dreamer utopians who know that this society could not possibly be permanent, those who are trying to kick at the cow's last leg.

We Go On

by Albert Libertad

We don't have faith, we have absolutely no confidence in our success: we are certain that we have neglected nothing, that we have made all our efforts in order to be on the correct road.

We are not certain that we will succeed: we are not certain that we are right.

We don't know, it is not possible for us to know if success will be at the end of our efforts, if it will be the reward; we try to act so that, logically, we should arrive at the result that interests us.

Those that envision the goal from the first steps, those that want the certitude of reaching it before walking never arrive.

Whatever the task undertaken may be, if the completion is near, who can say: they've seen the end? Who can say: I will plentifully reap that which I sow; I will live in this house which I build, I will eat the fruits of the tree which I plant?

And therefore, one throws the wheat on the ground, one arranges the stones one by one, one surrounds the fruit-tree with care.

Because one does not know for certain, for sure, for whom, how, when the result will be, will one neglect one's efforts for that which will be possibly good? Will one throw the grain on the hard rock or mix it with the tares? Will one arrange the stones without the square and the plumb-line? Will one put the seedling at the crossroads of the four winds?

The joy of the result is already in the joy of effort. He who makes the first steps in a direction that he has every reason to believe good, already arrives at the goal, that's to say, at the reward of this labor.

We don't need to know if we will succeed, if men will come to live in a great enough harmony to assure the complete development of their individuality, we have to do the deeds for that which may be, to go in the direction that both our reason and our experience aptly decide.

We don't say: "Men are born good, they should therefore harmonize their relations" We say "Logically, it will be in the interest of men to obtain with the least effort the greatest sum of well being; not from the point of view of eliminating effort, but of always using it for betterment. It is thus necessary to show them where our interest is. The understanding between individuals is the best means to come to assure human happiness. Lets try to make him understand it."

The idea of a meteor collision with the earth, a collapse of the sun, a

great fire being able to interrupt our show or our experience, cannot hinder all of us from beginning. Likewise, the misunderstanding of our ideas and practice by the majority of men, be it due to cretinism or perversity would not be a reason to stop us from thinking and critiquing.

All work begun is on its way to completion, whatever the resistance of the attacked group may be. It is not a question of speculating about the magnificence or the proximity of the goal to reach, but rather of convincing oneself with a constant critique with which one proceeds handsomely, and doesn't get lost in digressions.

We go on with ardor, with strength, with pleasure in such a direction determined because we are aware of having done everything and of being ready to do anything so that this is in the right direction. We bring to the study the greatest care, the greatest attention, and we give the greatest energy to action. While we direct our activity in a given direction, it's not a matter of telling ourselves: "Work is hard; statist society is solidly organized; the foolishness of men is considerable," it would be better to show us that we are heading in the wrong direction. If one reached it, we would use the same force, in another direction, without faltering. Because we don't have faith in such a goal, the illusion of such a paradise, but in the certitude of using our effort in the best direction.

It would not be worthwhile to concern ourselves with an immediate, tangible result, if it obstructs, diverts our exact path. The bait of reforms attracting the mass of men would not be able to hinder us.

To accelerate our march, we don't need mirages showing us the closest end, within our hand's reach. It will be enough for us to know that we go on and that, if we sometimes stamp around the same spot, we do not go astray.

The mirage calls us to the right and to the left, diverts you, and, if one succeeds in returning to the correct road, this is weakened and diminished by lost illusion. The intoxication of words and illusions resembles that of alcohol, it can throw the multitudes into an impassioned movement, towards the closest goal: but the sobered multitudes pause.

They pause discouraged by the emptiness of the empty result. The perseverance of courage is not in the act of arriving, but in the certitude of being right.

We don't need a sign-post to show us that we have traveled a third, a fourth, a hundredth of the way; nothing measures the quantity of our effort and such markings have no relation to our effort as a whole. We please ourselves to know that we give, according to our strengths and in the direction that we believe is best, all that we can give.

We believe in a constant evolution, we therefore know that there is no end. It is enough for us to always go forward, always on the correct path. And the packs may bark after us, and we may be the crazy ones, the bad ones, the majority may stand in our way, atavism, heredity may want to impose its ineluctable laws, the group may defend itself harshly, though the end may be far, very far, these things do not concern us.

We go on ... employing all means, in turn persuasive and violent. We

are ready to come together with anyone and with everyone for the attainment of universal happiness and for the normal development of the unique.

We go on ... Each effort brings joy in itself and every day sees its stopping place, even if advancement is slight.

We go on ... We are not sure to arrive, we are mindful that we have done everything and to be ready to do anything to be right, and hence to arrive.

And it is this that makes us the strongest ... that we are never weary.

We go on ...

The End of the World

by Mare Almani

translated from *Diavolo in Corpo*

On September 13, 1999, at the power station at Tokaimura on the Pacific coast of Japan, the most serious nuclear accident since the time of Chernobyl took place. During a laboratory experiment, three technicians spilled sixteen kilograms of uranium into a sedimentation tank designed to hold little more than two. The error started a chain reaction that continued for many hours, contaminating the entire area surrounding the station for a radius of several kilometers. The population residing in the vicinity of the installation wasn't evacuated until several hours after the accident and another 20 hours were required before the intervention of 18 volunteers "stopped"—according to statements of the Japanese government—the radiation leak. However, word got out, the news originating from the Land of the Rising Sun left the entire world with baited breath for a few days.

We are informed of disasters everyday, but this one assumes quite specific contours. More than AIDS which lays a heavy weight upon the promises of the senses, more than railway accidents which discourage one from traveling, more than digestive disorders which revive anorexia, more than air pollution which merely renders breathing unpleasant, what happened in Tokaimura casts its most appropriate and sinister light on the epoch in which we live. Perhaps because the place where this most recent nuclear disaster happened is the same place where the first one occurred, namely Japan, and this gives us the idea of the vise that, having returned to the place where it started, definitively closes the panorama of our future.

However, no one deals with the lesser consequence of the event that has upset our prospects for over half a century: the atomic menace that has completely overturned our sensible horizons by casting us into a world susceptible to being annihilated at any moment. Beyond the real danger, there has never been any way to measure the extent to which the eventuality of nuclear destruction has struck out imaginations, damaging the unreality that animates it and with it our thirst for freedom. The nuclear has succeeded in seizing the *desire for the end of the world*, which, in a certain sense, embodies the fascination and terror that is felt in front of a freedom without limits and which from time immemorial has given imagination its excess, and reducing it to a mere technical possibility at the disposal of power. How can we forget that up until the middle of the last century, this very desire for the end of the world had fueled the thoughts of most radicals, forming the sensible source of

an unlimited critical energy? And how can we not see that the very possibility of nuclear annihilation deprives the imagination of this infinite perspective?

Even though it may seem paradoxical, the desire for the end of the world has always been one of the great motive forces for human beings. This absolute negation has been lived as the concrete effort to snatch the possibility of determining one's own existence from divine or earthly authority. Once the fear of punishment was rejected, the end of the world became the proudest manifestation of the negativity in which human desire is rooted. Sade's crime is that he was the first to unveil the terrible secret that is hidden in the heart of the individual and to draw the due consequences from it. The anguish and the exaltation bound to the restless awareness of this force of negation are easily traceable in all those who have opened fire on that which surrounds them from the dugout trench of their particular inclinations.

But since the second world war, that which the inexorable possibilities, that were opened in the face of the Creative Nothing evoked by Stirner, couple to themselves is spoiled, corroded, poisoned, contaminated *from the start*. Today we know that the blank slate that has always formed the basis for radical social transformation is no longer capable of keeping its promises. In this way it has come to assume a suspicious mien in our eyes. When everything totters on the brink of an abyss who wants to hear talk of flying away? When destruction is recruited under the nuclear banner, who would dare to consider it a creative joy? When technical power transforms language into an instruction manual, who can give body to the insubordination of words?

There is no need to look any further than this for the reason behind the increasing disinterest in the face of the great social utopias since 1945: the atomic reality—with its wastes that lose their radioactivity only after hundreds of thousands of years—has not only deprived us of the possibility of negating the existent, but has also deprived us of the possibility of creating it positively, because in either case it's a question of imagining the end of the world or on the other hand the beginning of another world. All this has had material consequences that are not neutral. Losing the capacity for absolute negation, we also lose the capacity for thinking and imagining the very notion of the totality. The concrete threat of global annihilation and a definitive night into which we could be sunk in a single moment by the hand of some idiotic engineer has made a non-universe of the universe. When we find ourselves facing a horizon with no way of escape, we are no longer facing a horizon, but a wall. And here we are before this wall, adapted to our miserable daily reality, condemned to the most indifferent irresponsibility with regards to a world in which we no longer feel ourselves capable of doing anything.

Inasmuch as the temptation to be done with the world has passed to the other side of the barricade, to the side of power and money, our force of negation has shattered, scattering itself in the order of the possible, surviving in the form of fragments. Do you want proof? The examples can be easily dug up in the things that we live through every day, in the sea of particularisms that don't seem willing to withdraw and that, rather than curbing the process of generalized indistinctness, accelerate it to the point of enclosing

us in a circuit of interchangeable causes (women's rights, environmentalism, gay liberation, minimum wage: it is worthless to go on at length about the minimal importance of these particular causes). If one then passes from the ambit of social struggles to that of ideas, it becomes difficult to remain unimpressed by the way in which the exaltation of the fragmented on the part of the intellectual rabble—a contemporary phenomenon in the grip of the nuclear reality—seems to have come expressly in order to confirm the exclusion of the totality as a category of thought. It's as if our critical modernity has had the obstruction of thought as its real aim, starting from the annulment of the subject in order to come in the end to the different undertakings of deconstruction, linguistically simulating the atomic disintegration of beings and things.

Are we still able to measure the extent of the resignation that is guaranteed to us when it is claimed that we can't speak about a part without the whole? Here we are, reduced in advance to being less than what we are. Are we aware of the vital space that is torn from us when it is declared that singularity can never illuminate the totality? If singularity starts out as merely a fragment, it nonetheless has the curious ability not to remain such. The least contact with that which surrounds it is enough to set the whole landscape on fire. In order to make singularity a fragment that refers only to itself with no relationship to that which surrounds it, it became in its time a fragment in the midst of many others. Do we finally understand the boorish irresponsibility of a world that deprives itself in advance of the possibility of meaning through this deliberate refusal to conceive of the totality?

Not that I deplore the loss of a meaningful generator of values and the confusionism that follows from this as do many prudent people today. Perhaps it would be necessary to remind oneself that there has never been a given meaning to discover or a found meaning to give, least of all by becoming entangled on the paths of ideology or of gnosis. I even admit that the vibrant calls to safeguard the world and humanity from impending disaster do not find any echo in me. In my eyes, this humanitarianism of the final moment possesses something even more repugnant than institutional humanitarianism. As though it were not enough to have symbolically and materially exploited, plundered, massacred the natural environment and human beings. When, due to the boomerang effect, it is now a question of concretely paying the consequences of this, one then thinks to get oneself out of it by using and abusing the worst humanitarian rhetoric without realizing that one only fools oneself in this game.

After all, isn't it precisely this humanitarian sort of culture and civilization the type that, in the course of a few years, generated the Stalinist and Nazi extermination camps as well as Hiroshima? And it's not a question of figuring out whether art is possible after Auschwitz, as many have claimed, so much as looking for what about this civilization has made Auschwitz possible. Rather, anyone who persists in thinking that it is the sleep of reason, rather than the very state of the wakefulness of reason, that has generated monsters, anyone who persists in denouncing the bad use of technics rather than the technics themselves with their pathetic claims to solve every prob-

lem and free the human being from the effort of living, only helps to further tighten the noose that binds us to the present world.

If in the first half of the 20th century, the "life beyond our days" could appear within our reach, today this thirst for the dawn has been lost in a radioactive cloud. Now that our days on this earth might not be so numerous nor particularly susceptible to change, it seems that there is nothing left to do but beg for life here. Thus it is not difficult to measure the regression that has taken place on the pathway to utopia in the course of a few decades. In a world in which, as some have rightly maintained, survival of the species has become a revolutionary demand, revolutionaries have reduced themselves to demanding nothing beyond the continuation of the species. A question of common sense, no doubt. If someone wants to transform the world it is indeed necessary that it still exist. This is how the struggle for survival has come to replace the struggle for freedom without limits.

But once we've started along this decline, can we be amazed at the baseness of desires that are satisfied with a house, a car or an organized cruise? Perhaps in the name of a mythical past into which we continue to place all that we notice ourselves to be lacking even though we have never experienced it in the first person? Human community, the taste food once had, wild nature, the smell of books printed with a printing press, the skill of the old crafts and all the other pleasant, nostalgic longings of anyone who would like to go to sleep at night with the certainty of finding that when she wakes up in the morning the world will be as he left it. If it were this way, the radioactive wind would have nothing to do except raise the dust we have already become.

In the face of the humanitarian bleating that increasingly deafens us as the ritual chant that accompanies each new catastrophe, I cannot keep myself from confirming my unaltered confidence in that force of negation that constitutes the only energy with which desire irradiates me. And if I cannot hide the fact that in these last few decades there has not been a single day in which I have not seen the hope for an "overturning of standards" deteriorate, this only serves to verify the extent to which the human condition is currently suppressed. After the day of universal judgment, the last day of the earth must no longer inspire fear in us, because all the disasters of Tokaimura will not succeed in contaminating the meaning of an ancient battle-cry: freedom or death.

At the Center of the Volcano

by Dominique Maisein

translated from *Diavolo in Corpo*

Although put to a difficult test by the multiple catastrophes that weigh upon humanity, the deep-seated conviction that all History has developed following a progressive route that is more or less constant if not really regular endures in its mind. This idea of progressive evolution is not an odd opinion if it is true, as it is true, that having left the caves we have now reached the point of traveling in space. Today is better than yesterday—and worse than tomorrow. But what was the point of departure for this unstoppable course? One of the fathers of cultural anthropology, L.H. Morgan, in his study on the lines of human progress from the savage state to civilization, divides the history of humanity into three stages: the primitive state, the stage of barbarism and that of civilization. Morgan claims that this last stage began with the invention of a phonetic alphabet and with the spread of writing. “In the beginning was the Word,” the Bible says. It has been discourse that has facilitated the course of humanity, allowing it to conjecture, argue, retort, discuss, agree, conclude. Without discourse, the tower of Babel of the human community could not have been built. In the persuasive force of the word, Reason manifests itself and thus becomes the technique for the creation and government of the world, making sure that human beings do not wear themselves out in turn, but rather contrive an understanding in the way deemed best. And Reason, as a Roman sage said, is the only thing by which “we distinguish ourselves from the brutes.”

Dante used the same expression to distinguish animals that were not rational from the human being who was: “it is evident that to live as animals is to feel—*animals, I say, brutes*—to live as a man is to use reason.” Indeed, humans themselves can also live like “brutes” when they renounce the prerogatives that the Tuscan poet considers typical of the human being and the source of his greatness. Effectively, all philosophy teaches that the human being is different from animals because he is gifted with reason. If she limited himself to the satisfaction of her physiological needs, nothing would separate him from the rest of the fauna, and life on this planet would still be holding steady in prehistorical conditions. But this is not the case. And this modification, that is the evolutionary process, is seen as an ascent. The human being now walks erect and challenges the heavens while the animals for the most part continue to graze the soil. This is why it is thought that animals are guided by Instinct—which leads them to preserve themselves and seek

what is most beneficial—considered as the *lowness of the belly*; while humans are guided by Reason—which leads them to pursue the just and the useful—that is seated at *the crown of the head*.

And Reason, as the ancient Greeks said, is common to all and universal. Therefore, Reason is One. But who determines it? And, above all, what happens if someone opposes it, not wanting to follow it because she has other reasons that he does not intend to renounce? If reason is manifested through discourse, what happens when we don't have the words to express that which enlivens us? The world in which we live is a universe closed in on itself to such an extent that it cannot tolerate that which escapes it, being capable of accepting only that which is included in its cognitive and normative schemas, and so it ends confining that which it cannot explain within the limits of madness, barbarism and irrational utopia.

Even social critique—understood not only in its mere theoretical expression, but also in its practical realization—has known its brutality, a stage in which the struggle against the social order provoked by dissatisfaction with one's own wretched condition had not yet developed an articulated form through projectual activity, but rather assumed the form of sporadic revolts lacking theoretical motivations and only aimed at immediate satisfaction. In other words, when the vessel overflowed, a blind violence broke loose, that, though it was able to identify the enemy, was not yet able to *express its reasons*. And because of this, as soon as the rage calmed down, the situation returned to normal. As with the human being, so also with the social critique, it is possible to point to a moment of departure when instinct abandons its place to reason.

In the first half of the 19th century one witnesses the last great "senseless" revolt (luddism) and the appearance of the political project that, without forgetting its illustrious predecessors, would require the intervention of Marx and Engels to be fully developed. The year 1848 was not only the year of the great social upheavals that passed throughout Europe, but also the year in which the *Communist Manifesto* saw the light of day. The desire to change the world came out of the cave, dissolved a great part of its mystical and idealistic characteristics in order to acquire its own rationality and become social science. It was not by chance that Engels, in the preface to the English edition of the *Manifesto* published in 1888, would describe radical social movements before 1848 as supportive of "a crude, rough-hewn, purely instinctive form of communism."

Convinced of the fatuity of thoughtless outbursts of hatred, the struggle for freedom elaborates its programs, its strategies, and starts to advocate the subversion of the entire society and its rebuilding on other foundations. Scientific communism and all its variants are born, as is the anarchist movement. For 150 years, authoritarian communists and anarchists have both seen the *seizure of consciousness* as the fundamental condition for every social change. While the authoritarians have aspired to impose this consciousness from above through their political organizations on a proletariat that was prepared for it, the anarchists have tried to make it rise up

spontaneously through propaganda or example. Millions of writings have been distributed with this aim, in the form of newspapers, journals, books, pamphlets, posters, leaflets; conferences, demonstrations and initiatives have been organized, and committees and associations constituted; not to mention all the social struggles and individual and collective actions carried out against institutions. In the heart of every revolutionary, there was a great deal of hope. There was the certainty that all this activity would sooner or later lead to the awakening of this consciousness in the exploited that would finally make the revolution possible. The reason of Freedom—still thought of as one, common to all and universal—would take the place of the reason of Power that had usurped its legitimacy.

Today we know that this determinist process was only an illusion. History does not *inevitably* go anywhere. And however that may be, power has not stopped paying attention. If once the exploited were moved at the mere mention of the word “strike”; if they gathered together in every city, country, factory or quarter because life itself was the collective life of the class; if the life of the oppressed had included daily discussions of the conditions of existence and struggle for so many years; if in spite of the heterogeneity of this consciousness, they discussed the necessity of destroying capitalism, of building a new society without exploited or exploiters, everywhere; it is undeniable that, in the course of the last several decades, all this has disappeared together with the so much dreaded “proletariat”—considered as a class, vision of the world opposed to that of Capital.

Not by chance. Capital has applied itself to reaching the point where it can build an ideal society in which the enemy no longer exists, but where only productive, good citizens live possibly along with humanoids capable of reproducing society without posing questions. In the face of the danger represented by revolutionary *reason*, a dense group of flatterers—philosophers, artists, writers, linguists, sociologists, psychoanalysts, historians—has devoted itself to draining this reason of all meaning. The “end of History” means that there is no longer any future one can claim to have an influence: the instant, this abstract, artificial pulsation, disconnected from duration, is elevated to the rank of supreme application. In a time without depth, the thing is overcome by the appearance, the content withdraws before the empty form, choice gives way to automatism, the individual abdicates her autonomy. Thus, she finds herself wallowing once again in the oppressive emptiness of advertising posters that render the Absence somewhat attractive. The reason of the state has remained, only to endure and manage, and this is the one thing that the ecclesiastics of post-modernism have never dreamed of placing into discussion.

In this way, power has tried to preventatively erase the reasons of the revolutionaries. And not only the great reasons—Communism or Anarchy—but the smallest and simplest ones as well, those that mark the daily life of every exploited person allowing him to be aware of what she wants and why he wants it, making her capable of distinguishing the rich from the poor, the police from the prisoner, the violence of the state from that of the

rebel, charity from solidarity. But of the intent was to put an end to rebellion forever, something has not worked. Revolts continue to break out. What characterizes them is the fact that there is no visible quantitative progression before the explosion; the dimensions grow to the highest level without being preceded by great partial struggles. Their spark is not the promise of a future freedom but the awareness of a present misery, which, when not economic, is certainly emotional. Now, revolt has no more reasons to put forward, it is without precise and explicit objectives and rarely proposes anything positive. The point of departure is a general negation in which economic, political, social and daily life aspects are blended. Now revolt is characterized by the violent and resolute action of insurgents who occupy the streets and clash violently with all the organs of the state, and *also among themselves*. We are at the threshold of civil war, we are already in civil war.

The very fact that revolt can assume the form of an unforeseen explosion brings out an element of important force: the surprise effect. The old reformist social democratic arsenal is disarmed in the face of the actions of insurgents. Syndicalism also finds itself completely unable to respond and incorporate the violence into itself. Social workers and all state agents of social mediation generally find themselves completely overwhelmed. The absence of precise demands renders the work of recuperation even more difficult, and there is nothing left for these people to do but denigrate those who don't hesitate by referring to the "autism of the rebels." But it is not just the counselors of the king who are dismayed. Revolutionaries as well, who have been accustomed for years to the constant repetition of the concept that the revolution "has nothing in common with the explosion of a powder barrel," find themselves displaced, taken unawares. How do you reason with one who has no reasons? How do you discuss with one who has no words? The revolt may be fierce, but it is not currently able to make distinctions that require an analysis. Any one of us could find ourselves in the position of the truck driver who was beaten and attacked with stones in the course of the revolt in Los Angeles in 1992.

The rooster constrained in the narrowness of the stall, surrounded by horses, with no other bedding at hand, was compelled to seek out a place on the treacherous floor with horse tramping all around. Being in serious danger for his fragile life, the rooster put forth the following prudent invitation: "I beg you, gentlemen, let us seek to keep ourselves steady on our feet; I fear that otherwise we may trample one another."

With the lantern of our more or less critical awareness, we wander about in the vain attempt to illuminate the black night that surrounds us today. All the texts that we have read are proving inadequate, incapable of providing us with a thread to lead us out of this labyrinth. When daily events present themselves before us, we are no longer capable of deciphering them. Revolts continue to break out around the world, but not a trace of them appears in our handbooks. Thus, when we come to denigrate the bad insurrection in Albania [1997—translator] and applaud the good revolt in Seattle, following the suggestion of a reason stuffed with bookish notions, we don't act

so very differently from the rooster of the fable: we counsel everyone to hold themselves steady. At last, a revolt as it should be! That all the insurgents of the world take as a model!

Thus, we see once again how the requirement put forward by revolutionaries in the course of history has always been almost exclusively of the logical type, which is to say normative. And the norm, the reason consistent with itself, does its best to compel reality to conform itself to it. But reality escapes from it, because no ideology is in a position to exhaust it. In spite of our best intentions, nothing guarantees that the revolt of Seattle becomes a model. In fact, it seems that the wind is blowing the other way.

For years, we have upheld the virtue of reason as the sole guide of our actions, and now we find ourselves with little or nothing in hand. In the search for a way of escape from the absurdity that threatens our existence, it is difficult to resist the temptation to reverse direction and turn our attention to that which is usually considered as the antipode of reason, namely, *passion*. After all, there are already those who have made the rediscovery that passion is one of the most dangerous arms in the attack against the world of authority and money. We can dust off the old texts of Bakunin and Coeurderoy, the anarchists from the 19th century who exalted the “unchaining of the wicked passions” and “revolution as the work of the Cossacks.”

Let's listen to the shattering voice of Coeurderoy: “... we have no hope except in the human deluge; we have no future except in chaos; we have no expedient except in general war that, mixing all the races and shattering all stable relationships, will remove the tools from the hands of the ruling class with which it violates the freedom required at the price of blood. We establish a revolution in action, we inspire it in foundations; so that it is inoculated through the sword into the organism of society, in a way that none could any longer escape from it! So that the human tide mounts and overflows. When all the disinherited will be taken with hunger, property will no longer be a sacred thing; in the clash of arms, the sword will resound more strongly than money; when everyone will fight for his own cause, no one will have any more need to be represented; in the midst of the confusion of tongues, the lawyers, the journalists, the dictators of opinion will lose their speech. Between its steel fingers, the revolution shatters all the Gordian knots; it is without compromise with privilege, without pity for hypocrisy, without fear in battle, without restraint on the passions, ardent with its lovers, implacable with its enemies. By god! Let's do it then and sing its praises like the mariner sings the great caprices of the sea, his master!”

Claiming chaos after having futilely tried to set things in order for years. Exalting barbarism after we have identified it for so long with capitalism. It might even seem contradictory, but in doing so, don't we perhaps feel that much nearer to the goal?

And yet, if we think it over well, it is odd that in order to advance the thesis that wants barbarism to be not only that which most inspires fear in us, but also a possibility on which to wager, one must appeal to such fore-runners. As if we felt ourselves at fault and thus in need of finding new justi-

fications behind which to hide our doubts and insecurities. But then, what is served by dedicating ourselves to making analyses of the profound changes that the social structure has undergone, illustrating the technological restructuring of capital, exposing the atomization of the production system, taking action for the end of the great ideologies, stemming the decline of meaning, lamenting the degradation of language, etc., etc.? Reason after reason, analysis after analysis, citation after citation, perhaps all that we have done is to raise yet another insurmountable wall, in a position to protect us if not from external reality, at least from ourselves.

If reason is a compass, the passions are the winds

In reality, we are the victims of a great deception, designed by ourselves, when we appropriate the texts of a Bakunin or a Coeurderoy in order to alleviate the burning sensation left by the disappointment caused by the breakdown of every great social project. We don't take into proper consideration that these anarchists are not our contemporaries, have not witnessed the fall of the Berlin wall, have not lived in the era of the Internet. We propose their ideas again, but avoid reflecting motives that moved them—in a historical context completely different from the one in which we live today—to place their hope for a radical transformation not in adherence to an ideal program, but in the wild irruption of the darkest human forces. Thus, we can leave for the pigs so many questions on why—as Coeurderoy said—“the social revolution can no longer be made through a partial initiative, the easy way, through the Good. It is necessary that Humanity deliver itself through a general revolt, through a counter-strike, through Evil.”

Better to dress the old certitudes up in new clothes than to rid ourselves of them. Better to look at ourselves in the mirror that reflects the image of a civilized and thinking individual, even though inside a free and savage barbarian is on the lookout only waiting for the propitious occasion to show itself. If one can no longer have faith in the virtue of progress, better to swear on the genuine and spontaneous substantial nature of the individual upon which civilization has superimposed its vulgar social conventions through the course of the centuries. But isn't this also an ideological projection, an updated version of the sun of the future that will sooner or later rise behind the peaks as if by magic? And the problem does not only consist in not knowing whether there even is a human nature uncontaminated by television that could be rediscovered, or whether the human unconscious could be reclaimed from the poisoning of Capital.

In fact, in spite of appearances, the texts of Bakunin and Coeurderoy are the fruit of a perfectly logical reasoning. The aim one wants to achieve determines the means to be used. If our goal was to redeal the cards in the game, one could easily present a rational argument for what means to use. It would be understood that each in their turn should hold the bank. But if our objective is to destroy the game itself, with all its rules, its cards and the players who take part in it, then things change. In other words, if our desires would limit themselves to the replacement of a ruling class, the restoration of

areas presently not in use, a reduction in prices, the lowering of interest rates, better ventilation of prison cells and whatever else as well, it would remain in the ambit of rational possibility. If instead we want to put an end to the world as we know it and consequently enter into a world that is utterly fantastic to imagine, then we are facing a project considered impossible, extraordinary, superhuman, that requires impossible, extraordinary, superhuman means in order to be realized. A revolt weighed in the balance of convenience, with the eye attentive to the advantages and disadvantages at every step, is defeated from the start, because it can only advance to a certain point and then stop. From the point of view of logic, it is always better to find a compromise than to fight. It is not reasonable for an exploited person to rebel against society, because she will be overpowered by it. The barricade may still have its charm, but it's useless to hide that many will meet their death there. And no one knows in advance in whose chest the bullet will stop.

This is why the only allies left are the passions, those wicked passions to which everything is possible, even the impossible. Bakunin and Coeurderoy understood this. One cannot make revolution with good sense. Only passion is capable of overwhelming the human mind, carrying it toward unthinkable ends, arming it with invincible strength. Only individuals who have gone "out of their mind," on whom reason no longer exercises any control, are capable of accomplishing the undertakings necessary to the destruction of an age-old ruling order. As we can see, it is not a question of *converting* as many people as possible to an ideal deemed just, but of stirring them up since—as an old anarchist loved to say: "it is normal that people very much share the qualities of coal: an inconvenient and filthy mass when extinguished; luminous and fiery when ignited."

But the ardor of the passions doesn't last long, it is fleeting, just like the current revolts. It is an intoxication that thrust beyond itself, but that is slept off by morning. One can gather from this that if reason alone is not able to guide us toward freedom, neither is passion alone. But no one has ever claimed such a thing. Here we are before the consequences of a misunderstanding that occurs when one opposes a supposedly irrational passion to a presumably indifferent reason, generating an antithesis that does not exist in reality. Because, far from being rash and unreflective, passion is quite capable of taking time and giving itself a perspective in order to achieve its goal. Just as the acrobatics of reason often only serve to justify the outcome of our passions after the fact. Perhaps nothing has shown how logic and passion complete each other, interpenetrate each other and contain each other in turn like the work of Sade with its continuous linking together of orgiastic scenes with philosophical argumentation. Compass and winds are both indispensable. Whatever voyage one means to undertake, one cannot do without either one of these. This is why Bakunin invoked the fury, but also spoke of the need for an "invisible pilot." Now however the point is that it is not possible to pilot a tempest. One can only endure it.

"The violent revolution that we felt rising for some years and that I had personally desired so much passed before my window, before my eyes, and it found me confused, incredulous. ... The first three months were the worst. Like many others I was one obsessed by the terrible loss of control. I, who had desired the subversion, the overturning of the established order, with all my might, indeed I, now at the center of the volcano, I abhor the summary executions, the pillage, all the acts of banditry. I was torn as always between the theoretical and emotional attraction for the disorder and the basic need for order and peace."

—Luis Buñuel

It is not only the political and economic person, worried about electoral and commodity markets, who takes the field against the tempest, against the chaos and the primordial forces of barbarism, but, above all, the ethical person. To repudiate social norms, to abandon oneself to the instincts means to fall back into the darkness of wildness to the point of reviving the horrors of the primordial horde. Civilization, then, could only be Reason, Order, Law, and not necessarily those of the State. Bakunin's comrades in Lyon don't fail to reproach for this. One of them will remember how conflicts broke out between them "the principle cause of which was Bakunin's great theory on the necessity of allowing all the passions, all the appetites, all the wrath of the people to manifest themselves and to freely rumble unchained, free of the muzzle." There was one comrade in particular who "did not view this possible deluge of violence of the human beast" and "condemned every sort of crime and abomination, which would give the revolution a sinister countenance, rob the greatness of the idea through the brutishness of the instincts, rising against all those who have love in their hearts for the great things and whose consciousness has a sense of the just and the good." How is it possible, he asked, "that people who represent the idea of the future could have the right to defile through contact with the most ancient barbarism which the most elementary civilizations seek to repress?"

The observations of this comrade of Bakunin have made much more headway than the texts of the Russian anarchist. The proof of it is the oblivion to which these latter have been relegated together with those of Coeurde-roy. Barbarism cannot be the door to freedom, so we are reminded by those ethical people who, for the most part, are the very same ones who on other occasions have found ways of affirming that war produces peace, the rich preserve the poor, force guarantees equality. So what can open the door to freedom? Perhaps the expansion of markets? An increase in the number of parties? The consolidation in the forces of order? A better scholastic education? The general strike? A revolutionary organization with a million members? The development of the productive forces? And why ever, if not out of respect for the determinist mechanism which is considered the motor of history? It is a mystification, however, to paint a situation of anomie—that is to say, of an absence or great weakening of the norms that rule the conduct of individuals—with the darkest hues. It is yet to be demonstrated that inside the individual a monster quick to torture innocents is concealed. In reality

this is merely a hypothesis—as often refuted as affirmed by historical experience—spread to benefit those who rule, decide and impose. Nevertheless, even if it were so, could one perhaps decide beforehand which direction a situation of anomie would assume?

A mariner who sings of the force of the sea is not likely to exalt the beauty of shipwreck with it. In the same way, recognizing the role developed in every process of social transformation for the passions, even for the darkest ones, does not mean making a defense for rape, the bloodbath or lynching. There is no use in hiding that every revolution has known its excesses. However, this does not mean either renouncing revolution for fear that these will happen, as the so-called beautiful souls always claimed, nor cheerfully taking part in them. Because the people unchain even their wicked passions that have been repressed for far too long. In this, the revolutionaries will hardly be at their side. Indeed, one presumes that they have quite different things to do than shut themselves up in their house or lose themselves in the midst of a howling marasmus. Even in the midst of the tempest, the mariner who knows where we wants to go always has his eye on the compass and his hand on the rudder—and in his heart the hope that he can exploit the force of the water as much as possible in order to arrive at his destination and have his embarkation prearranged because he endures all the blows of the billows. Without any certainty of rescue, naturally, but without giving it up in advance.

The reflections of Bakunin and Coeurderoy—that some would describe as meta-historical and that, as we have seen, have not roused much agreement among revolutionaries—have found unwonted support in the conclusions that some observers of human behavior have drawn. When Bakunin speaks of the revolution as a *festival* in which the participants are overwhelmed by intoxication (“some from mad terror, others from mad ecstasy”) and where it seems that “the whole world was turned upside down, the incredible had become familiar, the impossible possible, and the possible and familiar senseless,” this is taken literally.

For example, Roger Caillois, in his essay that analyzes the meaning that the festival has had in different types of human society, speaks of the “contagion of an exaltation ... that prompts one to abandon oneself, without control, to the most irrational impulses.” Describing it as “intermittent explosion,” the French scholar explains how the festival “appears to the individual as another world, where he feels himself supported and transformed by the forces that overcome him.” His aim is that of “beginning the creation of the world again.” “The cosmos has emerged from the chaos,” Caillois writes, according to which the human being looks with nostalgia at a world that didn’t know the hardship of work, where the desires were realized without finding themselves mutilated by any social prohibition. The Golden Age answers to this conception of a world without war and without commerce, without slavery and without private property. “But this world of light, of serene joy, of a simple and happy life,” Caillois clarifies further, “is at the same time a world of exuberant and disorderly creations, of monstrous and excessive fruitions.”

The innovation of barbarism, if so we choose to call it, is found in the fact that it invites us neither to slaughter, torture or slit throats, nor to imagine an egalitarian and happy society. In the explosion of its frenzy, barbarism proposes to us that we courageously rise to the dangerous, even unacceptable and anti-social, side of ourselves. From birth, we have found ourselves projected into an ethico-surgical social system, the purpose of which is to perform the maximum number of amputations on us in the name of the maximum level of order. Facing barbarism, we only have to give an answer to the basic question of our fullness.

"It is no longer necessary to rely on goodwill or special favors. One can no longer pay ransom to the chief of purgatory, nor oil the palm of the guardian of hell; there is no longer a paradise where one could secure a seat in advance."

—René Daumal

The world in which we live is a prison, the sections of which are called Work, Money, Commodity, and the yard time of which is granted as summer vacation. We were born and have always lived inside this prison universe. Hence, it is all we know. It is our nightmare and our security at the same time. And yet. As every prisoner knows well, our heart has counted the steps that separate us from the wall thousands and thousands of times, afterwards calculating the meters of bricks that it is necessary to climb. As every prisoner knows well, our eyes have scrutinized that thin line on the horizon that divides the barbed wire from the sky thousands and thousands of times so that we can then muse on the forms and colors that we glimpse dimly there. But we don't know what is there beyond the wall of this enclosure. Perhaps a marvelous landscape. Perhaps a dangerous jungle. Perhaps both. Every proposed conjecture is a lie. Certainly, there is freedom, *whatever that may be*. Once conquered, it is up to us to know how to maintain it and be able to take pleasure in it. It is up to us, as well, if we so choose, to renounce it, but not before we have tried it.

Now more than ever, it is time for defiance. To think one can escape from daily life is madness. And, besides, a solitary escapee would end up living a miserable life. But wanting to utterly destroy the prison in order to liberate everyone is a barbarity. By what right do we interfere in the lives of others? And yet, there is a point at which the desperation and anguish of having only incomplete and temporary prospects overturn in the determination to be oneself without delay, identify means and ends and found the sovereignty of revolt on nothing. When we arrive at this point, if we are not already there, will we know what to do? Or will we retreat in order to return to that which we know too well?

The Anarchist Ethic in the Age of the Anti-Globalization Movement

by sasha k and Leila

The question always before anarchists is how to act in the present moment of struggle against capitalism and the state. As new forms of social struggles are becoming more clearly understood, this question becomes even more important. In order to answer these questions we have to clarify the relationship between anarchists and the wider social movement of the exploited and the nature of that movement itself. First of all, we need to note that the movement of the exploited is always in course. There is no use in anarchists, who wish to destroy capitalism and the state in their entirety, waiting to act on some future date, as predicted by an objectivist reading of capitalism or a determinist understanding of history as if one were reading the stars. This is the most secure way of keeping us locked in the present forever. The revolutionary movement of the exploited multitude never totally disappears, no matter how hidden it is. Above all, this is a movement to destroy the separation between us, the exploited, and our conditions of existence, that which we need to live. It is a movement of society against the state. We can see this movement, however incoherent or unconscious, in the actions of Brazil's peasants who take the land they need to survive, when the poor steal, or when someone attacks the state that maintains the system of exclusion and exploitation. We can see this movement in the actions of those who attack the machinery that destroys our very life-giving environment. Within this current, anarchists are a minority. And, as conscious anarchists, we don't stand outside the movement, propagandizing and organizing it; we act with this current, helping to reanimate and sharpen its struggles.

It is instructive to look back at the recent history of this current. In the US, beginning in the 1970s, social movements began to fracture into single-issue struggles that left the totality of social relations unchallenged. In many ways, this was reflected in a shift in the form of imposed social relations, which occurred in response to the struggles of the 1960s and early 1970s, and is marked by a shift from a Fordist regime of accumulation (dominated by large factories and a mediated truce with unions) to a regime of flexible accumulation (which began to break unions, dismantle the welfare state, and open borders to the free flow of capital). This shift is also mirrored by the academic shift to postmodernist theory, which privileges the fractured, the floating, and the flexible. While the growth of single-issue groups signals the defeat of the anti-capitalist struggles of the 1960s, over the 1990s we

have witnessed a reconvergence of struggles that are beginning to challenge capitalism as a totality. Thus the revolutionary current of the exploited and excluded has recently reemerged in a cycle of confrontations that began in the third world and have spread to the first world of London, Seattle, and Prague, and in the direct action movement that has, for the most part, grown out of the radical environmental milieu. In the spectacular confrontations of the global days of action, these streams have been converging into a powerful social force. The key to this reconvergence is that the new struggles of the 1990s are creating ways to communicate and link local and particular struggles without building stifling organizations that attempt to synthesize all struggle under their command. Fundamental to this movement is an ethic that stands against all that separates us from our conditions of existence and all that separates us from our power to transform the world and to create social relations beyond measure—a measure imposed from above. This ethic is a call for the self-organization of freedom, the self-valorization of human activity.

In this article we will outline our understanding of the ethic of the revolutionary anarchist current of society that grows out of the movement of the exploited in general. Then we will turn to the question of action and organization, looking critically at the forms of struggle that are appearing in the recent cycle of social movements and arguing that informal organization is the best way for anarchists to organize as a minority within the wider social movement. By organizing along these lines, we believe anarchists can sharpen the level of struggle and develop social relations in practice that are both antagonistic to capital and the state and begin to create of new ways of living.

Ethic and morality

We use the term *ethic* in a very specific sense and contrast it to *morality*. Morality stands outside what it rules over, it swoops down from above to organize relationships and discipline behavior. For example, the relationship between two people can be set morally by a third party, the church, the state, or the school. This third party is not a part of the relationship; in other words, it stands *transcendent* to the relationship. The relationship between two people can also be arranged through an ethic. Unlike morality, an ethic never comes from the outside; an ethic lets us understand how to relate to other people or objects, other bodies, in a way that is beneficial to us. An ethic is thus a doctrine of happiness, one which never comes from the outside of the situation, which never stands above a relationship, but is always developed from within; it is always *immanent* to the situation instead of *transcendent* to it. An ethic is a relationship of desire. In an ethical relationship desire is complemented by desire, expanded by it. Morality, on the other hand, always limits and channels desire. A transcendent morality is alien to the situation at hand; its logic has no necessary connection to the desire of those involved or to increasing their pleasure. It is a fixed law whose reasoning is always “because I said so,” “because it is the word of god,” “because it is wrong,” or “because it is the law and what would happen without the law.” An ethic is a tool for the active creation of our own lives; it is never an imposed decision,

a bought position in society, or a passively accepted role that we attempt to play. The most valuable thing one can learn in the struggle against imposed decision is how to act, how to become more powerful in our action.

Anarchism is an ethic in the most basic sense: it is an ethic because it calls for decisions to remain immanent to the situation at hand instead of alienated into a transcendent institution, it moves in an antagonistic relationship to all transcendent morality and institutions, such as the state, the party and the church.

Power and the alienation of power

Human nature has been a foundational concept for many anarchists. As such, the argument runs, human nature is good and power, which constricts and warps that nature, is bad. Anarchism becomes a philosophy that stands for getting rid of power and allowing the good nature of humans to flourish. In this section, we develop a different understanding of power, an understanding that doesn't automatically define power as bad. Instead of setting a particular conception of human nature as the foundation of anarchism, therefore, we suggest that an ethic of desire is the proper foundation for anarchist action and organization.

Power is the potential to exert a force, the ability to create and transform. Capitalism alienates that potential from us in the production process. The state also alienates our power; in fact, *the state is a form of alienated power that has been instituted, that has been constituted in the state form*. In its alienated form, power becomes the potential and ability to make others exert a force, to do work, or the ability to prevent us from exerting a force. It is a power that has been extracted from the social body through a complex process of force and consent.

Capitalism and the state separate the moment of decision from the act of its realization in both space and time: a decision is made before the action has begun and it is made in a different place, in some office of the state, corporate boardroom, or organizer's meeting. A law can be made years before it comes to control an act. The form of alienated power tends towards fixity, of setting and maintaining an order and a set of institutions—like the heavy-set granite structures that house the institutions themselves—that stand above society; it can thus be called *constituted or transcendent power*.

If power is the potential to exert a force, the ability to act in a creative, transformative, productive, or destructive way, the state as a transcendent institution is that which cuts us off or separates us from our *active power*. Our power is alienated from us, taken from us, and instituted in the state. We are only allowed to act in certain ways, whereas the state constantly acts and decides for us, acts in our name, or forces us to act in certain ways. It cuts us off from the creative energy of desire itself.

When power has not been alienated, it remains immanent within individuals and the social body as a whole. And, so long as it is not separated from the act itself, it remains a creative, productive, and transformative potential, for it refuses a fixed order. As Kropotkin states, "Now all history, all

the experience of the human race and all social psychology, unite in showing that the best and fairest way is to trust the decision to those whom it concerns most nearly." But there is always a danger that this power will be recuperated by groups to form institutions and will become a constituted, transcendent power that stands above the social body: the revolutionary power of those struggling against capitalism and the state can be frozen in the form of 'the Party' and, finally, the state itself.

In studying primitive societies, Pierre Clastres discovered that societies without a state were really "societies against the state." They organized the social body in such a way that warded off the constitution of alienated power into an institution separate from society. Stable, conserved power is prevented from crystallizing into a hardened state form. As Deleuze and Guattari point out, the state "is defined by the perpetuation or conservation of organs of power. The concern of the State is to conserve." Thus the state is the political organization of passivity. Anthropologists have noted the appearance of conserved organs of power in small-scale societies and have called such early organs 'impersonal institutions.' Impersonal institutions are distinguished from an authority that is based on personal abilities or qualities, an authority that ends when either that person dies, they are no longer seen as holding those personal abilities, or when those abilities are no longer useful to society. Someone could become known as a great hunter in a band society and trusted as an authority on hunting; that authority is vested personally in the individual. A society could have several individuals with such authority or it could have none. As such, authority does not crystallize into an institution that tends towards permanence, into impersonal institutions. But once authority comes to be institutionalized into a permanent position that is filled as an impersonal role, power begins to be conserved and separated from society itself. The President is an impersonal institution in that the authority of the Presidency continues after one President leaves and another takes their place; the authority rests in the institution.

Such impersonal institutions are openings that allow the state to slowly form above society. But the society against the state, that attempts to ward off or destroy the state, does not die as the state grows into a hardened, ugly body; in fact, the society against the state is continually reemerging and transforming its methods as the movement of the exploited and excluded to decide their own fate. The long and twisted history of the development of the state and the creative movement of the society against the state has been written and analyzed elsewhere. This history has brought us to our present moment in which the society against the state rises again. In the present moment, the form that alienated power takes is also varied: while the party dictatorship, a form that still exists, is an obvious example of alienated, transcendent power, the democratic form of alienated power no less separates decision from the act, no less separates us from our active powers.

As with the society against the state, anarchists must always fight against the alienation of power, against the formation of transcendent institutions that turn active power into a constituted order, whether that order be

called democratic or totalitarian. This is not only because such transcendent power separates us from our power to act on our desires, but also because as soon as our active power—our power to transform society and to create our own lives—begins to harden into a permanent order, a permanent organization, once impersonal institutions form within our midst, we lose the power to attack the state and capitalism effectively.

Value, measure, and social organization

The movement of the exploited, the excluded, of the society against the state, is a movement to destroy the separation between humans and their conditions of existence. It is a movement to build new social relations without measure. It is a revolt against the imposition of a single regime of value. Looking at the many struggles that are being called “the anti-globalization movement,” we can see in their diversity a complex pattern of attack on and defense from capitalist valorization. These struggles are heterogeneous in that no single solution or system of valorization is being offered to replace capitalism (thus these struggles can not be contained by a single organization). Yet, while they are heterogeneous, there is a pattern, and that pattern is produced by the fact that they are all fighting a singular and hegemonic regime of valorization, capitalism, that is invading every human practice and relationship. Alienation is the gap between desire and what is socially valued, between our potential to transform the world and the theft and parasitic use of that power by capital and the state. As that power comes to be alienated in the state form, society comes to be increasingly ruled by numbers to the extent that humans themselves are even reduced to interchangeable numbers.

One of the state’s most important roles is to be the guarantor of measure: the state maintains the value of money, the general equivalent, it sets the low point for wages, taxes, and guarantees the measure and protection of property. The state uses numbers to reduce social problems to simple math problems with solutions. But society isn’t so easily quantified and reduced; society isn’t just a problem that can be solved with a ruler. Thus, every solution is in reality a repression of the problem or a shifting of the problem to a new level or different sector of society. Solution and repression are a twined pair.

The largest of such social problems that states have to contend with are the distribution of wealth, the mediation of social conflicts that erupt from its unequal distribution, and the reproduction of society itself. Over this century, two solutions to the problem of the distribution of wealth, the setting of value, have dominated the world: Western capitalism and Soviet communism. Both systems separate humans from their conditions of existence, from what they need to live and follow their desires. Both systems also rely on transcendent institutions of power to maintain their systems of valorization. In the West, capitalist valorization relies on the state to guarantee the general equivalent and to maintain the private property structure that separates us from what we need to live. The human is thus split into a producer of goods for sale and a consumer of other goods. This split allows the extraction of surplus value, and it is the production of surplus value that

defines one as productive, producing and, thus, having value in society.

The Soviet system was a different solution to the same problem. One's value within the Soviet system was set by a different measure. Within the Soviet system, value operated as a quantified, measured need as set by the transcendent intuition of the state. The state, as an alien institution, a form of alienated power, decided what was needed through its great, calculating bureaucratic apparatus. By treating society as a mathematical problem, the Soviet system guaranteed an equality and homogeneity of existence. It flattened desire and individuals. Desires were judged to be of social value or not by committee. Use value came to be set by a moral system that stood outside of society. In the Soviet system humans were no less separated from their conditions of existence, for a transcendent system of property still existed as the state itself directly controlled property.

There is, however, a different type of communism, one in which the institutions of private property backed up by state power are absent; this communism can be defined by the equality of access to the conditions of existence. This ethic is at the heart of the movement of the excluded, of the society against the state, that always remains antagonistic, however incoherent, to the separations that capital and the state impose upon it.

This communism offers no mathematical solution, imposed from above, to social problems. There is no guarantee of what individuals and groups will do with the conditions of existence once they have access to them, that is up to their desires and abilities. Rather, in the absence of transcendent solutions and institutions, social relations and problems remain as tensions within society, tensions that are worked through immanently in practice. Value comes to be produced immanently in ethical practice, as a self-valorization activity by those involved in a certain situation. A single regime of value no longer covers and organizes the social terrain.

This ethic of desire, which remains fundamental to the movement of the excluded, is antagonistic to the constituted social order that separates the multitude from its conditions of existence; and, it is out of this antagonism that anarchist practice—as immanent to the movement of the excluded multitudes—grows. Just as self-valorization becomes an ethical practice for the excluded, informal organization, in struggle against capital and the state, becomes an ethical practice for anarchists: *both create social relations beyond measure.*

Part II: The Anarchist ethic and the organization of attack

The starting point for understanding the relationship between anarchists and the new social movements is to recognize that we are a minority within the movement. This is, of course, the normal position for anarchists, but it does call for a specific theoretical thinking and practice in order for us to effectively operate in such a context. Anarchists are hopefully at an insurrectional level of struggle, they are, for the most part, working towards insurrection, while the movement in general struggles at an intermediate level. What does this mean? Anarchists, except those who hold a determinist and evolutionary view of history, understand that insurrection, which destroys

the transcendent institutions of state and capital and allows the realization social relations that are immanently organized, is always possible as an outcome of struggle. Thus anarchists should always be working towards the goal of insurrection. The struggle of the new social movements that have developed over the 1990's, however, are mostly at an intermediate level, a level in which specific institutions may be attacked without a clear goal of insurrection against capital and the state. Direct action against the WTO, the IMF, and the World Bank, the movement to destroy genetically modified crops, the movement of the landless to directly appropriate the conditions of their existence, and the direct action environmental movement all contain the potential of moving towards insurrection. Anarchists must open and develop that potential. There are others within these social movements that, whether consciously or not, work to close the possibility of insurrection. This often happens as a result of certain forms of organization and organizing activity. Permanent organizations, organizations that attempt to synthesize the multitude of those struggling into a single, unified organization, and organizations that attempt to mediate struggle are all forms of organization that tend to close the potential of insurrection.

Before discussing the question of organization further, we need to clarify how we will use the terms 'the multitude' and 'the mass.' The multitude is what we will call all those who are excluded and exploited by capitalism; it is the multitude that struggles against the state and capitalism, it is the multitude that makes up the society against the state. The mass is the multitude as it has been synthesized into a singular block and disciplined to act in a unified manner. Just as a nation-state must transform a multitude of people into 'the People' or citizens in order to create a disciplined nation, and the church must morally discipline its members to produce a flock, organizations of synthesis, such as 'the Party,' must shape the multitude into a mass in order to control its movement. The nation-state, the church, and the Party are all transcendent institutions in relation to a multitude in that they all stand above and outside the multitude and yet attempt to organize its social relations. They swoop down upon the multitude with a grid of identity into which all must fit—all relationships are organized from the outside with such a grid.

For anarchists, the question of organization, however, is an ethical (immanent) instead of moral (transcendent) question: in a given situation, how do we combine in a way that promotes our active powers? How do we bring a multitude together in a way that doesn't limit our potential, our power to act, and our different desires?

In the wake of Seattle and Prague many organizers are discussing how to build and control the movement. They talk as if they are artists standing over a lump of clay—the multitude—that needs to be shaped and disciplined. The discussion usually leads to talk of the need to limit the actions of the most confrontational and to be better 'organized.' Concerning the Prague demonstrations, one "American organizer" stated, "If we are really serious about doing an action, then we need to make certain there are de-escalation

teams, people who are responsible for breaking up the violence.” The goal of the type of organization that they promote, however, is to limit direct confrontational action and to encourage dialogue and mediation. Naively, they want to harness the power of a mass of bodies in order to get a seat at the table of power. For anarchists, of course, being against capitalism and the state in their entirety, there can be no dialogue with constituted power, with the transcendent institutions of the state and capital. The willingness of those transcendent institutions to initiate a dialogue may be a sign of their fear and weakness, but it is also the beginning of our defeat when we limit our active power to join them in discussion.

Our active power, our power to create and transform, is our only weapon, and that which limits such power from within the movement is our greatest weakness. This does not mean that we should remain unorganized; in fact, it poses the very question of organization: how do we combine in a way that promotes our active powers? The anarchist ethic is always a critical ethic, and thus it denounces everything that cuts us off from and diminishes our power to act.

As noted above, one of the greatest dangers to the development of the new social movements in a positive direction is that forms of organization that cut us off from our active power and close off the potential of insurrection in the present moment become dominant: these are permanent, synthesizing, and mediating organizations.

Permanent organizations tend to develop into transcendent institutions in relation to the struggling multitude. They tend to develop a formal or informal hierarchy and disempower the multitude: power is alienated from its active form within the multitude and instituted within the organization. This transforms the active multitude into a passive mass. The hierarchical constitution of power-relations removes decision from the moment—the immanence—of its necessity. The practical consequences of such an organization is that the active powers of those involved in the struggle are stifled by the organization. Decisions that should be made by those involved in an action are deferred to the organization; and, permanent organizations tend to make decisions based not on the necessity of a specific goal or action, but on the needs of that organization, especially its preservation. The organization becomes an end in itself.

As an organization moves towards permanence and comes to stand above the multitude, the organizer appears, often claiming to have created the struggle, and begins to speak for the mass. It is the job of the organizer to transform the multitude into a controllable mass and to represent that mass to the media. Organizers rarely views themselves as part of the multitude; they stand outside of it, transcendent to it, and talk of ‘reaching out to the community,’ ‘awakening the masses,’ and ‘building the organization and movement’ as if insurrection was a game of numbers. Thus, as outsiders, they don’t see it as their task to act, to do actions, but to propagandize and organize, for it is the masses that act.

Their worst fear is alienating the ‘real masses’ thus image becomes

all-important. After Seattle many organizers were worried about the effect that property destruction would have on the image of the movement, and went to great lengths to distance themselves from the perpetrators of such acts. Direct Action Network went to the extreme of not offering legal aid to those charged with felonies during the Seattle protests. Seemingly, they subscribe to Napoleonic law in which the accused are presumed guilty, not innocent. Again, their image was at stake. Later, in L.A., the August collective asked D.A.N. if they could use its space for the L.A. anarchist conference. D.A.N. declined explaining that anarchists in general were too white and too male, and this would affect D.A.N.'s ability to reach out to the community. In other words, they wanted to appear to be in touch with the community, and anarchists would hurt their image.

For the organizer, who takes as his/her motto 'only that which appears in the media exists,' concrete action always takes a back seat to the maintenance of media image. The goal of such image maintenance is never to attack a specific transcendent institution, but to affect public opinion, forever build the movement or, even worse, the organization. The organizer must always worry about how the actions of others will reflect on the movement; they must, therefore, both attempt to discipline the struggling multitude and try to control how the movement is represented in the media. Image replaces action for the permanent organization and the organizer who operates within the society of the spectacle.

The attempt to control the vast image and opinion-making factories of our society is a losing battle, as if we could ever try to match the quantity of images put forward by the media or get them to 'tell the truth.' To come to a better understanding of the problems involved in such a battle and how the 'organizer' operates, we need to first better comprehend how 'opinion' functions in society. On a basic level, we need to ask, what is opinion? An opinion is not something first found among the public in general and then, afterwards, replayed through the media, as a simple reporting of the public opinion. An opinion exists in the media first; it is produced by the media not the multitude. Secondly, the media then reproduces the opinion a million times over linking the opinion up to a certain type of person (conservatives think x, liberals think y). Thirdly, as Alfredo Bonanno points out, "[An opinion] is a flattened idea, an idea that has been uniformed in order to make it acceptable to the largest number of people. Opinions are massified ideas." Public opinion is produced as a series of simple choices or solutions ('I'm for globalization and free trade,' or 'I'm for more national control and protectionism'). We are all supposed to choose—as we choose our leaders or our burgers—instead of think for ourselves. It is obvious, therefore, that anarchists cannot use the opinion-making factory to create counter-opinions, and hopefully anarchists would never want to operate on the level of opinion even if we could somehow exert control over the content spewed out of the factory gates. Anyhow, the anarchist ethic could never be communicated in the form of opinion, it would die once massified. However, it is exactly on the level of opinion that the organizer works, for opinion and image-maintenance are

the very tools of power, tools used to shape and discipline a multitude into a controllable mass.

'The Party' is a permanent organization that attempts to synthesize all struggle into one controllable organization; in doing so, it cuts the multitude off from its active power and closes the door to insurrection. For the Party, the struggle is always in the future, at some mythical time; the present is for political work, for recruiting and disciplining party members. Commenting on Prague, the Communist Party of Great Britain noted that the most positive event in the latest Global Day of Action wasn't the action, but the fact that they sold or distributed 2,100 issues of the *Weekly Worker* and passed out 5,000 leaflets (what they call political work). Meanwhile the International Socialist Organization (formally the SWP) concentrated on image at the expense of action: they claimed they would bring 2,500 people but brought less than 1000 and switched from an agreed upon position within the structure of the direct action damaging its success. But, of course, the ISO had other priorities than the action itself; they were present in order to recruit new members for the future, a future that their actions ensure will never come. As such, their decision wasn't adequate to the necessity of the moment; decision had been removed from the immanence within a multitude and brought into a transcendent institution. The ISO left a key intersection open and a few hundred anarchists, who could make decisions within the moment itself, covered the intersection as best they could. Transcendent organizations, such as permanent organizations and mediating organizations, by their very logic, will always forgo action and close the potential for insurrection. But transcendent organizations, such as 'the Party,' while they can stifle action, can never contain the desires and power of the multitude; they are always doomed to failure.

But, as anarchists, who refuse such a vanguard, transcendent position, we are part of the multitude, we are within it, we are immanent to it. We are exploited as the multitude is; we are excluded as the multitude is. While on the one hand the anarchist ethic is always a critical ethic that denounces transcendent institutions and morality, it is also always a constructive ethic that leads towards the building of new social relations and new forms of active power. As a minority within the struggling multitude, we choose a form of organization that follows both the logic of our position within the movement of the exploited and the anarchist ethic of immanently organized social relations—relations that are self-organized instead of organized by a transcendent institution (such as the state, the church, or the party) which stands outside the multitude. We must organize ourselves in a manner that won't tend towards permanence and hierarchy, which won't come to stand above the multitude, and chooses self-activity over image and representation. We must develop forms of organization that open to the potential for insurrection and move the struggle in that direction, instead of always shifting that potential further into the future.

Informal organization

What type of organization allows decision to occur in the moment

of its necessity? We call for organization that lacks the formality and authority which separate organizers and organized, informal organization. In this section, we are specifically discussing the organization of social struggle. We will discuss some general principles that have grown out of practice. Just as some small-scale societies lack formal impersonal institutions, informal organization lacks offices and hierarchical positions. Because the organizer's nature is to plan and control, s/he often privileges the perpetuation of the organization over other goals. Informal organizations dissolve when their goal is achieved or abandoned, they do not perpetuate themselves merely for the sake of the organization if the goals that caused people to organize have ceased to exist. The passage from informal to formal or permanent organization is analogous to the moment when a small-scale society creates impersonal institutions; it is a moment in which the group's power is alienated and placed outside of it.

Informal organization is a means for affinity groups to coordinate efforts when necessary. We must always remember that many things can be done easier with an affinity group or individual, in these cases higher levels of organization just makes the decision making process cumbersome, it stifles us. *The smallest amount of organization necessary* to achieve one's aims is always the best to maximize our active powers.

Informal organization must be based on an ethic of autonomous action; autonomy is necessary to prevent our active powers from becoming alienated, to prevent the formation of relations of authority. Autonomy is refusing to obey or give orders, which are always shouted from above or beyond the situation. Autonomy allows decision to occur in and during the situation of its necessity, instead of being predetermined or delayed by the decision of a committee or meeting. Organizational platforms impose a formality in the decision making process that inhibits autonomy. This does not mean to say however that we shouldn't think strategically about the future and make agreements or plans. On the contrary, plans and agreements are useful and important. What we are emphasizing is a flexibility that allows people to discard plans when they become useless. Plans should be adaptable to events as they unfold. It can be dangerous during a demonstration or action to hesitate to change plans when events take an unexpected turn, because one's group had originally planned otherwise. Since autonomy is born out of an ethic that rejects the blocking of active powers, it therefore implies a refusal to block the actions of others with an important exception. When others try to impede our action, we will not just sit by and let them. Examples of this include, those who tried to physically stop protestors from breaking windows in Seattle, those who take photos of illegal actions, those who unmask people who choose to be masked for security reasons, and those who mark protestors with paint to be identified later by the police. These people not only refuse to respect the autonomy of others' action, but take this to an extreme by trying to place those they disagree with in the hands of the police, enemies who have the power to take away years of our lives. We have no choice but to defend ourselves. The point where autonomy ends is the point

where alienated power is formed, where our only weapon, our power to act is taken from us.

Just as an informal organization must have an ethic of autonomy or it will be transformed into an authoritarian organization, in order to avoid the alienation of our active powers, it must also have an ethic of no compromise with respect the organization's agreed goal. The organization's goal should be either achieved or abandoned. Compromising with those who we oppose (e.g.; such as the State or a corporation) defeats all true opposition, it replaces our power to act with that of our enemies. Since Seattle, global financial and trade organizations have been calling for dialogue. To get us to bargain with them they have tried to look sympathetic and concerned. During the protests in Prague in September, a World Bank representative said: "We sympathize with the questions the protestors are proposing but we disagree with their methods. We think they're going about this in the wrong way. We want dialogue not force." Another World Bank representative said: "These are important meetings, about ending AIDS and poverty; what we want is dialogue not diatribes." The fact that the World Bank wants dialogue is a measure of our success in the streets. They hope we will choose dialogue over direct action, because they know that dialogue with them would be ineffective, that they would never really concede to our demands. They can listen to us, politely respond, even make minor adjustments, but they all eventually go home to a gated community of oblivion and have a martini. This is why they want to channel the force of our direct action into appeals, petitions and attempts to manipulate the mainstream media. The World Bank recognizes the power of our direct action and is taking counter measures; it is trying to convince us to use ineffective methods.

The scraps handed down to appease and divert us by those we oppose must be refused. Compromise with any transcendent institution (the State, WTO, WB, IMF, the Party etc.) is always the alienation of our power to the very institutions we supposedly wish to destroy; this sort of compromise results in the forfeiture of our power to act decisively, to make decisions and actions in the time we choose. As such, compromise only makes the state and capital stronger.

For those who wish to open the possibility of insurrection, those who don't wish to wait for the supposedly appropriate material conditions for revolution, for those who don't want a revolution which is merely the creation of a new power structure but want the destruction of all structures which alienate out power from us, such compromise is contrary to their aims. To continually refuse to compromise is to be in perpetual conflict with the established order and its structures of domination and deprivation. Permanent conflictuality means that we will not wait for orders from leaders or organizers who, by nature of their role, aim to control our rebellion and thus alienate our active powers. Permanent conflictuality is uncontrollable autonomous action.

Informal organizations may be composed of affinity groups with quite different political perspectives from each other. The disparate perspectives that may be found in an informal organization would not tend to be

found within the affinity group. The affinity group would be based on a commonality of perspective that wouldn't necessarily exist in a larger group. Some people wish to open the possibility for insurrection, while others are only concerned with an immediate goal. There is no reason why those who share an immediate practical aim but diverge in their long-term goals might not come together. For example, an anti-genetic engineering group could form and decide to coordinate the tearing up test crops if there are many plots in an area and to circulate anti-GE leaflets. (In cases of sabotage, the fewer the people who know the better, information should only be shared between affinity groups when there is a reason to coordinate efforts, for example, when it is desirable for several affinity groups to hit several targets in one night.) In this case those who want an insurrectionary rupture with this social order and those who merely hate genetic engineering could easily work together towards this immediate goal. For those who wish to open the possibility of insurrection, such cooperation will not close the door on their dreams. Informal organization, with its ethics of autonomy and no compromise, does not control struggle; and, uncontrollability opens the possibility for an insurrectionary rupture with this necrophiliac social order.

In the above case, we're assuming that all involved uphold an anti-authoritarian ethic that respects autonomy of action. Because authority can arise in any group, some anarchists feel safer if they only interact with other anarchists, thus avoiding authoritarians. But it is not the label anarchist that annihilates authority but an ongoing struggle with all those one interacts with. Every new situation and relation we enter poses the possibility for the rise of authority. Just as Clastres noted in *Society against the State* and other anthropologists who have lived in small-scale societies have noted a process of assertive egalitarianism, an active tendency to squelch attempts at creating roles of authority, or economic inequality. In an informal organization, we need to assertively counter the formation of authoritarian relations. The difficulty of this problem cannot be avoided by staying in an anarchist ghetto.

Anarchists could be a force that helps the anti-capitalist and anti-authoritarian currents within the anti-globalization movement spread further. This could be achieved by opening up discussion between anarchists and other anti-capitalist groups, and between anti-capitalists and anti-corporate/anti-globalization groups. This discussion would in some cases lead to links of cooperation and solidarity. When we discuss the importance of links between struggles or the spread of struggle we are not talking about a growth in numbers of an organization or movement. The type of organization that we have been discussing is not composed of people who aim to increase its numbers at the sacrifice of the quality of the relationships of those who come together; the spark of rebellion cannot be quantified. Informal organization is a means for discussion between diverse individuals and groups to become focused action. Informal organizations, affinity groups and individuals have already given birth to many projects, some of which aim to increase communication and sharing such as gatherings, the creation of social spaces like info-shops, and publications, these projects are crucial when capitalism con-

stantly puts up walls to separate us. Others have focused on the urgent task of directly attacking the existent social order.

“Make our struggle as transnational as capital”

This slogan is very compelling and has become the most common slogan heard within the anti-globalization movement. But how do we make our struggle as transnational as capital? This brings up some difficult problems for anti-authoritarians. How can a transnational struggle against capital and the state occur without creating an overarching massive authoritarian structure? How can struggle against a common enemy, capital, remain focused yet disparate, local and global? Transnational struggle, in reality, means struggle on many scalar levels. It also demands the development of many practices that allow us to work together and, at the same time, ward off the growth of transcendent institutions in our midst. Operating on many scalar levels will create tensions within the movement, and there is no simple solution that resolves such tensions. Yet, attempting to operate on a single scalar level, such as the national scale or the building of a massive international organization, dooms our movement to failure; nor can we build a local cocoon to hibernate in. Waiting only brings us defeat.

Capitalism is a very adaptable force; it has managed to embed itself in innumerable social and cultural realities. Capitalism operates from above and below; it imposes itself through the coercion of deprivation and then embeds itself in social relations. There is one capitalism, it operates as a system, yet it functions in millions of particular local ways. Any fight against it must destroy both the transcendent institutions that impose it from above (the state, companies, etc.) and transform the relations that sustain it from below. If the structures of domination and deprivation which uphold capitalism, and the capitalist social relations that have penetrated nearly every facet of our daily lives are to be destroyed, this destruction must spring from the desire of the multitude. The desire to destroy capitalism is the spark which must arise in many localities and spread throughout the globe, in order for our struggle to become as transnational as capital.

There is no longer anywhere to hide. If we destroy the state and capital in one place, leaving the industrial military regime in the hands of our enemies, our little utopia will soon be crushed. Likewise if we try to isolate ourselves, as Hakim Bey so poetically suggests in *T.A.Z.*, to create a self-sufficient autonomous zone free from capital, we cannot succeed. It is of course very important to create spaces for ourselves where we can breathe freely; where we can act and think without the immediate strait jacket of capitalist relations and roles, without the 9-5 production-consumption grind. But if we stop there we run into a problem, capitalism surrounds us. The squat is evicted, the self-sufficient rural community is surrounded by towns, or logging moves in until the only trees left are on ones land. One can no longer be completely outside of capitalism; it is a social disease that has touched all societies. This is not to say that it has fully penetrated them all, the few Penan of Borneo that remain in the forest do still share a social life that is in

stark contrast to capitalist relations. But they are fighting for their lives and there is not much forest left. We must understand that just as a genetically modified test crop will spread into nearby fields, capitalism is a pest which seeks to take over everything it touches; it cannot be contained without being destroyed as a whole.

Many anarchists in the anti-globalization movement operate on the scale of the nation-state, imagining that Clastres' *Society Against the State* could be rearticulated as the "State Against Capital"; they seem to understand capital as becoming pure and separating itself from the state. And as an index of current pessimism the state is imagined as protecting culture against global capitalism. As we argued in our section on value, however, there can be no capitalism without transcendent institutions, such as the state, to back up its private property system. The state, in some form, is the condition of possibility of capitalism, that which is necessary for capitalism to go on existing. Thus capitalism can never free itself from the state and continue to reproduce itself. Of course, the transcendent institutions that allow for the reproduction of capitalism are constantly transforming themselves; they are not static.

As the scale of the state-capital relation changes so too must the organization of resistance and attack; yet, any argument that we need to compromise and even ally ourselves with older transcendent institutions such as the nation-state are sorely misguided. Any compromise with alienated power can only cut us off from our power to transform society and our power to create the life of our desires to the best of our abilities. Thinking about the issue of the scale of resistance, about how to bring the concept of a transnational resistance to and attack on capital into practice, demands a much more careful analysis.

1. When people start thinking on global terms there is sometimes a tendency to assume that the only way for a struggle to be global is to function like a state or corporation, to try to synthesize all struggle within one international organization, and thus unify practice through this organization. This is undesirable from an anti-authoritarian point of view, yet it is also impractical. How could one possibly bring all struggle under one organization, without first suppressing many local struggles. A large organization of this sort by nature separates decision from the needs of the exploited, it makes them wait to act until the moment which is most advantageous to the organization. Large organizations that bring together many social struggles often think only in abstract terms about capital. It thus becomes necessary to wait to act until the appropriate material conditions arise, for a crisis to arise in capitalism as a whole. Such thinking is blind to the multifarious local motivations for revolt.

Transcendent organizations can only command revolt; in doing so they try to deprive revolt of its impetus, the immanent desire of the multitude. It is this desire that is the spark of insurrection; only it can transform the whole of social life. No individual, affinity group, or organization can command insurrection; insurrection is by nature uncontrollable. Those who

dream of an insurrection cannot just will it into existence, they can only open up the possibility for its unfolding through direct attacks on this social order, actions which can communicate and spread throughout the social body.

2. Capital can never be attacked in the abstract, it can only be attacked in its concrete manifestations; attack is always local but it can communicate globally. Local attacks can inspire people elsewhere—who have a common enemy—to take action. The points at which people perceive the commonality of an enemy vary widely, from a specific company, specific law or politician, to capitalism or the state as a whole. Actions and the publicizing of actions via communiqués and our media are opportunities for people to see the commonality between the oppressed in a faraway place and themselves. In this lies an opportunity for people to take their analysis one step further, and become critical of capitalism as a totality.

Recently in North America, environmentalists have been more successful than workers in letting local struggle communicate the global scale of capital. The environmental direct action movement is spreading quickly all over the continent, with very little organization at all. The ELF is not an organization, anyone can sign the name ELF (though those who started it request that those who sign the name meet certain criteria of perspective and goal). Yet, ELF actions have spread widely without the support of an organization, ELF actions occur because people are angry that the earth is being trashed, this ire spreads more effectively than would a permanent organization with its committees and paper selling. Not all people who engage in such acts of sabotage use the name ELF, there are innumerable other examples, the tearing up of genetically engineered test crops which has spread over several continents is the most well known example. In these cases, the local act of sabotage communicates a global enemy the capitalist industrial machine that is polluting our planet.

3. The recent upsurge of the global days of action offers an opportunity for specific actions to communicate and build links globally. But we need to ask what exactly is the nature of the opportunity that the global days of action offer anarchists? While the targets chosen, the international institutions of capitalism, do help to communicate an opposition to capitalism in general, perhaps the greatest opportunity these global days of action offer is the potential to link-up particular, local actions that attack specific targets with a general opposition to capitalism. In other words, the fact of the simultaneity of actions on a particular date may be more important than the spectacular shutting down of a huge meeting. By skipping the big event and instead doing smaller, local actions, anarchists can communicate the local consequences of the ever expanding capitalist death-machine. By the very simultaneity of many actions connections between regions and struggles are built. We are not saying that our actions should be determined by the dates set by the institutions of global capitalism nor should one only conduct actions on such dates, but we also should not ignore the historical opportunities offered by

the growth of the global days of action. To be effective such actions should be part of an ongoing struggle. Doing actions locally also has the potential to involve others who may not understand how the big events of the global days of action—the attacks on institutions such as the WTO, the WB, and the IMF—are connected to their lives. Doing local actions on the dates of the global days of action is one important way to intensify such struggles.

4. The final—and possibly most important—key to an active, transnational attack on capital and the state is developing the practice of a critical and revolutionary solidarity. When we are critical of those who share our aims, critical solidarity is a way for disagreements over strategy, tactics and organization to be aired and discussed without trying to block each other's actions. If we continually block the actions of others no action will take place. Notably, since Seattle previously fierce theoretical divisions have taken on less importance. This was particularly clear in the call for a Revolutionary Anti-Capitalist Block at the A16 Washington protest, which was a significant call for solidarity and joint action by all who consider themselves to be anti-capitalist revolutionaries. There has been a lot more activity on many levels since Seattle, people who didn't go have been inspired by the stories of those who did, suddenly now that there is plenty to do, theoretical divisions give way to concerns of practical importance. As a minority within the movement of the exploited, anarchists must find ways to work and interact with those with whom they disagree. At the same time this doesn't mean that disagreements are hidden. It is important that the concept of critical solidarity be understood widely, for all too often a critical attitude is taken to mean a lack of support. We can be critical of the Zapatistas while we act in solidarity with the struggle of the excluded in Chiapas against the Mexican State and the imposition of neo-liberal economics. It is always more important to act in solidarity with people's decision to create their own lives, than to agree with their theoretical perspective or the tactics they choose. It is the solidarity with the becoming-active and the refusal of the alienation of power that is most vital. As Nikos Mazotis said at his trial, "For me, solidarity means the unre-served acceptance and support with every means of the right that the people must have to determine their lives as they wish, not letting others decide in their place, like the State and Capital do."

Along with a critical solidarity that is always open to the autonomous action of others, we need to build revolutionary solidarity. Revolutionary solidarity should be active and in conflict with the structures of domination. Revolutionary solidarity allows us to move far beyond the "send-a-check" style of solidarity that so pervades the left as well as solidarity that relies on petitioning the state for relief or mercy. One example of revolutionary solidarity was Nikos Mazotis' action against TVX Gold in December 1997. Many people in the villages around Strymonikos in Northern Greece were struggling against the installation of a gold metallurgy plant in their area. In solidarity with the villagers, Nikos placed a bomb in the Ministry of Industry of Development that was intended to explode when no one was in the build-

ing; unfortunately, it never went off at all. Nikos is now serving a 15-year prison sentence (reduced to five and a half years; he is due out this year). TVX Gold is a multinational company whose headquarters is in Canada, there are thus many points at which revolutionary solidarity with the villagers of Stryminikos could have been enacted. Fundraising on behalf of one's comrades is necessary and surely appreciated, but this could be combined with more active forms of solidarity with those who struggle against our common enemies. Revolutionary solidarity communicates the link between the exploitation and repression of others and our own fate; and, it shows people the points at which capitalism or the state operate in similar ways in very different places. By creating links between the struggles against the transcendent power structures that form the State and Capital, revolutionary solidarity has the potential to take our local struggles to a global level. Solidarity is when you recognize your own struggle in the struggle of others. Revolutionary solidarity is solidarity with the becoming-active of others and therefore with their refusal to accept the alienation of their own power. Moreover, revolutionary solidarity is always an active attack; it always involves the recovery of our own active powers that multiply in combination—in solidarity—with the active powers of others.

Conclusion

In this article we have argued that anarchism is a practice that is always in tension with the constituted order. The common thread of anarchist practice is the refusal of a transcendent, constituted order, the demand that decisions be made by those involved in a situation. Anarchism is an attack on all that separates us from our active powers; anarchism is the desire that animates our refusal to allow the alienation of our power. Thus the practice of anarchism is an ethic. The practices that we have sketched in the above essay have been developed by anarchists within the struggle of the excluded, and, as such, they constitute a continuation of the society against the state.

In order to remain vital, however, anarchism must avoid the constitution of transcendent power-relations within its midst. For such relations would both void the effectiveness of our attack and lead to the defeat of self-constituted social relations. Informal organization is a means for anarchists to combine with others of the exploited multitude without forming transcendent institutions. The practice of the anarchist ethic within the wider struggle will both allow people to remain active in their attack and bring into existence new, immanently created ways of living and relating. Through the very practice of informal organization, the anarchist ethic can spread further within the anti-globalization movement. Within the wider movement of the exploited and excluded, the movement—however coherent—to reclaim the power to create our own social relations beyond measure, anarchists are thus in a position to deepen the struggle against capital and the state.

References

Hakim Bey, *TAZ*. New York: Autonomedia, 1991

Alfredo Bonanno, *The Anarchist Tension*. London: Elephant Editions, 1998
http://www.reocities.com/kk_abacus/ioaa/tension.html

Pierre Clastres, *Society Against the State*. New York: Urizen, 1977.

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Nomadology: The War Machine*. New York: Semiotext(e), 1986.

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000.

David Harvey, *The Conditions of Postmodernity*. Oxford, 1989.

Insurrection, "Autonomous Base Nucleus."
http://www.reocities.com/kk_abacus

Insurrection, "Beyond the Structures of Synthesis."
http://www.reocities.com/kk_abacus

Peter Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread*. London: Elephant Editions, 1996.

Nikos Mazotis, "Statement to the Athens Criminal Court."
http://www.reocities.com/kk_abacus/mazotis.html

The Ferocious Jaws Go Habit: Enigma, Knowledge and Revolt

by Mare Almani

translated from *Diavolo in Corpo*

"And when the foam of the arrogant waves flows back sighing, the lustrous pearls of life lie on the sand."

—Giorgio Colli, *La Ragione Errabonda* (The Wandering Reason)

I see Empedocles walking away from Agrigento. Saluting the inhabitants with his unmistakable wave, he sets out toward the summit of Etna. With the nimbleness of thought his feet move swiftly, almost to the top. Now the volcano captures his thought ... mean his senses. It seems to him that earth has never vibrated with so much force, as if all the mysteries were no longer hidden in the abysses, but were on the surface among the minerals and the crevices. The air becomes increasingly tense like the strings of a lyre, nearly taking the breath away from anyone who can climb no further, but only to return to his paths and his habits. In the distance, Empedocles sees the sea, the night is accomplice. There will be no return. Now the fire of the crater is making him dizzy.

This is the one who described the four elements of the cosmos in his great poem: earth, air, fire and water. He had written that the life of every being depends upon their mixing and separating. Love unites them and Hatred divides them in an endless harmony. Empedocles did not achieve his wisdom through the academy, but by dancing as prey to divine madness, moved by the arrogant force of a communism of the spirit. But on this night, he is alone and there is no longer time for celebrations. Everything becomes simple, the earth throbs, the wind blows, the sea bides its time, the fire calls. He has seen the enigma of the cosmos, which the gods left as a challenge to the intelligence. Tonight he has nothing to add to his life. He will reach out to drink fire from the eternal craters in first flight.

I see Homer seated on the rocks of an island, facing the sea of Io. He is a tired man, the wisest of the Greeks, lover of rest after many battles in the arena of the intellect and of words. Almost absent-mindedly, he asks a group of fishermen coming from the sea if they caught anything. "What we caught, we left; we carry what we did not catch," they answer him. With this riddle, they refer to the fleas, some of which they found and crushed and some of which they carry in their clothes. The content of the statement is empty, but the formulation is that of the classic enigma. And the enigma is a challenge, an encounter at daggers drawn between the intellect and that which is hid-

den. Homer's passion for knowledge is enflamed again, the attack allows no escape, the wise one must solve the enigma. The wager is understanding, the risk is life. Homer does not know how to solve the enigma, does not hold the square and dies "from discouragement."

Alluding to the Sphinx which is its symbol, a fragment from Pindar speaks of the enigma that "resounds from the ferocious jaws of the virgin." Therefore, the challenge that can hide itself even in a riddle that resounds from the jaws of a fisherman is ferocious. The Sphinx, which is the figure that precisely represents the common background of human and animal life, will address its enigma to all the inhabitants of Thebes. The wager in play is peace against a terrible miasma, a famine that kills old and young. The challenge of the monster, like that of the fishermen, is trifling as a riddle. ("What creature goes first on four legs, then on two and, finally, on three?") No one is able to solve it, and the city counts its corpses. A vagabond named Oedipus will answer "Man" (first, an infant who cannot walk, then an adult and finally an old man who needs a cane). The sharp word causes the Sphinx to sink into the abyss.

I see Heracleitus the obscure, alone in his forest. He spoke only to the children among the inhabitants of Ephesus. I watch him feed on roots and berries until swollen with water, just one step from death. Having gone through the pathos of the hidden, he knows that speech is a weapon of Apollo the oblique, the god who strikes from a distance. He never says it nor hides it, but nods. Thus, he asks the doctor to whom he turns to stop the dropsy (the wise lover of fire—symbol of the infinite possible—is consumed by water) if with his knowledge he is able to nurture a fire in this place where there is a flood. The doctor who does not enjoy solving enigmas is astonished and powerless, and Heracleitus the obscure returns to the forest where one alone is like ten thousand. He buries himself under dung in an attempt to dry his own body out, counting on the force of the sun which is new every day. He had written that it is most necessary to extinguish the arrogance (the *hubris*) from the fire. But he does not renounce the fire, the arrogance of that which is hidden inside of us. Vanquished by water, he is torn apart by dogs.

I see Diogenes the Cynic, wandering and renegade, walking on that roadway that leads anyone who is sent into exile to become a bandit. A question of words of course, seeing that their interpretation can change life. With Diogenes, the sovereign detachment of the wise one is transformed into the histrionic gesture and the publicized style of provocation. Empedocles and Heracleitus are already distant, but their fire is not completely extinguished. Having gone to Delphi to consult the oracle, Diogenes did not succeed in solving the enigma. The oracle had told of the necessity of overturning the political institutions of his city, but he had interpreted this as minting false coins. But ethics, or rather being in agreement with oneself, which is to say with the enigmas of one's demons, is not an inconsequential hobby. Now Diogenes is in exile, and there is no place for an honest counterfeiter among those who respect money at least as much as they respect authority.

I see Socrates on his deathbed. He no longer has the pedantry that

distinguished him in the plaza at Athens, in the guise of the moralist of the state who uses his own courage to as a defense of the Law. A greater Sophist than the others, if he did not love the haughtiness of the powerful, he loved the individual who would place her own ethic above collective morality and authority even less. Rightly, some have seen the first specter of the baleful shadow of christianity in him. Socrates carries the signs of the community of contestation and of the challenge in decline, as well as those of the fulltime intellectual, the dialectical peacemaker, the professor of philosophy within himself. With him, the reason that is born from play and ecstasy wrongly begins to renounce its own ferocity with the sole aim of institutionalizing its power. And yet, Socrates never wrote, convinced that truth is inseparable from the one who states it and from the moment in which it is stated, that it is not a logical or juridical principle.

I see something allusive turn about him, something theatrical and deep. To anyone who awaits some clear precept, his jaw leaves only one phrase, an enigma on which understanding continues to stumble: "We owe a rooster to Asclepius."

The god hurls deceptive words; he is cruel; he wants to subdue intelligence. His intent is to cause death with banal and solemn formulas in the name of his own power. Human intelligence doesn't immediately grasp it, convinced, for fear of seeming overly simple, that the solution of an enigma could never be within reach. The god laughs.

What is an ideology at bottom if not a fixed game of enigmas? To say that the boss exists to maintain the workers (and not the reverse), is this not a mystery that would make a child smile? Calling war a humanitarian operation, is this not a riddle unworthy of the fishermen who tricked Homer? State propaganda is a refrain that perpetually repeats: "What is it that owns nothing, but can grant everything?" Even the teeth with which it bites us, this biter by the name of "state," are ours. Yet it seems omnipotent; its deadly riddle deceives. Its concessions are our "rights," it tells us, the rest is prohibited, criminal, terrorist.

Television and newspapers—those ferocious jaws of power—tell us over and over that the rich and poor form a "nation" with common interests, that money produces social wealth, that freedom is the child of law, that the police defend the collective well being, that anyone who steals is at fault, etc. Mediocre enigmas, the aim of which is not to challenge the intelligence, but to put it to sleep; the banality of these enigmas serves to hide the wager in play: death. In fact, just as in ancient Greece, anyone who doesn't know how to uncover the illusion—anyone who doesn't know how to escape from the ideology—dies. Every day the world is planted with corpses because of exchange, the contamination of food, war, work, nuclear experiments, everyday banking operations and so on. And yet is all this justified with these enigmas? Pure and simple reversals of reality, boorish lies, tattered sophisms and flashy mystifications. The majority of our contemporaries repeat them without conviction. Men, women and children die, but intelligence is not gripped by distress nor allowed to be overcome by discouragement. The

Sphinx of money and law laughs.

The reason is that the daily constrictions, the obligations of survival, the forced displacements, the misery of relationships are the terrain where the stupid and ferocious riddles of power take hold. The banality of gestures and habits, this treacherous enemy of amazement and thought, renders one inept for the contestation in which intelligence forges its arms, the unending dialogue in which ideas become dangerous. This is the terrible coherence of the society in which we live: programmed and subjugated activity produces the opinions adapted to accepting it, lived misery elaborates its own conception. Besides, doesn't the blackmail of ideology—which is to say the justification of this reality—perhaps present itself as opinions? And it is well known that everyone has his opinion; so the concrete activity of individuals think to abolish differences of fashion in it.

The sudden entry of the unknown into daily life shakes up the reign of enigmas. This is shown by all the cases of men and women who “go out of their heads,” as they say, in other words, who are no longer able to bring their social identity and the perception they have of themselves into agreement. But it is demonstrated still more clearly by what occurs in the course of revolts, of riots, of insurrections. Why do men and women who had supported the police up until the night before find themselves attacking them? Why does the economic need of demanding more money turn into the anti-economic desire to burn down the banks? Why does the petty hatred toward criminals transform itself into assaults on prisons and solidarity in revolt? To sum it up, why are the enigmas of money and authority solved?

Because, in the course of these social tempests, individuals become *more intelligent*. Because the tricks of power become banal when men and women cease to be so. Because insurgents, in the community of unique ones, change their own lives and hence their understanding of the world. Because amazement, which is the source of all authentic thought, stands out above habit. Because social relationships—which the enigma reveals and hides at the same time—become more direct, burning down the foundation of the “dialectic of negotiation” and of ideology: from one side or the other of the barricades. Because the challenge of the enigma, the ferocity of its attack on the intelligence, the extreme competition of knowledge, finds men and women ready to welcome it rather than merely submit to it, aware now of the wager in play: freedom or death. Because at last the Nietzschean metamorphosis of the lion into the child, of sheltered self-defense into the opening to the game and to the marvelous completes itself.

That these moments of suspension of habit—and thus, of norms—are often only excesses of fever of an organism that then returns to the normal temperature (the zero degrees of survival), only serves to confirm the enigmatic relationship that exists between intelligence and revolt. The arrogant wave of the latter leaves its pearls on the shore for the former, then it retreats. But where?

For the Greeks, the dialectic was the art of solving enigmas. Mortal battle of reason, contest between humans and gods, mad and impassioned

game, arrogance of thought: the dialectic—which precedes the birth of philosophy—is the intellectual expression of the enigma. It is mental and physical confrontation at the same time, knowledge for living. It has nothing, then to do with the hegelian or marxist dialectic. It is not a question of an objective mechanism of History, nor of a device of conciliatory reason. In this sense, when Engels said that the proletariat had to realize modern German philosophy, that is to become dialecticians, he jumbled the papers. The dialectic of the exploited is only the practical intelligence that dissolves the illusions of ideology, first of these illusions being that of waiting on the shore of the tranquil and inexhaustible river of Progress. That tomorrow will be better than today is a perfidious illusion of the god, the monstrous sneer of the Sphinx.

Someone correctly interpreted the bombing of the plaza Fontana as an enigma thrown at proletarians. The overturning of reality was flagrant and ordinary but the immediate result was death. The state accused anarchists of having done that which only the state and its servants could and can do. The aim was clear: to bring social subversion to defeat. An enigma. The clash was unequal like that between a god and a human: official propaganda had all the newspapers and television as its own, the revolution had leaflets and the streets. And yet dialectical intelligence (in the ancient Greek sense, and not the hegelian as some would claim) didn't fail. The challenge was accepted with all arms. A decade of social war demonstrates it.

The enigmas of ideology are degraded along with the hearts and minds of those that don't know how to solve them. The current lies of the economy and of politics talk on and on about the state of the critic. Where are the dangerous ideas? That in similar cities, with similar lines, with similar relations, with a similar look, with similar food, with similar work and similar controls, everyone doesn't rise up—isn't this perhaps an authentic enigma?

I see Empedocles, Homer, Oedipus, Heracleitus, Diogenes and Socrates, and I think that liquidating the enigmas of power is simply the path for arriving at last at other enigmas, those of our own demons. Knowledge for living, however it comes, will always bring us face to face with ourselves. On the summit of Etna, in the middle of a forest, in wandering or under dung.

Alienation, Marvelous Pursuits and the New Nomadic Sciences

by Leila

As I sit at this corporate-owned cafe, there are three cell phone conversations going on at once—the buzz of stressful leisure is in the air; life is so complex these days but, at the same time, it's just too easy. Convenience is killing adventure even for those who can't afford it; convenience invades the environments that it touches and infects them with sterility. The panhandler in front of the shopping mall gains nothing from the appliances and fashions sold within yet she has to suffer just the same from the stifling, lifeless environment created by convenience that is for others.

How did the challenge which is such a fundamental part of living life get erased to such an extent in the most affluent pockets of the globe? The convenience and instantaneity of technology have removed the spark of many an adventurous passion; they took the distance out of space and the place out of time. But that's not the end of the story. Challenge dies when the will is decimated: split into 10 pieces, shattered only to be swept up and used by others. Individual power is destroyed when one is prevented from acting or thinking. Hyper-specialization creates a society in which no one person has power over their actions. One can either act on others' commands or command the actions of others; it is becoming increasingly difficult to simply act. The splitting of our wills is fundamentally tied to the split between the physical and the intellectual, which stems from the division between physical and intellectual labor.

Gothic journeymen traveled from place to place building cathedrals. In that time there were no architects who planned construction on paper, physically distant from the construction site. Journeymen on the other hand, both planned and built cathedrals. The state did not appreciate the journeymen's associations' tendency to strike, nor their ability to move as they pleased when work conditions were unfavorable. "The state's response was to take over the management of the construction sites, merging all the divisions of labor together in the supreme distinction between the intellectual and the manual, the theoretical and the practical, fashioned after the difference between 'governors' and 'governed'" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Nomadology*, 29-30). By separating intellectual and physical labor the state took power away from both types of workers. The manual laborers could then only build what others had planned and the planners—who in economic and political terms were the more powerful of the two groups—no longer had the capacity to build anything at all.

Hobbies are forms of alienated leisure, compartmentalized parts of one's life, past-times whose purpose is to fill our time with countable accomplishments and enjoyments. At my piano lesson which I have to pay for, between 4 and 5 o'clock on Monday I will review lesson four. They are additions to our lives not multiplications or proliferations. While the hobby is alienated leisure, a past-time that is born from a shattering of the will and the divisions of labor and time within capitalist societies, the marvelous pursuit is an attempt to find paths out of alienation, an attempt to put the pieces back together again by refusing to conceive of human action as divisible into the physical and the mental. It is also an attempt to feel the rush of a life of challenge in which one can both make decisions and act. The marvelous pursuit is born from the desire to create playful complexity in a desert of simplistic convenience. A hobby is a form of consumption, the marvelous pursuit on the other hand, is a rejection of commodified convenience, it can't be bought because it has no price. The person who reads Aramaic poetry on the sidewalk, the cramped city dweller who has an intricate knowledge of ferns, the person who can play a sonata with a blade of grass, these people interact with the things around them and the spaces they pass through in unexpected ways and make these places and moments their own. A sidewalk could be a place to pass by on one's way from home to work or it could become a place to read Aramaic poetry to passers by. A marvelous pursuit refuses socially ascribed use. People learn such socially useless things as the names of fern and the grammar of dead languages because they are bored with the mind-dumbing options dished out to them on TV. Marvelous pursuits are a means to resist alienation from one's environment because they are a temporary means to make that environment one's own, by ascribing one's own, often bizarre, value for things and spaces.

The marvelous pursuit often creates complexity but a complexity which is opposed to that of the technician. The 'master' of an marvelous pursuit can never be an engineer because the marvelous is by nature useless to society (and therefore to capital). The value in marvelous pursuits lies in their self-creation which evades both use-value and exchange value. These pursuits may or may not have revolutionary potential, but it is very difficult for capitalism to recuperate them precisely because they are so useless. A marvelous pursuit could be a nomadic science—a traveling or a crossing—or it could get you nowhere: it is an attempt that might fail, a move away from alienation which may lead you in a circle back to the same spot, to sit on the pile of glass shards and wait for the next possible way out.

Another response to living in a society that's become just too convenient is DIY. Having grown up in late capitalist societies where things are bought not made, the youth of the richer countries often rebel by learning to do it themselves. Some buy land and move to the country to grow food, other's learn to restore an abandoned building and pirate electricity and so on. This is a healthy response to growing up in useless culture, where people reach adulthood without knowing how to build, make or grow much of anything. Learning to make things we use ourselves instead of buying them is a

fundamental and necessary part of creating a non-capitalist stateless society. Of course, this cannot destroy capitalism, which is expansive and cancerous and must be attacked, but is a way to take parts of our lives back from capital in a direct way.

At times the DIY spirit is infused with a sense of practicality that is very utilitarian. In this country, it sometimes has a tinge of the "good ol' American can do." In this case, I mean a utilitarianism that is born from a capitalist culture in which material goods are worshipped. That which is useful is that which produces something tangible, and the greater the quantity the better. Use is often determined by one's conception of survival, that which is most necessary for survival is most useful, but of course one's conception of survival will always be cultural. Counter-cultural types are not without mainstream cultural baggage, and in spite of a virulent rejection of materialism on one level they will think they need things to survive that a hunter gatherer simply couldn't find uses for. So even one's conception of survival is cultural, and in our culture survival is drenched with materialism. In societies that are highly capitalist, the common conception of use-value will be completely tied up with exchange value; money is often a fundamental part of people's conception of an object's use. The most extreme manifestations of such a utilitarian mentality within the DIY subcultures are punk DIY businesses. The utilitarianism of the capitalist grid makes us tools. It is based on a practicality which has been directed away from one's situation to a complex set of systems; not to meeting an individual or group's needs but to meeting the need of the grid of the state-capital relation as a whole. That is why this type is practicality so quantitative, it is shaped by capital's game of money's numbers.

The privileging of the physical over the mental is just as absurd as privileging the mental over the physical, since the two are impossible to separate within human experience. I would guess that the tendency to separate the two has become much more common since the separation between manual and intellectual labor has become so all pervasive. The privileging of a concrete material outcome is a kind of utilitarianism that can serve capitalism's production centers well and the privileging of the intellectual can serve the class divisions that have accompanied the division between manual and intellectual labor.

There is much talk these days in the media about the marvels of artificial intelligence, computers are constantly referred to as if they function in a similar way to the human mind and the mind is referred to as if it functions like a computer: mechanically and virtually. It is possible that some forms of anti-intellectualism are reactions to the increasing displacement of action into the virtual, into the placelessness of cyberspace. Could this be the result of a desire to feel the soil beneath one's feet, to exist more fully as a physical, sensual being, to be part of a space time that isn't a series of freeze-frame instants like that of e-mail (7:37 EST Dear Julio,...)? Sometimes I have noticed people conflate the mental and the virtual, they impose all of the alienating qualities of the virtual onto the mental: the mental is separate

from action and the physical, mental space is as placeless as cyberspace. For some the experience of acute social alienation makes it desirable to lose one's ability to distinguish between oneself and one's surroundings; some look for a mystical solution to their alienation. Some want to lose consciousness of the separation between the soil and their feet. But how does one feel the soil beneath one's feet without consciousness? But of course there are a myriad of ways in which humans can relate to their environment that lie between approaching it with removed mechanical calculation on the one extreme or attempting to achieve mystical union with it on the other. If one were indeed able to achieve a mystical state would this take away social alienation? Such attempts to overcome alienation ignore the very social relations that caused one to be alienated in the first place.

The development of the technological means to reproduce and transmit words, sounds and images has corresponded with a growing social alienation. That is, the development of technological means to increase communication between people that are far away has corresponded to a growing distance between those that are nearby. From this growing alienation grew the desire to overcome it. Milan Kundera has written about a phenomena called graphomania: the desire to see one's writing in print, the desire to gain recognition and fame from one's writings. He views this as being directly related to the alienation between people who are physically near to each other. Lacking connection with those nearby we crave recognition from those far away. In the islands of the Massim region of Papua New Guinea people who are separated by water become known through trade and the gifting of decorated shells, every kula shell is unique and everyone knows who made it. The type of fame that a society creates is directly related to its communication technology, in the islands of where kula shells circulate each shell stays unique because people do not mechanically reproduce them. Hence people become known by a smaller number of other people than those that are famous in our society but the quality of the knowledge that is spread about famous people is quite different.

The degree of alienation experienced by those who lived in the time of the advent of print capitalism was not as acute as the alienation between people in today's massified societies. In turn, we have much more elaborate means for those that are very distant to communicate with words, sounds and images. The nature of fame has changed along with the level of social alienation and the technological means of communication, a Hollywood movie star's name and image is known by many more millions of people than the most famous early European novelists were in their time. Nowadays it is quite easy to become known, to spread one's name around the internet, for example, while communicating very little. Similar to this type of "fame" is that of success. Success is as colorless as money, it doesn't matter what makes one successful just like it doesn't matter what makes one rich. Success is the most impersonal kind of fame; it is the general equivalent of fame. Thus, success is no longer an adjective, it has become an abstract noun. "He is successful." As unique connections with specific reachable, touchable

people dissolve, the need for general and wider recognition grows. The extreme result of this is the desire for success in the abstract, where there is no particular desire to be successful at only one thing, to be a successful banker is interchangeable with being a successful novelist. Soon children will begin to tell their parents: "When I grow up, I want to be successful." The quest for fame is bound to be a frustrated quest because it is fueled by a desire for connections with those nearby which paradoxically results in a search for connections with those distant, the latter can never result in the former; like mystical oneness it can not truly satisfy a desire to overcome social alienation.

Western navigation depends on a global system of coordinates (latitude and longitude, now instantaneously measured by GPS) whereas Polynesian navigation depends on local knowledge that varies (the patterns of waves currents and winds, the types and habits of sea birds), adequations instead of universal principles applied to particulars. In Nomadic Science "if there are still equations, they are adequations, inequations, differential equations irreducible to the algebraic form and inseparable from a sensible intuition of variation. They seize or determine singularities in the matter instead of constituting a general form" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Nomadology*, 32). The practicality of adequations is not a practice of imitation or the mere imposition of codes, plotting points on the grid. Whereas modern science involves the splitting between observer and observed for the sake of experimentation (the word science comes from the Indo-European word skei which meant to cut or separate), and a thus a split between the physical object of study and the scientist's removed deductions, nomadic science involves an intimacy between the nomad and her surroundings. To equate is to impose conceptual equality between a particular and an absent abstraction. The practicality of equations the impositions the external decisions through equalizing systems of thought, grids invented in other places and times, perhaps on other continents.

Many new kinds of nomadic sciences have been created, even in those societies where modern science is most advanced. Nomadic science can be a means to move away from an alienated existence, to move away from the options dished out by capital and create other ways to live. The skills necessary to make an abandoned building inhabitable, learning how and where to dumpster dive, how to live and travel without money, the skills of sabotage, all of these pursuits could become nomadic sciences, lines of flight out of our alienated existence. Insurrection cannot use the equations of modern science but must instead use the adequations of nomadic science. This is because social problems are unsolvable; there are no formulas that will eliminate them. We must instead feel the patterns of the waves, for amidst the unpredictability of the storm there are still discernible patterns that could guide us to the other side.

References

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Nomadology: The War Machine*. New York: Semiotext(e), 1986.

A Balanced Account of the World: A Critical Look at the Scientific Worldview

by Wolfi Landstreicher

The origin of modern science in the 16th and 17th centuries corresponds with the origins of modern capitalism and the industrial system. From the beginning, the worldview and methods of science have fit in perfectly with the need of the capitalist social system to dominate nature and the vast majority of human beings. Francis Bacon made it clear that science was not an attempt to understand nature as it is, but to dominate it in order to twist it to the ends of humanity—in this case meaning the current rulers of the social order. In this light, science must necessarily be subjected to social analysis by anyone claiming to call the present social reality into question.

Science is not simply a matter of observing the world, experimenting with its elements and drawing reasonable conclusions. Otherwise, we would have to recognize children, so-called primitives and a good many animals as excellent scientists. But the practical experiments carried out by all of us every day lack a few necessary factors, the first and most important of which is the concept of the universe as a single entity operating under universal, rational, knowable laws. Without this foundation, science cannot operate as such.

Of course, the idea of universal natural laws had already come into existence in ancient Greece, arising at about the same time as written law for governing the city-states and money-based commerce. But the ancient Greek perspective differed significantly from that of modern science. The universal natural laws of Greek philosophy were fundamentally relational, parallel to the political and economic institutions of ancient Greek society. Thus this conception tended to promote moderation—Aristotle’s “golden mean”—and an avoidance of hubris, traits that very clearly do not find their equivalent in the modern scientific perspective.

Between the time of the ancient Greek philosophers and the origin of modern science, two significant historical events affected the western view of the world. The first of these was the rise of the Christian religion as the central dominating factor in western thought. This worldview replaced the concept of a multiplicity of gods who were part of the world with that of a single god external to the universe who created it and controls it. It additionally declared that the world had been created for the use of god’s favored creature, the human being, who was to subdue and rule it. The second significant event was the invention of the first automatic machine to play a significant role in public social life: the clock. The full significance of the invention of the

clock in the development of capitalism, particularly in its industrial form, is a tale in itself, but my concern here is more specific. By materializing the concept of a non-living thing that could nonetheless move on its own for the populace, the clock gave an understandable basis for a new conception of the universe. Together with the idea of a creator external to the universe, it provided the basis for perceiving the unity of the universe as a clockwork created by the great clockmaker. In other words, it was essentially *mechanical*.

So religion and a technological development laid the basis for the development of a mechanistic view of the universe and with it of modern science. Recognizing the importance of religion in providing this ideological framework, it should come as no surprise that most early scientists were ecclesiastics, and that the sufferings of Galileo and Copernicus were exceptions to the rule, useful in developing the mythology of science as a force of truth fighting against the obscurantism of superstition and dogma. In reality, the early scientists were generally working for one or another of the various state powers as integral parts of the power structure, following the same path as one of the best known among them, Francis Bacon, who had no problem with reporting people like Giordano Bruno, who expressed 'heretical' ideas, to the church authorities.

But the scandals of science, like those of the church, the state or capital, are not the substance of the problem. The substance lies in the ideological foundations of science. Basically relational views of the universe—whether the legalistic one of the ancient Greek or the more fluid views of people who lived outside civilization—imply that an understanding of the universe would come from attempting to view it as holistically as possible in order to observe the relationships between things, the connections and interactions. Such a viewpoint works well for those who have no desire to dominate the universe, but rather only want to determine how to interact with their environment in order to fulfill their desires and create their life. But the capitalist need for industrial development required a different worldview.

If the universe is a machine and not an interrelationship between a myriad of beings, then one does not achieve an understanding of it through simple observation and direct experimentation, but through a specialized form of experimentation. One cannot come to an understanding of how a machine works simply by observing it as it functions in its environment. One needs to break it down into its parts—the gears, the wheels, the wires, the levers, etc.—in order to figure out what each part does. Thus, a foundational aspect of the method of modern science is the necessity of breaking everything down into its parts, with the aim of achieving the most basic unit. It is in this light that one can understand why scientists think that it is possible to learn more about life by cutting a frog open in a laboratory than by sitting by a pond observing frogs and fish and mosquitoes and lily pads actually living together. The knowledge science pursues is quantitative knowledge, mathematical knowledge, utilitarian knowledge—a type of knowledge that transforms the world into the machine it claims the world is. This sort of knowledge cannot be drawn from free observation in the world. It requires

the sphere of the laboratory where parts can be experimented with outside of the context of the whole and within the framework of the ideological foundations of mathematics and a mechanistic worldview. Only parts that have been separated in this way can be reconstructed to meet the needs of those who rule.

Of course, the first parts that must be separated from this mechanistic whole are the scientists themselves. The factor that makes the experiments of animals, children, non-civilized people and untrained people within the modern world unscientific is our lack of so-called objectivity; we are too involved, still in intimate relationship with that with which we experiment. The scientist, on the other hand, has been trained to place himself outside of that on which she experiments, to use the cold rationality of mathematics. But this objectivity is really no different from the separation of a king, an emperor or a dictator from the people they rule. The scientist cannot step out of the natural world in any literal sense which would allow him to view it from beyond its borders (for all practical intents and purposes, this universe has no borders). Rather like an emperor from the heights of his throne, from her laboratory the scientist proclaims to the universe: "You will submit to my commands." The scientific worldview can really only be understood in these terms. The conceptions of the nature of the universe that have been put forth by modern science have not been so much descriptive as prescriptive, edicts proclaiming what the natural world must be forced to become: mechanical parts with regular, predictable motions which can be made to function as the ruling class that funds scientific research desires. It should come as no surprise then that the language of science is the same as the language of the economy and of bureaucracy, a language devoid of passion and any concrete connection to life, the language of mathematics. What better language could one find for ruling the universe—a language that is at the same time utterly arbitrary and utterly rational?

So modern science developed with a specific purpose. That purpose was not the pursuit of truth or even knowledge except in the most utilitarian sense, but rather the atomization and rationalization of the natural world so that it could be broken down into its component parts which could then be forced into new, regularized, measured relations useful to the development of technological systems that could extract more and more components for the reproduction of these systems. After all, this was what the rulers wanted, and they were the funders (and thus financially the founders) of modern science.

With the mathematization of all things, what is singular in each thing disappears, because what is singular is beyond abstraction and therefore beyond mathematics. When that which is singular in beings and things disappears, the basis for passionate relations, relations of desire, disappears as well. After all, how does one measure passion? How does one calculate desire? The domination of instrumental reason has little room for any passion other than that deformed sort of greed that seeks to accumulate more and more of the standardized, commodified items available on the market and the money that makes them all equal in the strictest mathematical sense.

The various classification systems of science—which parallel systems used by state bureaucracies—certainly played a significant role in excluding the singular from the realm of science. But science uses another more insidious and irreparable method for destroying the singular. It attempts to break every thing down into its smallest possible components—first those units that are shared by every entity of a particular type, and then those that are shared by every entity that exists—because mathematics can only be applied to homogeneous units, units that can be equivalent. If early scientists had a tendency to experiment frequently with dead animals, including humans, it was because in death one dog or one monkey or one human is very much like any other. When pinned on a board in a laboratory with their bodies cut open, have not all frogs become equivalent? But this does not yet break things down adequately. Certainly such experimentation, whether with dead organisms or with non-organic matter allowed science to break the world down into components it could mold to fit into its well-measured, calculated, mechanistic perspective, a necessary step in the development of industrial technology. But mathematics and the corresponding mechanistic worldview were still quite clearly ideas that were being imposed on an unwilling and resistant world—particularly (or maybe just most noticeably) the human world, the world of the exploited who did not want their lives measured out in hours of work timed by the industrially accurate clocks of the boss, the exploited who didn't want to spend every day in the same repetitive task that is also being carried out by hundreds—or maybe thousands—of others in the same building, or one that is identical to it in order to earn the general equivalent for buying survival.

Physics has always been the science in the forefront of the effort to make mathematics the inherent basis of reality. If one is to believe the myth, when the apple hit Newton on the head, it supposedly led him to come up with equations to mathematically explain the attraction and repulsion of objects. For some reason, this is supposed to make us think of him as a genius rather than a petty-minded, calculating businessman/scientist. (He was a stockholder in the famous East India Company which provided the financial basis for so many of Britain's imperialistic endeavors and head of the Bank of England for a time.) But Newton's law of gravity, Galileo's law of inertia, the laws of thermodynamics, etc. come across as mathematical constructs of the human mind that are imposed on the universe, just as their technological results—the industrial system of capitalism—was an imposition of this rationalized worldview into the daily lives of the exploited classes.

It should be clear from this that the scientific method was never the empirical method. The latter was based only on experience, observation and experiment within the world with no preconceptions, mathematical or otherwise. The scientific method, on the other hand starts from the necessity of *imposing* mathematical, instrumental rationality on the universe. In order to carry out this task, as I have said, it had to separate specific components from their environment, remove them to the sterility of the laboratory and there experiment with them in order to figure out how to conform them to this in-

strumental, mathematical logic. A far cry from the sensual exploration of the world that would constitute a truly empirical investigation.

Modern science has been able to continue developing not because it opens the way to increasing knowledge, but because it has been successful at carrying out the task for which the state and the ruling class funded it. Modern science was never intended to provide real knowledge of the world—that would have required immersion in the world, not separation from it—but rather to impose a particular perspective on the universe that would turn it in to a machine useful to the ruling class. The industrial system is proof of the success of science at carrying out this task, but not of the truth of its worldview. It is in this light that we can examine the “advances” that constitute the “new physics”—relativity physics, atomic physics and quantum physics—because it is this post-Newtonian physics that succeeds in imposing the mathematical conception onto the universe to such a degree that the two come to be seen as one. In Newtonian physics, the universe is a material reality, a machine made up of parts, the interactions of which can be “explained” (though, in fact, nothing is really explained) mathematically. In the “new” physics, the universe is a mathematical construct—matter simply being part of the equation—made up of bits of information. In other words, the “new” physics has a *cybernetic* view of the universe.

Relativity physics mathematizes the universe on the macrocosmic level. According to its theories, the universe is a “space-time continuum”. But what does this mean? The “space-time continuum” is, in fact, purely a mathematical construct, the multi-dimensional graph of a complex equation. Thus, it is completely beyond empirical observation—strangely like cyberspace. Or not so strangely, if one considers the former as a model for the latter. Once again, it matters little if this picture of the universe is true. It works on a technological and economic level, and that has always been the bottom line for science.

The “ultimate reality” that is the “space-time continuum”—this “reality” beyond our senses that the experts tell is more real than our daily experience (and who still doubts them in this alienated world?)—is constructed of bits of information called quanta. This is the microcosm of the total mathematization of the universe, the realm of quantum physics. Quantum physics is particularly interesting for the way in which it exposes the project of modern science. Quantum physics is supposed to be the science of sub-atomic particles. At first, there were just three: the proton, the electron and the neutron. These explained atomic weight, electricity, etc. and allowed for the development of nuclear technology and modern electronics. But too many mathematical discrepancies appeared. Quantum physics has dealt with these discrepancies by using the most consistent scientific method possible; it has formulated new equations in order to calculate away the discrepancies and called these mathematical constructs newly discovered sub-atomic particles. Once again, there is nothing that we can observe through our senses—even with the aid of tools such as microscopes. We are dependent on the claims of experts. But experts in what? Clearly, they are experts in constructing stopgap equations that up-

hold the mathematical conception of the universe until the next discrepancy arises—functioning in a way that parallels capitalism itself.

Relativity physics and quantum physics are often passed off as “pure science” (as if such a thing has ever existed), theoretical exploration without any instrumental considerations. Without even considering the role these branches of science have played in the development of nuclear weapons and power, cybernetics, electronics, and so on, this claim is also belied by the ideological interests of power that they serve. Together these scientific perspectives present a conception of reality that is completely outside of the sphere of empirical observation. Ultimate reality lies utterly beyond what we can sense and exists completely within the sphere of complex mathematical equations that only those with the time and education—that is the experts—are capable of learning and manipulating. Thus the “new” physics—like the old, but more emphatically—promotes the necessity of faith in the experts, of acceptance of their word over one’s own perception. Furthermore, it promotes the idea that reality consists of bits of information that are connected mathematically and can be manipulated at will by those who know the secrets, the sorcerers of our age, the scientist-technicians.

Relativity and quantum physics have succeeded in doing what every branch of science would like to do; they have completely separated their sphere of knowledge from the realm of the senses. If reality is only a complex mathematical equation made up of bits of information, then thought experiments are certainly at least as reliable as experiments on material objects. It should be evident by now that this has been an ideal of modern science from the beginning. The separation of the scientist from the sphere of daily life, the sterile laboratory as the realm of experimentation, the blatant scorn of the early scientists for daily experience and what is learned through the senses alone are clear indications of the attitude and direction of science. For Bacon, for Newton, for modern science as a whole, the senses—like the natural world of which they are a part—are obstacles to be overcome in the pursuit of dominance over the universe. Interacting with the world on a sensual level is much too likely to evoke passion, and the reason of science is a cold, calculating reason, not the passionate reason of desire. So the world of non-material experimentation opened by the “new” physics fits in well with the trajectory of science.

While some have tried to portray the concepts of relativity and quantum physics as a break with the mechanistic worldview held by science up to that time, in fact, this “new” view of the world as pure mathematical construct made up of bits of information was precisely the aim of science. It developed its material manifestation in cybernetic technology. The industrial mechanistic worldview gave way to the far more totalizing cybernetic mechanistic worldview, because the latter serves the purposes of science and its masters better than the former. The development of cybernetic technology and particularly of virtual reality opened the door to the possibility of non-material experimentation for those branches of science for which this had previously been impossible, particularly the life sciences and the social sciences. This

world doesn't just provide a means of storing, organizing, categorizing and manipulating figures and information gathered during experimentation and research in the physical world; it also provides a virtual world in which one can experiment on virtual organic beings and systems, on virtual societies and cultures. And if the universe is nothing more than interchangeable bits of information in mathematical relationship to each other, then such experiments are on the same level as those carried out in the physical world. In fact, they are more reliable, since the obstacles of the senses and of the possible development of sympathetic emotion toward those upon which the scientist is experimenting do not come into play. No need to worry about the fact that anything mathematically calculable, and thus programmable, can happen in the virtual realm; this merely shows the infinite technological possibilities to be found in the manipulation of bits of information.

It is worth noting that the "discovery" of DNA occurred just a few years before the beginning of what some have called the "information age". Of course, cybernetic and information technologies had existed for some time already, but it was in the early 1970's that these technologies began to penetrate into the general social sphere to a great enough extent to be able to affect how people viewed the world. Since we have already been torn from any sort of deep, direct relationship with the natural world due to the exigencies of the industrial system, most of our knowledge of the world comes to us indirectly. It is not really knowledge at all, but bits of information accepted by faith. It is, therefore, not so difficult to convince people that knowledge really is nothing more than an accumulation of these bits and that reality is simply the complex mathematical equation that encompasses them. It is a very short distance from this to the genetic perspective that life is simply the relationship between bits of coded information. DNA provides the precise interchangeable bits that are the necessary basis for this and, thus, provides the basis for the digitalization of life.

As we have seen, science has never been simply an attempt to describe what exists. Rather it seeks to dominate reality and make it conform to the ends of those who hold power. Thus, the digitalization of life and of the universe has the express purpose of breaking everything down into interchangeable bits that can be manipulated and adjusted by those trained in these complex techniques in order to meet the specific needs of the ruling order. There is no place in this perspective for a conception of individuality made up of one's body, one's mind, one's passions, one's desires and one's relations in an inimitable dance through the world. Instead, we are nothing more than a series of adjustable bio-bits. This conception is not without its social basis. Capitalist development, particularly in the last half of the 20th century, turned citizens (already part of the apparatus of the nation-state) into producer-consumers, interchangeable with all others in terms of the needs of the social machine. With the integrity of the individual already shattered, it is not such a great step to transform each living thing into a mere storage bank for useful genetic parts, a resource for the development of biotechnology.

Nanotechnology applies the same digitalization to inorganic mat-

ter. Chemistry and atomic physics provided the conception of matter as constructed of molecules which are constructed of atoms which are constructed of subatomic particles. The goal of nanotechnology is the construction of microscopic machines on a molecular level that will ideally be programmed to reproduce themselves through the manipulation of molecular and atomic structures. If one accepts the impoverished conception of life promoted by genetic science and biotechnology, these machines would arguably be “alive”. If one examines some of the purposes their developers hope they will serve, it seems that they could, like spliced genes, function in the environment in ways very much like viruses. On the other hand, some of the descriptions of the auto-reproductive function that is to be programmed into them give the frightening idea of air-borne active cancer cells.

Both biotechnology and nanotechnology can evoke horrific visions: large and small scale monsters, strange diseases, totalitarian gene manipulation, microscopic air-borne spying devices, intelligent machines with no more need of their human dependents. But these potential horrors do not strike at the heart of the problem. These technologies are reflective of a view of the world drained of wonder, joy, desire, passion and individuality, a view of the world transformed into a calculating machine, the worldview of capitalism.

The earliest modern scientists were mostly devout Christians. Their mechanical universe was a machine manufactured by God with a purpose beyond itself, determined by God. This conception of a higher purpose disappeared from scientific thought long ago. The cybernetic universe serves no other purpose than that of maintaining itself in order to maintain the flow of bits of information. On the social level where it affects our lives, this means that every individual is simply a tool for maintaining the present social order and can be adjusted as necessary to maintain the flow of information that allows this order to reproduce itself, information more precisely called *commodity exchange*.

And here the real function of science is revealed. Science is the attempt to create a system that can present a balanced account of all the resources in the universe, making them available to capital. This is why it must break the universe down into its smallest bits, bits that have a sufficient degree of identity and interchangeability to act as a general equivalent. This is why it must force the universe to conform to a mathematical construct. This is why ultimately a cybernetic model is best for the functioning of science. The real end of modern science from the start has been to render the universe into a great calculating machine that will render account of its own resources. So the function of science has always been to serve the economy and its development has been the search for the most efficient means of doing so. But the scientific accountants with their calculations, graphs, charts and ledgers are perpetually confronted with a recalcitrant reality comprised of entities that don't conform to numbers or measurements, of individuals who resist interchangeability, of phenomena that cannot be repeated—in other words, of things that incessantly unbalance the accounts. Scientists may attempt to retreat to the laboratory, to the thought experiment, to virtual reality, but

beyond the door, beyond their minds, beyond the realm of cyberspace, the unaccountable still waits. So science, like the capitalist social order it serves, becomes a system of stopgap measures, of perpetual adjustment in the face of a chaos that threatens to destroy the economy. The world envisioned by science—the one it proclaims to be real as it tries to create it through the most excruciating technological bondage and torture—is an economized world, and such a world is one drained of wonder, joy and passion, of all that will not be measured, of all that will not give an account of itself.

Thus, the struggle against capitalism is the struggle against modern science, the struggle against a system that strives to know the world merely as measurable resources with a price, as interchangeable bits of economic value. For those of us who seek to know the world passionately, who want to encounter it joyfully with a sense of wonder, different ways of knowledge are essential, ways that aim not at domination, but at pleasure and adventure. That it is possible to study and explore the universe in ways other than that of modern science has been shown by the reasonings of certain natural philosophers in ancient Greece, the knowledge of the sea of Polynesian navigators, the song-lines of Australian aborigines and the best explorations of certain alchemists and heretics like Giordano Bruno. But I am not interested in models but in the opening of possibilities, the opening to relations with the world around us that are without measure—and the past is never an opening; at best, it is evidence that what exists is not inevitable. A conscious rebellion of those who will not be measured could open a world of possibilities. It's a risk worth taking.

Where Do We Meet Face to Face

by Wolfi Landstreicher

Alienation is not a psychological disorder, an inability on the part of certain individuals to adjust to a basically healthy society. Alienation is an inherent part of the present social order, objectively verifiable. The present social reality is based on a hierarchy of power that requires a system of representation through which society can reproduce itself. To maintain this social system, it is necessary that the lives of individuals be made alien to them, not self-created, but defined in terms of roles and rules of protocol for the proper relationships between these roles. The healthiest individuals in this society are precisely those who most deeply feel the anguish of their alienation, who know that real life is not here and, therefore, refuse to succumb.

Alienation is as old as civilization itself since the dawn of civilization corresponds with the origin of institutionalized power structures. But resistance to alienation is just as old. Every structure created by those in power for the purpose of controlling the interactions of individuals has met with resistance from those who do not want to be controlled. However, since this resistance has remained, for the most part, unconscious, un-willful and, thus, incoherent, social control has advanced to the point where now it often seems that there is no place left where individuals can truly meet face to face.

The main purpose of city streets and sidewalks is commercial traffic—moving goods for sale and those who buy and sell them where necessary. They are intended to create a particular form of social relationship, one centered around a market economy. But streets and sidewalks, along with city parks, became gathering places for those who simply wanted to talk and play and enjoy themselves. The so-called idle poor particularly found such settings useful for creating the interactions and pleasures that made up their lives—often to the detriment of commerce and the needs of the power structures. In recent years, streets and parks have been increasingly policed and restricted with laws against loitering, vagrancy, gathering in groups and sleeping outdoors. In addition, urban architecture and city planning, which have always reflected the interests of the ruling class, have become increasingly sterile and oppressive, creating an atmosphere in which conviviality and festivity are smothered. The most recent examples of city planning simply have no center at all. It's becoming increasingly obvious: the reference they propose is always somewhere else. These are labyrinths in which you are only allowed to lose yourself. No games. No meetings. No living. A des-

ert of plate-glass. A grid of roads. High-rise flats. Oppression is no longer centralized because oppression is everywhere.

Even as alienation has increased and taken on more encompassing forms, festivals and holidays such as Carnival and Halloween have acted as vehicles for the expression of genuine life, its passions and desires. Precisely because these events are separated from an everyday existence in which the separation of one's life from oneself is the most essential quality, they have allowed people to temporarily re-appropriate their lives and passions—often protected by the anonymity of a mask, a crowd or generalized drunkenness. But these celebrations are being increasingly restricted and ordered when not completely suppressed. Concerns for public safety (conveniently forgotten when real dangers such as automobile traffic, industrial pollution or job-related accidents are at issue) are used as excuses for increased policing of such celebrations and their restriction to increasingly smaller, often enclosed spaces and highly orchestrated events. It is irrelevant that these alleged concerns for public safety are mostly based on hearsay and exaggeration. When these celebrations are restricted to small spaces and orchestrated events, commodification comes to dominate. Most of the permitted events become entertainment spectacles for which one must pay or temporary markets for the sale of junk. The genuine festivals of the exploited become increasingly illegalized by these processes, and the pallid, impoverished pseudo-festivals that are offered in their place are often too expensive for the poor—and too much like ordinary existence in this society to be attractive on any more than a superficial level anyway. The spirit of free play is being suppressed and channeled into the spirited consumption of commodities.

The attacks on street life, both daily and festive, are essentially attacks on the exploited and marginalized of this society. The rich have long since retreated from the streets except as a means to get to or from work and the shops, preferring the imagined security of their atomized existence in which all interactions happen through the proper channels. (Even in the business districts of most cities where these managers of the economy find it necessary on occasion to walk from one building to another, they will always be walking with their cell-phone to their ear, safely regulating how and with whom they interact.) But those at the bottom of the social hierarchy have little access to these channels, and the increasingly illegal sphere of street life has been where they can meet. And here they could meet face to face.

The increased restrictions on permitted interactions on the streets and in the parks did not put an end to relatively free interactions. Taverns and cafes continued to be gathering places for discussion, the sharing of news and ideas and occasionally even for the development of subversive projects. It is true that cafes and taverns have always been places of business, places where one is expected to buy, but they have also provided space where people can meet and interact with very little mediation. Now this is changing as well. Not even considering the fact that increasingly such businesses are instituting policies of kicking individuals who don't buy anything out, the environments themselves are being made inhospitable to real interaction. In

the United States, most taverns are dominated by televisions and loud music. It is not uncommon for a tavern to have several televisions so that there is no place to turn to escape its domination. At times, the music may be fun to dance to, but when there is no way to get away from it, it becomes another attack against genuine, unmediated interaction. In a setting so unwelcoming to genuine conversation, it is easier to interact only with those you already know or to conform to the protocol of roles imposed by the social order.

Cafes remain outside of the realm of domination by the television and can still provide a setting for real interaction. But here as well there are trends which tend to move away from this. Probably the most insidious of these is the cyber-café. Along with coffee, these cafes offer computer use to their customers. Rather than talking to each other directly, people in these cafes drift into their own little cyber-world, checking out abstract and distant information or conversing electronically with people halfway across the globe. This sort of mediated interaction guarantees that ideas remain safely in the realm of opinion and makes practical projects extremely unlikely. This is not the setting from which movements such as dadaism or surrealism, or groups like the Situationist International are likely to spring.

The cyber-café is a trend that reflects the growing domination of the cybernetic over interactions of all kinds. The tedium of everyday interactions in the present world makes a virtual world very attractive to some. Certain cyber-utopians tell us that the development of computer technologies will put end to cities as we know them, as all (of the ruling and managing classes—the poor and exploited don't count in this vision) are able to work, play and shop through their computers from suburban homesteads which they never have to leave—a more pastoral and ecological version of the luxury high-rise in which well-to-do people can live, work, play and shop without ever leaving the building. A darker, more realistic version of this vision sees the cities becoming reservations for the excluded classes and other social misfits who can't or won't fit into this cybertopia. The laws and restrictions limiting the use of streets and parks that are currently being put into effect are aimed precisely at these excluded ones who would be the urban dwellers of this vision. The well-to-do suburbanite is already well integrated into a system where face-to-face interaction is an anachronism to be dealt with through a protocol of surface courtesy which reinforces isolation and the atomized existence of well-oiled cogs.

This cybernetic vision, however, whether in its utopian or dystopian version, does not take the exigencies of class struggle into account. Would it, indeed, be in the interest of the ruling class to bring the exploited together in an even more concentrated manner? Could the mechanisms for creating social consensus and public opinion continue to function adequately for the maintenance of social peace in a situation of such unmitigated misery? In fact, this dystopian vision is comparable to the presently existing detention centers for undocumented aliens. These centers, which exist throughout Europe, in the United States, in Australia and so on, are places of frequent unrest and revolt (as are the urban ghettos that presently exist). In fact the very

existence of these camps are indicative of a process that is going on now that is very different from the one suggested by the dystopian perspective described above. Many cities are now being heavily gentrified with the ruling classes and their managerial lackeys moving into the center of these cities, driving out the urban exploited, leaving them with nowhere to go. In poorer countries, people who have lived on the land, taking care of their needs for themselves, are being driven off their land, proletarianized and forced into a precarious urban existence that often drives them to immigrate. In fact, rather than concentrating the exploited classes in the cities, the general trend at present seems to be for capital to force them into increasing precariousness, with no place to stay and an increasing difficulty for maintaining ongoing relationships. This could be perceived as a frontal assault by the ruling class against face-to-face interactions among the exploited, particularly those of the sort that might stimulate revolt.

Of course, this process of deconcentration is gradual and the exploited do continue to have many opportunities for face-to-face interaction. So it is presently necessary for the rulers to provide a substitute for such interactions which can act as a pacifier and can guarantee that when explosions of rage do occur those involved are not really used to talking with each other or acting together. Thus recreation must be made less interactive. Of course, this tendency toward increasingly solitary and atomized forms of recreation is not only found in the opportunities for commodified play available to the poor, but throughout society. The affluent must also be kept from real interactions of pleasure, because otherwise they might realize that the present society only offers them a larger portion of the generalized impoverishment of life that is this society's main product. Thus, television, films, video games, computer games and virtual reality provide forms of recreation in which millions of individuals passively observe the same simulated events, maybe making the minimal response of pushing a button or flicking a switch to stimulate a programmed reaction that is the same for everyone who makes that response. Real action and interaction have no place in these recreational non-activities. Even dungeons-and-dragons type games are so thoroughly programmed that no real interaction can happen among the players who must completely transform themselves into roles determined by the rules of the game, acting in terms of these rules which often seem like the random hand of fate. In other words, these games are merely fantasies mirroring the present society. The trend toward mediated interaction and play, particularly in its cybernetic form, has caused some people to lose touch with reality, undermining their ability to distinguish actual life from simulated life. People become more gullible, open to all sorts of lies and deceptions. This is probably a major factor in the recent rise in religious and superstitious beliefs. When television, films and computer technologies can portray supposedly supernatural events in ways that appear real and when people's experiences are increasingly mediated through these technologies, then such mystical paradigms are enforced in their minds as methods for interpreting the world, and the healthy skepticism that is so necessary for effective resistance to au-

thority is obliterated. Strange events may very well happen, but any tale of such an event that reinforces mystical, religious, occult or superstitious belief is immediately suspect, because it fits in too well with the social insanity imposed by an increasingly mediated existence.

This society is becoming more insane every day. Involvement with actual people and actual environments is being suppressed along with any space—physical or psychological—in which individuals can create their own interactions. This alienation, which is imposed on everyone whether they are aware of it or not, can be viewed as a kind of schizophrenia, but this insanity is not that of individuals; it is society as a whole that is schizophrenic. And the methods by which it is imposing its insanity are bureaucratic and intellectual with the latter methods becoming increasingly dominant.

As I have already said, the imposition of alienation has never been without resistance. Recently, I read about various cafes and taverns opened with the intention of promoting face to face interaction by people who desired revolution. In the early twentieth century, hoboes created informal “hobo colleges” for the same purpose. People such as Emma Goldman or Ben Reitman might speak and the hoboes and others present would discuss the speech with passion and intellectual incisiveness. Such projects were not revolutionary in themselves, but they were a form of resistance to increasing alienation. In Chicago, when Bughouse Square, a park where anarchists, communists and others who opposed the present social order gathered, argued and discussed how to fight that social order, was closed down, several cafes and taverns were opened with the specific purpose of providing a space for the same sort of intense, passionate discussions of how to transform the world. But where are those cafes and taverns now? They were a form of resistance, but they were not revolution, and as businesses they couldn’t keep going forever since profit wasn’t their motive. They were a form of resistance to alienation that was still trapped in the logic of that most basic form of alienation, the economy, a logic that inevitably killed these projects.

Another form of resistance to alienation is described in a pamphlet entitled, “The Battle for Hyde Park: ruffians, radicals and ravers, 1855-1994” (available on line at www.reocities.com/CapitolHill/Senate/7672, or e-mail them at practicalhistory@hotmail.com to find out how to get a paper copy). This pamphlet documents the potential for festivity and free play in the context of social conflict. It describes four riot situations in Hyde Park in which free play was an essential element. In these situations, the potential for insurrection could be seen. The last of the events described happened in 1994 and was witnessed by those who put the pamphlet together. Unfortunately, in their attempt to give an overall historical view, the writers of the article describing this demonstration turned festive riot completely ignored the question of personal interactions and the role of affinity in this situation. Certainly these elements are essential for understanding this event. When these questions are ignored, events such as those of October 9, 1994 in London remain, for us, events separated from life, events that happen purely by accident, having no relation to our projectuality as insurgent individuals,

because we (and even most of those who participated) have not been able to develop an understanding of how such events connect to our lives and the affinities we develop. An analysis along these lines may be essential if events such as these are not to be carried along in the trajectory of alienation that I have been describing which would transform such riots into events like tornadoes, earthquakes, blizzards—something that happens to people, not something they create.

As long as the present social context exists, alienation will continue to expand, making our lives ever more distant from us and our interactions ever more controlled by the protocol of the commodity and of the institutions of power. So it is essential to destroy this society, to raze it to the ground. But what can such a vision mean on a practical level right now? It is essential to resist the progress of alienation with all our might, creating projects for ourselves which promote real interactions outside of the roles and relationships that social reproduction demands. This resistance must be willful, a conscious refusal of the imposition of alienated and impoverished interactions. This resistance needs to move beyond being merely defensive to become an offensive attack against the institutions and structures of alienation. This attack needs to take up every weapon available to it: detournement, subversion, sabotage, vandalism, irony, sarcasm, sacrilege ... and, yes, physical arms where appropriate—carefully avoiding any specializations. Each would use the weapons she finds most appropriate in terms of his situation and singularity, but there is no use in judging those who choose weapons we did not choose. I know such a call frightens most anarchists. It calls them from the little world of their subculture, their micro-society with its own alienating roles and structures which parallel those of the larger society, into a realm of real risk where imagination must be used to create insurrectional projects based on actual affinity between singular individuals. All of the models and structures in which we've taken refuge must be fiercely examined and critically dismantled, and we must learn to depend on ourselves. If we do not wish to find ourselves in a world where no one really lives, where no one really knows anyone else, where everyone has become a mere cog in a machine meshing with other cogs but remaining truly alone, then we must have the strength to attack alienation in every way we can. Otherwise, we may just find there is no place left where we can meet face to face.

Money and Logos

by M.D.P.

translated from *Diavolo Corpo*

Is there a relationship between the birth of the rational mentality and the development of commercial economy? In the 7th century B.C.E., a whole series of tightly connected social changes took place in the Ionian Greek cities of Asia Minor. It is precisely during this epoch that the rational mentality arose, at the time when maritime commercial culture began to experience its first great development.

In a short period of time, things moved from tribal social structures and ancient monarchy to the political form typical of the Greek city-states. The kinship and religious ties of the landed aristocracy gave way to a new kind of social ties in which the individual was valued above all on the basis of his property: luxury very quickly becomes a political institution. The same aristocrats who had formerly based their power on land ownership and warrior virtue began to acquire wealth first by rigging pirate ships for sea robbery and later by rigging merchant ships for commerce itself. The aristocrat started to invest his property on the sea.

A new form of domination arose, a plutocratic aristocracy that began to concentrate political power and the administration of justice in itself. The wealth that came from the land allowed it to arm merchant ships which reached the farthest ports of the Mediterranean. The usurious loan was developed to a high degree increasingly immiserating the peasant class. Class struggle developed between the peasants and the aristocrats. A third class soon intervened as an intermediary, namely, the merchant class. They were the ancient demiurges, that is to say, the first master artisans who were accustomed to taking their work from city to city, who acquired power through commerce. They were the cadets of the noble class who had been excluded from hereditary rights and therefore began to acquire wealth on the sea. In short, it was about a new wealthy class that rose with the development of maritime commerce. This new class at times sided with the aristocracy and at times with the people, increasing or moderating the class conflicts in accordance with its own interests.

The dominant regime is thus political particularism, the spirit of competition taken to the highest degree, the domination of the census and of wealth. The ruling oligarchy was forced to take an ever-increasing interest in the political events of the city. It gradually lost its nobility and superiority of descent as personal wealth increased; the importance of family and birth

diminished in the face of the individual and of money. Class struggles sharpened to such a degree, particularly in the commercially wealthiest cities, that at a certain point a new form of mediation intervened in order to annul it: *legislation*. Written law (*nomos*) to which citizens were subject and to which they could turn in order to demand their rights became necessary. The *right* is separated from politics. This is a fact of enormous historical importance that was developed to the fullest extent not so much in the Greek colonies of Asia Minor as in the western colonies of the Greater Greece. We will see that it was really here that mathematical thought developed and that the philosophical school that had Parmenides as its greatest representative arose.

The domination of the dynastic oligarchy became political domination; the aristocracy of money replaced that of birth; power was not protected by the traditions of nobility but by written laws that sanctioned the power of money. Wealth became an essential factor for having political rights and participating in the public thing. The aristocrats converted the harvests of their lands into money and assembled slaves for their mines. They gave up piracy for commerce which was more secure. Piracy was the response of the warrior aristocracy to the new merchant class. At first the aristocrats defended their privileges by fighting the sea traders, but later they found it more useful and profitable to become merchants themselves. On the other hand, the new wealthy class, who were at first despised by the nobles in the same way that a pirate chief despises the captain of a merchant ship, acquired ever greater prestige and invested their money in land so that soon there was nothing to distinguish them from the nobles and the warriors. The aristocrats who became merchants and the merchants who became landowners are the trustees of a new form of power, the plutocratic oligarchy.

Beneath the rich nobles and the new rich, a middle class formed that enriched itself through marriage or auspicious speculation or was forced into agricultural or manual labor through impoverishment. Below this middle class were the peasants and artisans. The former were subjected to the usury of the rich and forced to sell the products of their land at low price in order to buy manufactured objects at a high price. The latter, the urban population—consisting of artisans, tradesmen, manual laborers and mercenaries—formed an urban proletariat mainly concentrated in the markets and ports. It was not strong enough to impose its will, but was strong enough to form a troublesome element.

From the 7th century B.C.E. on, Greek history—and not just that of the Ionians of Asia—was characterized by a continuous succession of class struggles. These were precisely what led to the application of written and democratic laws which served the new rich class as a powerful weapon for combating the divine and hereditary rights of the aristocrats on the one hand and the demands of peasants and artisans on the other. The aristocrats lost the privilege of creating and interpreting the rules of social life according to the tradition of blood. The collective responsibility of the *ghenos* and of the family gave way to that of the individual and of the citizen before the city-state. The power of tradition gave way to the power of law.

Another institution of fundamental importance arose in this period of major historical transformation. The coining of money with its value guaranteed by the state was actually invented in the 7th century B.C.E. in Asia Minor to facilitate trade between the Ionian cities and the most important cities of Lydia. The latter had already accumulated considerable wealth in trade with Mesopotamia, so much so that in that period the Lydians were considered the most capable merchants by way of land. The Ionians offered the merchants of the interior an opening to the sea. The Greeks of Asia Minor became the indispensable intermediaries in the trade with all the people who could not be reached by land. The naval power of the Ionians would rapidly increase replacing the older power of the Phoenicians.

Among the many innovations of those times, two factors in particular distinguished Greek commerce from that of the Phoenicians and were the source of its supremacy. The Greeks did not limit themselves to trading slaves or refined products like spices, jewels, precious cloth and the like by sea like the Phoenicians, but traded items of primary necessity and low cost such as oil and wine, ceramic jars, metals, fabrics and utensils, and they traded these things in great quantities. It is easy to understand how this type of commerce established completely new exchange relationships between people. Attention is not paid to the quality of the material, but to the quantity. Trade not only serves rich and powerful monarchs and aristocrats of the more "civilized" people, but the widest range of social classes. Every people whether civilized or barbarian, every individual whether of the highest or lowest rank, is a potential buyer or seller of goods according to the Greeks.

There is another substantial difference. The Phoenicians, who could be considered the most daring navigators of the time due to their navigation skills and courage, faced the sea with tiny ships and built commercial trading centers on the coasts where they stopped as bases for their most distant dealings. The founding of trading centers is a characteristic aspect of Phoenician commerce. There are only a few exceptions to this, and the most important of these is the founding of a city such as Carthage, which quite quickly became economically powerful by being able to rebel against the Phoenicians and constitute itself as an independent naval power. Unlike the Phoenicians, the Ionians of Asia Minor established a sort of sea-based commerce with an essential characteristic that is completely new: *the establishment of colonies*.

It is not easy to enumerate all the causes of Greek colonization, but the most important of these could be considered the scarcity of tillable topsoil that led to the search for new territories; rising overpopulation connected to the increase in wealth; class struggle between rival factions within a single city and between cities that forced entire groups of citizens to make their exodus by sea. This last factor in particular must be taken into consideration since it is the typical expression of the establishment of new forms of social relationships, of the breakdown of ancient feudal kinship ties following the rise of a new social class of wealthy merchants, of the political and social instability that derives from it and of the political particularism of the *polis*.

IN SEARCH OF STABILITY

The invention of money had a revolutionary effect on a whole series of planes, accelerating a social process of which it was itself one of the basic effects: the development of a maritime commercial sector within the Greek economy that even extended to products for common consumption, the creation of a new type of wealth that was radically different from landed wealth and the development of a new wealthy class whose activity was decisive in the social and political restructuring of the city. A new mentality and a new morality were born. The entire traditional conception of human excellence based on nobility of birth and warrior virtue were called into question and later destroyed by the power of money. Money became a social mark of value: it gave prestige and power. Emerging as a fitting human strategy to guarantee the ease of exchange between trading people, Money established a common denominator and a common measure between use values that are qualitatively different. The goods had to be made comparable to each other in order to be traded; they had to be made equivalent to one another through a process of abstraction that ignores the difference in order to find the uniformity, that abstract and quantitative element that is exchange value. Every commodity came to be like every other; thus one person valued another because he possessed the same amount of money. The written law confirmed the process of quantification established by the circulation of money in its process of abstraction—all citizens were equal before the law just as they were before money; all could participate in the public thing and the government of the city with powers proportional to their wealth and everyone could acquire wealth through saving, commerce and speculation, independently of family relations, ancestral religion and the customs of birth.

The process of abstraction and quantification was manifested not only in money and law, but in other areas as well: the adoption of alphabetic writing, the promulgation of a civil calendar responding to the needs of public administration, the division of the city into zones defined on the basis of criteria of administrative convenience, the birth of mathematics and philosophy and, lastly, the concept of the *polis* itself. The city was not identified with any particular group, privileged family or specific activity; it was simply the ensemble of all the citizens whose social relationships, freed from ancient personal and familial bonds, were defined abstractly in terms of identity, interchangeability of roles, equality before the law.

The mathematical, rational, logical mentality arose in the Ionian colonies of ancient Greece at the same time as sea-based mercantile economic structures. The quantitative and abstract aspect of mathematics was joined with the process of abstraction and quantification implicit in commodity exchange.

The social transformation that marks the transition from the ancient monarchic and feudal regime to the city-state is connected to the analogous transformations in the fields of ethical and mythico-religious thought.

The ancient religious prerogative, through which those of royal and noble birth secured their power over the masses, lost its privileged character, expanding and spreading out until it was integrated almost completely into

political institutions. A knowledge formerly prohibited and reserved for a privileged few became public domain; it was discussed in the circle of brotherhoods of sages that at this point no longer imposed any restrictions of rank and origin. The opening of common discussion on topics of a general order that were previously the subject of supernatural revelation, such as the origin of the cosmic order and the explanation of natural phenomena, led to the rise of *philosophy*.

The philosopher was no longer the ancient priest, trustee of a mystery at the service of royal power, but an individual belonging to a brotherhood in which free discussion had opened; later he would argue his opinion directly in the crowded agora, making them subjects of public debate in which contradiction, dialectical reasoning and "proof" would have definitively gained the upper hand over supernatural revelation. The basic problem of the philosopher and the sage was the diffusion and publication of his ideas, placing them in dialectical relationship with his predecessors and successors. He had to take the potential rebuttals of his adversaries into account and was constrained to think in relationship to them. His task was to create schools of thought, teach and transmit ideas and knowledge while perpetually keeping the possibility of discussion open. Through words and writings he addressed himself to all citizens and all cities. The philosopher no longer had a homeland or traditions; rather one could say that he was a "world citizen." He traveled from city to city to discuss his ideas, to learn different things, to counterstrike, to argue. It was much more difficult to keep track of the city of one's origin than of the "school" to which one belonged; in fact, this was one of the small elemental gestures that characterized him. As Heracleitus asserted, the philosopher had to take hold of that which is common to every human being; he had to base himself on *logos* just as the city is based on law; the only law the philosopher obeyed was the law of reason. But the Heracleitean *logos*, the normative principle of nature, started to separate from nature; the original unity between being, becoming and norm was already damaged. The *logos* was not so much the normative natural principle as the normative human principle, that which ruled the behavior of people, their relationships among themselves and with nature. But nature was subjected to a law that it did not itself create that was no longer immanent in it, a law that was imitated in the social order of the city-state that imposed its rules of conduct in all relationships of a person with himself, with other people and with nature, just as money, universal exchange value for all goods, imposed its law on the goods themselves and ruled the relations of people with each other in the realm of commercial exchange.

The same basic needs were also found in poetry before and during the time philosophy developed, starting with Homer. The sense of the transience and inconstancy of life and human destiny, the discomfort and restlessness of those who experienced a world turned upside-down and in continual transformation, appeared frequently in the poetry of this period, expressed in a very lively way. In the midst of such instability in life, the Ionian felt the urgent need to catch hold of anything firm and stable, the necessity of conceiv-

ing a unitary principle and permanent law of change. Therefore, he turned to the abstract concepts of *Fate, Necessity, Justice*, that served him as an anchor. These ethical concepts arose in the sphere of social life in response to the harsh struggles of cities, parties and classes and came to constitute not only the channel between the social sphere and the individual, but also between this and the surrounding natural world. And since long and dangerous sea voyages increased the awareness of the changeability and instability of all natural things even more, the problem of the search for stability and permanence acquired cosmic dimension; in other words, it became a philosophical problem. Speculation on the natural world, aimed at the search for a unitary law applicable to every transformation, found a basic point of reference in the earlier ethical conception and in the abstract concepts of *Necessity and Justice*. In the Ionian philosophies of the 7th century B.C.E. and consequently in Heraclitus, Parmenides, Empedocles and Democritus, the concepts of *Fate, Necessity and Justice* established the permanent, unitary principle of a universal and eternal law in the multiple varieties of phenomena. The word *cosmos* itself was derived from the military-political field, referring to an ordered arrangement. It would give birth to the term cosmology and reflected the mental sphere of philosophy.

The notion of a universal and stable law that rules human life first appeared in Greece in the Ionian epic poetry of the Homeric narratives. This notion was connected with the transition from a more ancient form of morality exalting the violent passions and warrior courage typical of the aristocracy to the more recent one in which courage and force were considered dangerous passions and surrendered their place to prudence and intelligence. The morality of the merchant replaced that of the warrior; the violence of reason and language replaced that of physical force, the calculated risk of the shrewd trader replaced the manifest risk of the noble warrior. Thus, a completely new mentality and ethic arose.

FATE, NECESSITY, JUSTICE

Though always understood as the supreme regulator of all natural and human events, Fate was interpreted in two substantially different ways within the sphere of Ionian thinking. Sometimes it appeared as a dark mysterious force that blindly distributed the good and the bad among people. At other times, it appeared as a normative law, a rational and ethical principle of conduct that a person had to follow so as not to provoke punitive sanctions through the violation of a prescribed order. The first conception recalls the blind natural forces to which the seafarer was subjected and the uncontrolled, destructive forces liberated in the first bloody class struggles that marked the advent of a new society. In the lyric and tragic poetry of the more ancient era, the clear awareness of the misery of the human being who was subjected to a power that was greater than her and that he was utterly unable to control appeared continually. Thus, the original moral precepts of moderation arose. These did not so much draw attention to a need for measure and proportion as is frequently claimed, as to the awareness of the

limited and dependent conditions of the human being of the time. But later, when the first written laws arose with the aim of annulling social differences and affirming the abstract power of money, the ancient decrees of Fate were definitively transformed into norms of moral conduct, a need for order and justice the violation of which inevitably led to sanctions aimed at restoring its validity. From this time on, it was no longer the blind violence of nature, but rather the human passions, the human passions that were considered the original source of the violation of the law of order and justice. Rebellion against the law of *Fate* could be considered reckless and still rouse a sense of secret admiration; rebellion against the norms of justice was simply considered pride and foolish arrogance and was punished as such. Only at this point did the transition to the new ethical perspective of mercantile society in which control of the passions, prudence, the use of reason and the insidious hidden violence of laws and norms of social conduct gain the upper hand over the open expression of desires, over violent emotion, over the force of arms and over recklessness seem fully evident. At this point, the power of the abstract value of exchange over ancient ties and social relationships was clearly manifested.

In the same way, the principle of *Necessity*, which corresponded to the primitive social situation in which the individual was completely at the mercy of great political upheavals and natural forces that the seafaring merchant was forced to face on the sea in extremely precarious conditions (leading to nostalgia for a more stable world and, thus, to reaction in the face of new historical events), gradually gave way to the principle of *Justice*. This occurred when a new social order began to be built, when instability and uncertainty began to give way to stability and permanence, in other words, when a balance based on the common denominator of exchange value was established between the old and new social classes in struggle, a balance which accepted the power of money as law and established individual worth on the basis of wealth. But the new social stability was achieved abstractly through the promulgation of written law and the quantification and rationalization of all civic life. Even though social organization in general was subject to an abundance of stable laws, perpetual unending becoming, the game of changing fortunes and circumstances in which nothing is truly fixed or stable, ruled in the realm of concrete daily life. Only in the realm of the administration of justice and power did the abstract principle of permanence and immutability appear, that principle according to which the social world seems to be ruled by a single, inflexible law, the law of profit. This social situation found its correspondence in philosophy. From the 8th through the 6th century B.C.E., attention began to focus on permanence and on the laws of necessity, measurement and justice; the need to bring the multiple back to the unitary, becoming to being, became increasingly urgent. But no longer in the form of an inclusive, organic conception of nature according to which being is devoid of reality unless it is the principle of becoming and becoming is not acceptable if it cannot be traced back to being, but rather at first in the realm of a dialectical conception that relates being to becoming in the endeavor of a

reciprocal justification and tries to bring the multiple back to the unitary, and later in the realm of being itself that, after denying the reality of all becoming, can only relate to itself. This evolution of philosophical thought can be easily followed, because it retraced the paths of the evolution of commercial capital.

DECEPTION AND PERSUASION

The merchant exchanged goods in order to make money. In doing so, he gave up the violence of arms to make use of a more subtle and refined method, the violence of language. The merchant gave up the spoils of war, easy to acquire but short-lived, for a more lasting profit even though it was more difficult to conquer. He gave up the Dionysian activities of pillage and war for the Apollonian activity of commerce. While warrior people got the upper hand through the immediate violence of their strength, merchant people were too weak and cowardly and had to have recourse of cunning in order to survive. So they renounced the risk of adventure, put off their greed for a time, shunned open violence in order to take advantage of the hidden violence of cunning.

Cunning is the art of deceptive persuasion, and the art of deceptive persuasion is diplomacy. A superiority of language is needed; one has to be coherent in order to persuade with reasoning; one needs to *explain*, that is to say, to make it *plain*, through language, that things cannot possibly be different from what one wants them to be. Explanation is the act of convincing violently with language; it is persuasion through which one can *convince oneself* of the truth of an argument; it is the facility for *convincing oneself*. To explain is thus to persuade the opposing party that the behavior one is trying to secure is advantageous to them. The merchant must persuade in order to sell his goods at a profit, and in order to accomplish this he must play on the desire of the eventual buyers. He must swindle through persuasion. The art of persuasive deception is typical of the merchant.

The powers of thought and language over reality are guaranteed only by the separation between language and reality; but power over reality can only mean taking possession of it. There is a paradox in the fact that this power, which is only guaranteed by separation, must at the same time be a possession. This leads to an endless process in which language and thought continually try to take possession of reality, while continually reestablishing their distance from it. This is appropriate for the activity of expressing themselves as the thought and language of alienated power. The absurdity is the will to take possession of reality in the moment and in the very act in which separation from it is established.

“EARNING” REALITY

In order to better understand the relationship between the development of Greek philosophy and the parallel development of the commercial economy, it is useful to compare the conception of nature held by the earlier Ionian philosophers with the philosophical speculations of Parmenides in order to understand the substantial difference between them.

When the Ionian philosophers spoke of natural reality, they used the word *ta onta*, which means the things that exist, because they perceived reality in its concrete multiplicity. However it may have been interpreted, the essence of the world showed itself to them under the visible form of a plurality of things, rich in all their qualities. Being appeared as singular for the first time in Parmenides and was designated by the term *ta on* which meant that which is. The essence of the world was no longer a variegated plurality of qualities, but rather one single abstract and general quality. The change of language revealed the advent of a new conception of reality. It was no longer made up of the multiple things gathered from sensory experience or speculative reflection, but was the intelligible object of rational reflection (the *logos*) that was expressed through a language that, critically reflecting on itself, found its basic requirement in the principle of non-contradiction.

The Being of Parmenides is *One*, identical to itself; it cannot be other than itself, but can only grow into itself. The Being of Parmenides is intelligible, the object of *logos*, that is to say of reason. It is the object of rational language. Or rather, it is formed in the sphere of this rational language that is common to all human beings, the general abstract element of their reciprocal relations of communication. However, the Being of Parmenides is not immediately visible in reality. It must be acquired through a difficult conquest: the investigation of the philosopher. The essence of reality must be “earned”.

The connection between the Being of Parmenides and exchange value in the form of money, a pure abstraction that is identical to itself, should be evident. Money is accumulated in order to buy goods in one place and resell them in another with the aim of getting money. But the exchange of money with money seems absurd, since exchanging things which are identical to each other makes no sense. The sense in this process actually comes from the fact that money is not exchanged for an equal amount of money, but for a greater amount, thus increasing its value. This happens because the goods are bought at a low price so that they can be sold at a higher price. Thus money can be exchanged with itself; it can represent the unchangeable being that has reason to exist only in itself. At this point, reality becomes *One* in the qualitative sense. Its only quality is “exchangeability,” exchange value.

“The doctrine of Parmenides marks the moment in which the contradiction between the becoming of the sensory world, this Ionian world of the *physis* and the *genesis*, and the logical requirements of thought are proclaimed,” Vernant states. In other words, it marks the moment in which the contradiction between the differing qualities of goods and the single quality of money is set forth. This single quality is known as exchange value, interchangeability, that which all things have in common, that which is the essence of all things, that which makes all things comparable, that which places them in relation, that which constitutes their *ratio*, their rational, intelligible, logical aspect. Vernant goes on: “After Parmenides the task of philosophy would be that of restoring the link between the rational universe of discourse and the sensory world of nature through more subtly shaded definitions of the principle of non-contradiction.” In Parmenides this link—that is to say, the link between the exchange

value of things and the things themselves—is destroyed. The exchange value of things replaces them, representing them in the same way as the rational world of discourse represents the sensory world of nature.

Greek reason is commercial reason. Commerce can take place only in terms of linguistic fraud, and this language is built on deception. This language must persuade, must offer evidence for persuasion, must explain. This language, like the Being of Parmenides, must find its own verification in itself.

China: Capitalist Discipline and Rising Protests

by sasha k

China has gone through enormous changes over the last twenty years. And while it is certainly part of a single, global regime of value—and, thus, subject to capitalism's disciplinary regimes—it is not on the path that leads to the U.S. model. All state-capital relations are hybrid systems; there is no set path or most advanced form towards which all others tend. Each existing form takes up a place within the global regime of value and competes within that regime. China, therefore, should not be viewed as further back on an imagined evolutionary scale; it has its own unique history and no form of state-capital relation is the best for all circumstances.

A simple evolutionary view of capitalism posits the U.S. as the most advanced capitalist country. By oversimplifying our present situation, such a view ignores important aspects of the development of capitalism and the state-capital relationship, and it closes us off from important spaces from which we could critique and attack capitalism. A simple evolutionary schema of social development has been with us for some time, from the early anthropologists, to social Darwinists and sociologists, to Marxism. Such a schema places all societies on a singular ladder of development from primitive to advanced capitalist, and all societies are assumed to follow the same path. Thus what separates us from another society is an amount of time, how much further back in history they are. It is also assumed, therefore, that we can look back at ourselves by looking at other societies. Instead we need to understand how we are spatially separated from other societies. Capitalism certainly has come to incorporate the entire globe; yet we shouldn't assume that capitalism is a process that solely homogenizes the world: all roads don't lead to the US. The Chinese reforms are producing a system very different from the US (not that there aren't significant similarities).

The 1980s and 1990s mark a passage to a new form of the state-capital relation in China. The history of this change is a history of class struggle and global pressures. Within China in the late 1960s, a volatile critique of the bureaucratic institutions and internal political struggles to control alienated power brought about a transformation of the Chinese state-capital relation. The Cultural Revolution was not merely a cynical political movement, it was also an anti-political movement that attacked the institutions of alienated power. The authority of the Party was eroded and the bureaucracy lost its ability to control events; there was a massive refusal of work. At the same time there

was a struggle by many different parties to regain control of alienated power, and to re-institutionalize it. After the sabotage of production reached an intolerable level, Mao and the military reasserted a degree of control.

But after Mao's death a new political space for the control of alienated power opened. Again this space was partially produced by the continuing critique of bureaucracy that, by the late 1970s, had grown into the Democracy Wall movement. Deng Xiaoping politically rode that critique to take power over the bureaucracy. Yet Deng could in no way rebuild the power that Mao and the earlier bureaucracy held over people; a new system had to be built, a new form of the state-capital relation. This new system had to rely more on social consensus, and could no longer command the level of control over social organization that the old system did. This new system was based both materially and ideologically on the development of technology and the advancement of efficient production. It had to import both high technology and capital for investment.

This fit well with the needs of the global capital. Capital, in its need to ever expand, was looking for new areas in which to invest over-accumulated capital and to sell the surplus of over-produced products: it needed both cheap labor and willing consumers. China had both. Yet when you hear all the talk of the "vast untapped market of China," you should know that the targeted market is the urban population of China, especially the coastal urban population. And the creation of this urban consumer society has brought about one of the defining features of the present Chinese society, the deepening urban/rural split. The big Chinese cities are now part of the first world: huge skyscrapers fill the skyline and are being built at a furious rate, there is a constant ringing from cell phones, gated communities spring up out of farm land on the outskirts of the cities, and the latest fashion is sold on every street. In the countryside, where 75% of the population lives, life is getting tougher and unemployment is growing.

In the late 1970's, the Chinese reforms under Deng Xiaoping began in the countryside by dismantling the collectives and allowing households to take responsibility for growing food on leased plots. Under such a system rural incomes grew rapidly, and, in the late 1980's and 1990's, reform moved on to the urban industries. It is only in the last few years that state industries have had to deal with the pressures of competition. Huge layoffs have been the primary way for these industries to become profitable; still, many have gone bankrupt and been sold off. It has only been by maintaining a national growth rate of around 8% that many of these urban industrial laborers have been given new jobs, although many remain unemployed. The nature of their jobs has also changed. The old state industries guaranteed one a job for life, health care, schooling for one's children, and housing. These sectors of society are increasingly being privatized and most jobs offer little assistance. Many of the urban unemployed have been given make-work jobs with low pay and no benefits. And most new urban jobs are being created by private and foreign investment.

At the same time the rural economy has stagnated. The growth of

rural incomes was 1.8% in 2000, whereas urban incomes rose by 6%. But for both, the rate of growth is slowing, and it is estimated that soon rural incomes will not grow at all. Rural enterprises had grown in number in the 1980's, soaking up much of the excess rural labor. But as capitalist valorization plays an increasingly important role in decision making, these state supported enterprises have been failing at a very high rate, and only about one quarter of surplus agricultural laborers are finding employment in rural enterprises at the moment. Some rural laborers have referred to rural enterprises as "new enclosures." At the beginning of the reform movement the enterprises came in and took over farmers land with the support of the local state, and many of the farmers were given jobs in such industries. Now that these industries are going bankrupt and being sold off, the rural laborers have no place to find work and no land to return to, so they have to head to the cities in order to survive. There is little private and almost no foreign investment in rural areas. In the 1990's, it is the rural unemployed who have grown the fastest (the rural unemployed is estimated at around 130 to 200 million).

Yet the state seems to fear urban unrest the most, and, in order to keep the cities stable, it restricts the movement of rural unemployed into the cities. The wages and consumption in the cities are higher than rural areas. Internal migration is for the most part illegal: one needs a residence permit to live in a city. The state also raised the price of train tickets significantly in order to stem the tide of the rural poor. The status of being illegal immigrants in one's own country has only increased the precariousness of the rural poor, and, at the same time, it has produced a huge reserve of cheap labor. Most of the sweatshops that produce goods for export are filled with such laborers, mostly rural women.

A second—and no less important—characteristic of the new social system in China is corruption. But corruption should not be understood as an irregularity; corruption is how capitalism operates in China, it is the normal economic system. Corruption is one of the most common ways of extracting surplus value from workers. When factories go "bankrupt" workers don't get paid and money disappears into the pockets of capitalists and state officials. To keep one's job and not be immediately laid-off, a worker has to give "gifts" to their manager, and the manager in turn passes gifts up to the bosses. The money ends up in the hands of individual or state capitalists. To collect health insurance, workers also need to pay off managers. New style contracts are called "life and death contracts," as the managers have the power of life and death over the workers; and, joining the market economy when one is laid off is called "jumping into the sea." Protests against corruption are protests against surplus extraction, capitalist exploitation.

Although little reported in the Western media, such protest go on every day in China. These protests usually begin when either a firm goes bankrupt, employees are laid off or wages aren't paid for several months (a very common occurrence in China). Factories often try to "buy off seniority," which means that people are paid a fee when laid off depending on how long they have worked. The organization of protests are quite spon-

taneous; workers will suddenly hold a sit-in at the factory or, more likely, take to the streets to demonstrate. And the outcome can be varied: either the workers will be paid a little to go home and be quiet or, if the protest is particularly disruptive or continues too long the armed police will put it down, sometimes killing demonstrators. Common targets for sit-ins these days are railway lines or highways. On January 12, 2001, 4000 workers from the Jilin Industrial Chemical Group blocked a public highway for three days in subzero temperatures. In January 1999, 100 retired workers from a Wuhan factory demonstrated because their company stopped paying their pensions. 200 police attacked them violently. In October 1998, 500 workers from an iron and steel factory in Sichuan held a sit down strike on a vital railway line and were attacked by armed police. There have been reports of workers handing out flyers, but of course, no publications can be produced and communication between struggles is rare and only via rumor and word of mouth. There have also been reports of workers assassinating bosses or managers who laid them off. While it is hard to get guns in China bomb-making material is easy to come by; and, the number of bombings—many of them unsolved—is on the rise. A portion of these are done by disgruntled workers. Unfortunately the targets have been rather random. And these protests are likely to continue to increase in frequency as the Chinese economy comes to be more fully integrated into the global capitalist regime of value.

The changes driving these protests are due in a large part to the leadership's decision to bring the Chinese economy under the reign of the global capitalist regime of value. Since 1992, the Chinese government has moved to make Chinese industry competitive on the world market. One of the more significant moves to insert the economy into the global regime of value was the 1994 devaluation of the Chinese currency. This devaluation is one of the primary causes of the 1997 Asian economic crisis, as it made the labor costs of smaller Asian nations less competitive thus hurting their investment. The increase in foreign investment in China (almost all in the coastal cities) has been extremely important in soaking up unemployed labor, but it hasn't been enough. To deal with this problem the government has also rapidly increased its spending on infrastructure. Yet again, most of this investment has been on the coast in the big cities. The large State Owned Enterprises have had to become profitable, and many have gone bankrupt. The government has also tried to spur domestic (urban) consumer spending, giving urban workers two weeks of extra holidays to spend money and lowering the interest rate and raising the taxes on savings accounts. But the famous untapped consumer market of China isn't what it is purported to be. There is very little consumer spending in the countryside where the majority of Chinese live, and urban spending has been much less than hoped for.

Another milestone in China's move to become fully part of global capitalism will be its entry into the WTO (probably in the fall).¹ Yet this will only compound the rural problems, as membership in the WTO will particularly hurt the rural population. China's agricultural goods aren't competitive

1. China became a member of the World Trade Organization on 11 December 2001 [Editor].

on the world market. With WTO entry, cheaper agricultural goods will enter China's cities from abroad, and rural incomes, which are already stagnating, will probably drop significantly. The state is making a lot of noise about increasing rural investment, but such investment is much more difficult than urban investment due, in part, to the small scale of farming in China.

In order to maintain social stability with so many tensions coming to a fore, the Chinese state resorts to ideology as well as force. In a society that looks nothing at all like the one Mao envisioned, the Party has had to recreate its image and build a new ideological foundation. It can no longer claim to represent the interests of proletarian class struggle, and instead advocates class harmony. In addition, according to a new formulation by Party Chairman Jiang Zemin, the Party should first represent "the development needs of the most advanced forces of production." The state represents the interest of the builders of high tech industrial park and the commercial developers of nanotechnology, not the proletariat and the peasant. Thus the Party is now more open about the fact that it has more in common with the budding capitalist class in China than with the workers. Both the government and many of the new capitalists see democracy as a chaotic force in China. And both are intent on keeping the workers from organizing or acting in their own interests. Secondly, the Party has increasingly turned to fostering nationalism in order to seem to represent the body of the nation instead of a single class within it. It continues to claim to speak for general interests not class interests. This is the prime reason for China's spending so much to get picked as the site for the 2008 Olympic Games. Thirdly, since Deng Xiaoping came to power in the late 1970s, the Party has used technological development as one of its primary claims to power. It argues in part that it is a rule of technicians more than politicians, that science is in command, and that under its management technological development will free people from toil and poverty. One hears no end to the propaganda that science will solve and is solving the problems of the Chinese people.

But ideological claims on alienated power cannot work alone to smooth over the tensions and contradictions of society. The Chinese state also has turned to a more sophisticated management of opinion to control society. Opinion is a flattened idea that operates like a commodity. It is perfect for a consumer society in which everybody is supposed to find a market niche to fit within. In China today everyone is entitled to their own opinion, but the reproduction of opinion is controlled. Nobody cares what the average person says in their own home, but it is impossible to reproduce your opinions and spread them across society if that opinion is upsetting to the state-capital relation.

The state even allows call-in radio and television shows now: mostly they discuss tame subjects in which people discuss their personal tastes, style and products, but some cover more controversial topics, and they are more tightly controlled. Through its newspapers and media, the state circulates updates on public opinion: "all of the people of Beijing want the Olympic games here in 2008;" "the people of China understand that the Falungong is

anti-science, anti-society, and anti-human." The state now even allows talk shows; but they are very controlled. Intellectuals usually play an important role in such shows, explaining how there are winners and losers in society, and the losers should accept their lot (a strange idea indeed, but one that is all too unquestioned here in the US as well) so that society can develop. Chinese intellectuals aren't embarrassed to resort to social Darwinian arguments or to announce that the market economy is the only one possible. A very few Chinese intellectuals have questioned the way society is developing, but their texts and books get banned. In general, intellectuals are becoming technicians for guiding the reform process in line with market economics.

As in the West, advertising plays no small role in producing 'public opinion' in China. It is not only products that are sold by advertising, but a whole type of society, consumer society. The idea of fashion is being sold as well as particular styles. To be modern is to have varied tastes. Matched up with this new society is a new architecture, a new physical shape to the city. And that architecture is a utopic image that points to the future. Billboards that stand over huge sprawling highway overpasses that reach to three levels are plastered with pictures of huge sprawling highway overpasses: we are modern, the very shape of our city proves it. Beijing is replete with shopping malls, all bright with jutting metal and glass, proclaiming post-modernity has arrived or at least it will be here soon with a little more work, where one can forget one is in the third world, one is really in a first world enclave.

Yet, Chinese society is most definitely becoming much less stable. There are now thousands of protests a year in China; the spectacles of Beijing don't work their magic in the dying, inland industrial cities and rural areas. A year ago, the largest of these protests took place in a northeastern mining town. The mine was closed, putting the whole town out of work. This caused three days of riots, which included the burning of police cars and were only put down by the army. In a few protests, police have even been killed. Rural riots have also taken place, many over water rights in the increasingly drought prone north. Farmers have even attacked gated communities on the edge of Beijing that had taken their land. Yet these outbursts haven't been able to build into any sort of movement. The Chinese government doesn't allow any autonomous organization. Nor does it allow independent publications to exist. When China recently signed UN covenants on human and social rights, it specifically excluded the sections that allowed for autonomous unions and free association. Not that such rights would ever be observed if they had signed them anyhow. It is autonomous organization that the Chinese government is most afraid of, and that will surely be illegal indefinitely.

Many questions remain: Will the Chinese state be able to contain the discontent that is generated by the increasing insertion of Chinese society into the global capitalist regime of value? Will such discontent find effective means of organization and action? Will such struggles find ways to communicate with each other? And, how can we act in solidarity with such struggles?

Section Three: Hot Tide Discussion Bulletin

The Scale of Capitalism

and Resistance

by Leila and sasha k

In the face of the new form of globalization, some have argued that we must return to the nation state or to culture as the privileged site of struggle, others have maintained that the individual is necessarily the site of confrontation. Many Marxists, on the other hand, have argued theoretically that the world proletariat, often understood as a homogenous entity, must unite as one to overthrow capitalism. In practice, Marxists have usually attempted to organize the proletariat at the scale of the nationality. The present moment in the capitalist process shows the limits of these approaches and the need to think critically about the issue of scale and difference in opposing capitalism. Today, more than ever, we need to pay attention to both ends of the scale: the universal (global capitalism and global capitalist culture) and to the particular (how capitalism operates in a particular geographic situation, culture or how it effects particular individuals or groups). One dichotomy we wish to avoid, however, is that contained in the idea that capitalism is the universal and homogenous and culture is the particular and heterogeneous. One project that Hot Tide is involved in, therefore, is to rethink the contradictions between anarchism (especially individualist and insurrectionary anarchism) and anti-state communism and autonomous Marxism. This is both a question of theorization. How does capitalism operate on different spatial scales? How does it produce difference across the globe? What forms of resistance and positive self-valorization is emerging in the present moment and organization (how are diverse people—a multitude—with diverse goals to attack capitalism effectively without erasing or repressing their differences); the two should not be separated.

We will write a series of articles in order to stimulate such a discussion in both *Hot Tide* and *Killing King Abacus*.

Points for further discussion:

1. The most recent phase of globalization is a new spatial organization of capitalism. Yet it is simplistic to understand this new phase of globalization as the emergence of pure capitalism and the destruction of the nation state (it is strange that some anarchists have recently fallen into such rhetoric) or as simply the homogenization of the globe. Capitalism works on many levels to produce differences around the globe, it doesn't only produce homogenization. While capitalism works to free certain flows of trade and capital, for instance, it also always ties these flows down on new levels. And while the role of the state is certainly changing, there is no pure capitalism that wishes to wipe the state

out completely. Capitalists use state power to reorganize global power relations. States take part in the construction of new or reinvented nodes of power such as the World Bank, the IMF, NATO, and the WTO. It is through states that these institutions gain legitimacy. At the same time that states are losing some control over the flow of trade and capital, the control of many states over the lives and actions of their populations has increased. The state and capital have sunk their tentacles deeper into our very being. At the same time, capitalism helps to produce uneven geographic conditions around the globe: some states become stronger while being retooled and others grow weaker. It is also true however, that the globe has almost been completely enveloped in under a single logic of power and value, and states must operate within that logic.

2. We need to reconceptualize how we envision resistance to capitalism. The time for thinking in terms of the 'mass' is long gone (if there ever was one); we need to be able to conceptualize resistance without either wiping out our differences, or denying commonality in struggle (there is only one capitalism). There is no homogenous mass, only a multitude of participants in the struggle against capitalism. This seeming contradiction between the desires of an individual and the struggle of the multitude is indeed difficult to attend to, but it is enormously important. In moments of struggle we need to make space for our differences while attacking the many headed hydra of capitalism. On the level of organization, this means we should never again attempt to build a single, overarching organization; the autonomy of self-organization must always be maintained. In addition, organizations should have a particular purpose for which they come together, and once that particular purpose has been reached they should disband. Permanent organizations have a tendency to become authoritarian and waste most of the energy of the participants in trying to 'build the organization' or push its line.

3. It's the date, not only the target. The recent string of anti-capitalist protests, while not without problems, have given a powerful new form to the anti-capitalist struggle. This has been especially true in their ability to link up diverse struggles without wiping out their particularity. The brilliance of these struggles has been their organization around a certain date on which a global capitalist institution is meeting. While there were large protests at the site of a major target, it was the date and capitalism in its many aspects that was the prime focus. Thus one is encouraged to attack a target of one's own choice on that day. Attacks on such diverse targets on the same day that a global capitalist institution meets, link many struggles without causing them to march to the same drummer or suppressing the diversity of these struggles until 'the organization' names the time (after the revolution?). The simultaneity of these struggles links them up in our imaginations; this allows us to begin in understand a common enemy. We have no need to go to Seattle, Washington, or Prague (although doing so is fine); pick your own target in your area, for N30 or S11, and find the local particular expression of an always globalizing capitalism as your target.

Terrorist Threats

by Leila and sasha k

Terrorism has long been a useful term for the state. Recently, the state has widened its applications so that nearly anything can be considered terrorism. New brands of terrorism have emerged such as eco-terrorism and cyber-terrorism. The FBI has labeled anti-globalization groups and others like the ELF and ALF—special interest extremists? The legal definition of terrorism is broadening in many states and countries (for example, the new British terrorism law). Here in San Francisco, simply putting up posters lead to a felony charge and be labeled as a terrorist threat. At the same time the military is expanding its use further and further into domestic affairs here in the US. The typical media image of terrorism is not limited to the usual racist anti-Arab hype but now it is just as often the enemy within: the Eugene anarchists, the Unabomber, Timothy McVeigh. The division between spheres of control is changing: foreign affairs are treated as domestic and domestic affairs are treated as foreign. Hence the labeling of wars as police actions. The U.S. military's spheres of control encompass situations as varied as the Kosovo war and local anti-globalization protests: rubber bullets in Seattle and uranium shells in Kosovo. The military is finding crisis everywhere.

From Manifest Destiny to the Monroe Doctrine the US has always aimed to expand its domain. The US has been a dominant world power since WWII, however the form of US hegemony has recently changed. The classic unilateral Latin American invasions and CIA organized coups (Guatemala, Dominican Republic, Chile, Granada, Panama), occurred in the context of the Monroe Doctrine: a US dominated western hemisphere. US military intervention in far-flung corners of the globe is becoming more common than before and necessitates less of a pretext. These interventions are now rarely unilateral US actions. The US elicits the help of other countries through NATO and the UN when it can, this is a logical maneuver that accompanies a move from a specific sphere of geopolitical control (kept in check by the Soviet Union) to a global sphere of control. Of course, the US acts alone when it fails to achieve support for multilateral action. As Madeline Albright described the situation, the US is able to act "multilaterally whenever possible, unilaterally whenever necessary." The addition of NATO and the UN changes the form of US hegemony from one nation's imperialism towards the creation of a one global empire ruled by a US dominated complex of states and financial organizations (such as the WTO, IMF, the World Bank).

Recently, the military quickly appeared at major demonstrations. Nerve gas that was used in the gulf war was used in Seattle. In DC during the A17 protests, the US Army and Security Command helped the DC police in their surveillance of protesters. According to the Intelligence Newsletter report hundreds of Army intelligence operatives were present during the DC demo. According to the military's own documents, during the 1990s' the US Army Intelligence and Security Command (INSCOM) was drawn into contingency operations other than war all over the globe? or domestic operations that are "law enforcement" support missions in civil disturbance suppression. Apparently, according to INSCOM the difference between Seattle and Somalia is simply a question of tactics.

While violent attacks on Mexicans trying to cross our borders continue, there is more and more talk of a globalized world of porous borders. Openness is more virtual than real. Information and capital cross borders more easily while the movement of people is more easily tracked and restricted. The government's creation of the term cyber-terrorism is the perfect answer to the legal glitches of increased military snooping in domestic affairs. The internet crosses borders, therefore cyber-terrorism control is legally placed within the sphere of military affairs. What this meant for the year 2000 budget was that millions of defense budget dollars were spent on wiretaps. It used to be the FBI's job to spy on us but now the military is stepping up its surveillance. The defense department can now quite easily wiretap your house in NJ in the name of stopping terrorism. The lines between old spheres of control is blurring but in this case this merely results in the widening of the domains of both the FBI and the military.

Lately American democracy is showing its true face more clearly. As civil society shrinks, the state's uglier functions become more visible as they spread throughout society. Prison budgets grow while school budgets shrink and rubber bullets in Seattle tarnish the image of Officer-friendly as the military becomes the police and the police more military like. Slowly, the image of a free society is fading while the image of the criminal or terrorist "enemy within" multiplies endlessly in a house of mirrors. In spite of diminishing crime rates, images of violent crime are more and more common helping to justify the imprisonment of two million people in the US. There is more and more talk about California the police state, yet the middle class feels safe in the midst of the mass arrests because the criminal is always assumed to be someone else: someone poorer, browner, less moral. A police state and the militarization of society become possible along with the disappearance of a "civil society" while people sit at home, isolated, watching "society" on TV. The televised image of the enemy within (criminal or terrorist) is aiding the state in its assault of surveillance and imprisonment which in the end effects even the middle class that supports the disappearance of the carrot of personal freedoms that the state used to offer. When the middle class no longer believes that they live in the land of the free, the state will need to fill the ideological vacuum, it will need to justify itself. Will the anti-crime and anti-terrorism rhetoric be enough to fill the void?

Direct Action Cannot be Televised!

by Leila and sasha k

Since Seattle, global financial and trade organizations have been honing up their media image. To get us to bargain with them, they have tried to look sympathetic and concerned. The meeting in Prague was full of talk about poverty. During the meeting in Prague a World Bank ad said: "the purpose of the World Bank has always been fighting poverty." Another mentions "justice for all." The World Bank seems to have learned from the media master—Bill Clinton—how to create a compassionate image. In Seattle Clinton said: "I sympathize with the protestors." Then Tony Blair (a man famous for copying Clinton's tricks) made a similar statement during the oil price/tax road blockades in September. He expressed sympathy but said in his public-school accent that he disagrees with their methods and that "they're not going through the proper channels." As if he would have conceded to their demands if they'd been more polite. A week later in Prague we hear the same Clintonesque bullshit, a World Bank representative said: "We sympathize with the questions the protestors are proposing but we disagree with their methods. We think they're going about this in the wrong way. We want dialogue not force." Then, another World Bank representative said: "These are important meetings, about ending AIDS and poverty; what we want is dialogue not diatribes. ... We want a globalization that will benefit everybody." And to top it off, James Wolfenson, President of the World Bank said: "Poverty is in our neighborhood wherever we live." I'd love to be the poor person that lives in his neighborhood.

The fact that the World Bank wants dialogue is a measure of our success in the streets. They are desperate for us to choose dialogue over direct action because they know that dialogue with them would be ineffective, that they could never really concede to our demands. They can listen to us, politely respond, even make minor adjustments, but they all eventually go home to a gated community of oblivion and have a martini. This is why they want to channel the force of our direct action into appeals, petitions and attempts to manipulate the mainstream media. The first step in this process is sorting out who should be represented; to let us fight amongst ourselves for who gets the best media representation. Even the BBC recognized the recent rise of Direct Action as a tactic in an article about Prague and the September road blockades; of course, they think this is a bad thing. Our enemies recognize the power of our direct action and are taking counter measures. The fact

that they beg for dialogue exposes their fear and thus our power. The scraps handed down to us in order to appease us and divert us must be refused. Compromise with any transcendent institution (the State, WTO, WB, IMF, the Party etc.) is always the alienation of our power to the very institutions we supposedly wish to destroy; this sort of compromise results in the forfeiture of our power to act decisively, to make decisions and actions in the time we choose. As such, compromise only makes the state and capital stronger.

These image games are smoke signals sent to lure us into the media den, a place where ideas become opinion that is endlessly produced and reproduced and nothing is actually done. The media den is a place where thought becomes inept; thought is divorced from action when it becomes merely choice of position. To defer action in hope that such representation will lead to a change in WB or IMF policy for example is to give up our own capacity to act when and where action is necessary: to leave the decision to others and resign one's own power. If one opposes capitalism as a whole then such a tactic is especially absurd: the WB or IMF would never dismantle itself. The media den is the master of manipulation, it intoxicates us until we are satisfied to leave matters in other hands. Meanwhile, we lose our most effective weapon, our capacity to act. In acting we create social relations; in practice the struggling multitude self-organizes. But organization always poses the danger of limiting our active power.

On the internet and in several publications some people have begun to call on the 'direct action' milieu to move away from confrontation. This points to what is perhaps the biggest danger to the continuing struggle against capitalism, the danger posed by those within 'the movement' who are waiting for a chance to represent the movement in a dialogue with the institutions of capital and with the state, those willing to compromise, to end the 'deadlock,' to petition for a scrap. Such compromisers usually work within various permanent organizations that have grown up within the movement whose prime focus is the media. But the work of these organizations aims at effecting 'public opinion' and getting a back seat at the table of power, and involves a complex process of managing the image of the multitude that rises up against the institutions of capital. Within their heads, these organizers chant the mantra "only that which appears in the media exists," as they frantically go from one interview to the next, for in the end they are more interested in what is on TV than what is going on in the streets, in the woods, in the night. This involves two steps. First, such organizations attempt to organize and discipline the multitude of active individuals involved in the struggle. Second, they attempt to manage the representation of the action in the media.

The first step involves taking a multitude, an undisciplined conglomeration of individuals and groups with different desires, and shaping them as best as possible into a mass of disciplined bodies. Foremost, this means separating decision from the necessity of its moment and setting rules of behavior that stand above all the participants. This has even meant physically stopping people from acting and turning people into police. The or-

ganizers are willing to sacrifice the most active in order to get a seat at the table of power. This attempt to contain the action is usually only partially successful and the media organizations mill us down in their image-factories to produce material for constructing a 'proper' representation, cutting off the pieces that don't conform to their bland tastes. They become the spokespeople, eagerly offering themselves up to the media in easily digestible bite size morsels. The spin-doctors speak for the movement, naming it in their image, always hoping for a bigger slice of the evening, half-hour pie. But those who wish to fight on the terrain of image, base their strategic decisions on an idealized notion of political discourse. In fact, this notion of political discourse is no different from the story that the media and democracy tells about itself. Can the organizers be so naïve?

Of course, contrary to the dominant notion of political discourse to which the organizers subscribe, there is no open terrain of political exchange and participation; what we have is a spectacular apparatus of images that produce and regulate 'public opinion.' Public opinion is not something that is first found among the public in general and then afterwards replayed through the media, as a simple reporting of the public mood. An opinion is produced by the media itself; it is a flattened, uniformed idea devoid of all life and connection with desire that is reproduced a million fold through the media. Public opinion is offered up to the passive consumer as one more commodity, as a simple choice: are you for globalization or for national protection? Are you for third-world debt relief or should they pay what they owe? No thinking necessary; we fall right into place, or we are supposed to. Opinions are massified ideas, and offer no hope of communicating our desires for a qualitatively different world. Can the organizers be so naïve? The question that the media organizations constantly pose to us is, should we follow Tony Blair and the World Bank's advice and leadership and join in a dialogue with power? Should we forgo our active powers and move the struggle from direct action and attack into the struggle over image? Our very strength is the creative use of our active powers of attack; their greatest strength is their control over the technologies of image reproduction, the media. If we want to completely destroy the present order, we can't win by fighting on TV.

Points of discussion on organization to avoid defeat through compromise:

1. The lowest level of organization that works in a given situation is the best: look at the ELF.
2. Autonomy in action is the only way to maintain the strength of our attack. Decision should always remain with those who are doing an action.
3. Communication, critical and revolutionary solidarity, and mutual aid are the best ways for groups to link up their struggles; large scale and permanent organizations bury and crush the active powers of individual members.
4. Compromise with imposed decision is always defeat: we remain in permanent conflict with the institutions of capital and the state.

Comments on Hot Tide

by Wolfi Landstreicher

Thanks for sending the Hot Tide discussion bulletin. It is quite impressive despite its brevity, and raises significant questions that need to be wrestled with now by all of us who seek the destruction of capital, the state and all authoritarian structures. Having said that, I have some comments and criticisms to make which I hope you will read in the light of my great appreciation for this project.

In "The Scale of Capitalism and Resistance," several very significant questions are raised. Unfortunately, in the opening paragraph and point 1, it reads like very abstract academic "radical" theory, a barrage of abstract concepts that are difficult to relate to the concrete reality behind them. I bring this up because I think the use of this sort of language sets a tone for how the questions raised in these sections are likely to be discussed. For example, relating the avoidance of the (false) dichotomy of a "universal and homogenous" capitalism and a "particular and heterogeneous" culture to the re-thinking of "the contradictions between anarchism (especially individualist and insurrectionary anarchism) and anti-state communism and autonomous Marxism," leaves the impression that you consider this dichotomy to be essentially a theoretical construct relating to these various conceptions of revolution—i.e., that this is essentially an abstract question (though, both individualist and insurrectionary anarchism are more a decision about how one wants to confront the world than a theoretical method). Here also, the proletariat only gets mentioned as a construct of the theory of some Marxists. You bring up the question of space several times and it is a very important question, but the phraseology you use is very abstract and I wasn't always clear what you were getting at. But all this is just details. What made these first two paragraphs seem particularly abstract to me was the lack of any mention of the very concrete social relationships produced by capitalism and the state—I'm talking about exploitation and domination—or about the role of technology (which is, in fact, of great significance to the space question, since cybernetic technology has created a new virtual space—cyberspace—that is apparently infinite, for capital to exploit. Both the proletariat—as mentioned above—and the individual are only mentioned as constructs of particular theories. All this sets a tone for a very abstract discussion in which the concrete social relations imposed on us and the concrete struggles against these seem distant. To use the example of space, what interests me is a discussion

of how power and capital have come to dominate all of the space in which we live, either driving us out or stealing away the possibility of really living in the spaces we are permitted to occupy, how this double headed monster has exploited this space to such an extent that a new realm of virtual space has become necessary for further expansion of new forms of technology which change the form and practical methods of exploitation and domination and, thus, the real experience of the exploited, and how we can move in the direction of destroying this monstrosity. What I am saying in this long-winded manner is that your first two paragraphs—which, being first, set the tone of the discussion bulletin—leave the impression that you feel that the questions you raised should be confronted first and foremost on the terrain of abstract theoretical constructs. I feel that, from a revolutionary perspective, the place to start is the concrete social relationships of exploitation and domination that we experience, our desire to destroy them and the struggle this creates against this social order. This needs to be the basis of our theoretical efforts if they are not to fall into the realm of ideological thinking.

Finally, in point 2 you bring in the concrete social struggle—an with it, human agency—and the questions move out of the realm of abstraction and start to come to life. This, in itself, is enough to change the type of language you use. The opening paragraph and point 1 read like essay questions on a final exam in an advanced university course. Point 2 reads like the opening of a discussion among people seeking to build a revolutionary practice together. Point 3 brings things to a very practical level, and so I'll wrangle with that a little bit.

The points you make about the usefulness of dates for global action is well taken as far as it goes, but there is also a weakness in centering on dates that are in fact determined by power. The editors of *Terra Selvaggia* put it well:

“What is certain is that this type of confrontation, whatever problems it may cause, is utterly inadequate if separated from a widespread daily struggle, not only because of the ease with which it is recuperated and used by power and its false opposition, but prevailing because it is not at the summit conferences of the WTO or the OCSE that our fate or that of the planet is decided. These summit conferences are only a formal and spectacular moment, a moment that the powerful themselves are considering eliminating because of the problems it creates. The real decisions occur in other offices, in meetings without spotlights and in embassies scattered across the globe. To sum up, the future is not put at risk so much by a few dozen dandies who meet on occasion as by hundreds of thousands of scientists and technicians and speculators who put new means and methods of exploitation into effect daily in every part of the world.”

“So then, what to do? Continue waiting for the dates the WTO sets for our confrontations, being led astray toward minimum results? Or decide for ourselves when, where and especially how to set out?”

The point here being that if one is involved in an ongoing daily struggle against the social order, one may be able to bring something real and effective into these dates. Otherwise—particularly since they are dates set by power—they can readily become mere spectacular pressure valves for social rage. So I would argue that the date is not so important as the ongoing project of insurrectionary struggle into which one may choose to fit the date.

In “Terrorist Threats”—generally an excellent piece—the last paragraph speaks in ambiguous terms about democracy. Phrases such as “the illusion of democracy” and “the image of a democratic society is fading” can be read in different ways. As I see it, democracy is, in fact, reaching its highest level of perfection as a totalizing and totalitarian political system—a system in which people participate voluntarily in the increasing penetration of the structures of social control into their own lives—that is in the increasing police-ization of their own lives. The illusion that is fading—at least for those willing to see it—is that democracy has anything whatsoever to do with freedom, that it is anything other than a system of control which through the diffusion of power and responsibility undermines individual agency and so creates the most penetrative and totalitarian social system ever. What is the democratic citizen if not a cog in the social machine? I couldn’t tell whether what you meant in this paragraph is that democracy is exposing itself for what it really is, but the wording is ambiguous enough that it could also be understood as claiming that the present democracy is a false democracy, thus implying that there may be a “true democracy” that we could support. I doubt this latter is what you mean, but if it is, then it will have to be a point of contention in discussion.

Finally, it is, indeed, important to analyze how capitalism effects people of different regions differently, but it is equally important to examine how capitalism is increasingly imposing a universal condition of precariousness on the exploited classes everywhere and what this means for our struggle.

I hope all this is taken in the comradely spirit in which it was meant—as an attempt to move discussion forward. The criticisms I have made are given precisely because I consider this a worthy project that raises significant questions. There is a great deal to wrestle with as we seek to build our project for destroying this social order.

Our response by Leila and sasha k

On the question of the abstractness of the first article in HT1: One of the primary purposes for HT is to critique some of the problems of the growing anti-globalization movement. Many of these grow out of a weak and undertheorized understanding of the present historical moment of the state-capital relation. And these problems have many implications for practice. We hope, in the future, to make the link between theory and practice more clear. Nevertheless, we do think that we need to develop a more nuanced and historical understanding of capitalism and the state. The anarchist milieu often portrays capitalism and the state as never changing, only developing quantitatively, simply ever more domination. We were hoping to both encourage a discussion of the qualitative changes in capitalism and the state and how they relate to the struggle to destroy them. A certain level of abstraction is useful for such a discussion, although we agree that it should remain tied to concrete struggle and we are trying to do this in HT. The issue of space and scale is one way among many to look at capitalism and we only just began to bring up the issue in our short article. The issue of space and technology is, however, not the only important aspect of the scale and space question.

As to the abstractness of the terms 'proletariat' and 'individual,' these terms are often used as abstract constructs by those theorizing revolution. In privileging one over the other in theory the question of scale is ignored and society can be treated as a problem that can be simply solved. We bring up the issue of scale specifically to note that this scalar problem, this problem of the individual and society or of class versus the individual, has no simple solution; instead, there will always be a tension in revolutionary practice between scalar levels; one cannot just choose to privilege one and ignore the other. We want to make the point that it is false to conceive of individualism and communism as a problem with a simple solution or a simple choice, and that this has important consequences for revolutionary practice. Thus we are in fact saying that it is only when the individual and class are treated separately as purely theoretical issues that a theoretical solution to the problem can be found, whereas in practice the tension will remain, it cannot be wiped out by theory. We are critiquing the use of the individual and of class as pure theoretical constructs for the very reason that we want to open the fertile space of tension that exists between them in practice. This space can also be viewed when one brings the writings of anti-state communists

into communication with individualist and insurrectionary anarchists.

On the question of global days of action, there is less disagreement than it seems. We suggested that the dates of the global days of action offered those involved in struggles an opportunity to link specific local struggles together. In doing so these struggles come together to express opposition to the totality of our social order, they communicate through linked action our desire to destroy capitalism and the state in their entirety. What we suggest is that going to the big event is less useful than continuing with an ongoing struggle. Of course we are not saying that one should only do actions on those certain days, only that there are consequences if we also do actions on such days. We should certainly "decide for ourselves when, where and especially how to set out." Yet, while our actions should not be determined by dates set by those in power, we should not simply ignore historical opportunities when they come up: there is a long continuum between being determined by history and ignoring history and our present social circumstances. Thus we most definitely agree that, "the date is not so important as the ongoing project of insurrectionary struggle into which one may choose to fit the date." What an absurdity it would be to suggest otherwise. Additionally, we need to look more closely at what has been called the 'anti-globalization movement'; we cannot simply ignore it. In the social struggle against the state and capitalism, anarchists will be a minority. We cannot remain pure by separating ourselves from struggle in general and expect everyone to become an anarchist (the author of the above letter in no way suggests this). We need to think critically about how anarchists can act as a minority within such struggles. This is above all a question of organization, one that we will continue to expand upon in Hot Tide.

In 'Terrorist Threats' I used ambiguous language about democracy such as 'the illusion of democracy.' I see what you mean by saying that the last paragraph of the piece could be read as meaning that the problem is that the present democracy isn't real democracy and that I want real democracy. I don't want democracy, I don't want any form of rule. I was using the word democracy in an ironic way. I don't think US Democracy comes anything close to what its name purports to be, a rule by the people, or the majority of people. After all, elections are first bought by big corporations and when that doesn't work fraud will do. This is a very efficient system of control that works very well and this form of democracy has made a lot of progress towards its own aims. I just find it amusing that it is called democracy while other not so different systems are called authoritarian. Although this irony was not intended to imply that I found true democracy desirable, I can see how it would be read that way so I changed the wording of the last paragraph to be clearer.

In the last sentence of Terrorist Threats, I referred to an ideological void being left when the idea that the US is 'America the free' stopped being convincing. But when I think about it further I realize that this has never been convincing. I was being overly simplistic to call this a void. To be more precise, I should have said that the age-old anti-crime and anti-terrorist rhetoric

not only supports the growth of the state's machinery of control but also serves a more general ideological purpose. That is, it not only justifies the building of more prisons and the state's present strategies but also justifies the state's existence in general. While I don't think there's really an ideological void, I do think that there are an increasing number of cynical people who haven't been convinced by all of that "it's a free country garbage" for a long time. It is these cynics that I was referring to. The anti-crime and anti-terrorism rhetoric likely corrals in portions of the cynical middle and upper class who are afraid to walk in certain neighborhoods. These cynical but fearful cloistered types may not believe they live in a free country but probably don't care, these people are convinced they need more police to be safe. People are becoming more matter of fact about California being a police state, but many don't care precisely because they have bought the anti-crime and anti-terrorism story. And hey they aren't stupid, those that are cloistered in big houses in Bel Air need not only the cops but private cops as well, cause people would ransack their houses at the first available opportunity.

Solidarity, Analysis and the North-South Divide

by Leila and sasha k

As capitalism expands its grip extensively across the globe and intensively within our daily practices and relations the divisions between its center and periphery become blurred. Third world and first world have long been approximate categories, many LA neighborhoods have health statistics that are roughly equivalent to those in the third world and the elite shopping districts of third world cities have been largely indistinguishable from those in the rich countries for decades. The recent acceleration of capitalist globalization has sped up this process; corporations are moving to where the labor is cheapest, and when possible labor is moving to where wages promise to be highest. Thus, the difference between the maquiladoras of Mexicali and the sweatshops of the garment district of LA is negligible. While the divisions between first world and third world are blurring in some aspects, this blurring is in no way an equalizing process.

While anti-neoliberalization struggles, most often specifically against the IMF's Structural Adjustment Programs, have been widespread in the poorer countries since the early eighties, many North American activists and anarchists tend to believe the CNN created image of a singular anti-globalization movement that is centered in Europe and North America. Somehow between the words anti-neoliberalization and anti-globalization an artificial gap was created. The one notable exception is the Zapatistas, who made sure that their opposition to NAFTA and neo-liberalization in general was publicized world-wide in part by choosing to attack on the day NAFTA was implemented.

While many are ignorant of third world struggles others venerate them. They embrace third world struggles uncritically because they feel that people involved in those struggles play at higher stakes than we do, are subject to higher repression that we simply cannot understand and that we therefore have no right to criticize them. This argument is persuasive because it brings up a relevant concern. Struggles occur in specific times and places; we should not simply slap perspectives and strategies that grew out of one situation onto another one. That is we should try to take differences into account, but it doesn't logically follow that we shouldn't look at struggles in places far or near with a critical eye. Veneration is a form of ignorance because it refuses to look at the ugly side of a situation.

While not all anti-globalization struggles are against capitalism in

its totality, all are against the unlimited penetration of capitalist valorization into all territories and all relations. The struggles against the IMF imposed Structural Adjustment Programs are struggles against the disappearance of spheres such as health care and schooling that are somewhat independent of 'pure' market forces. As we know, in North America there have been struggles to protect anything from forests, to jobs, to society as a whole from the total onslaught of capitalist valorization. Many of these struggles have goals which are contrary to anarchist aims; some aim to preserve state control over specific institutions or to increase the government's control over the economy. But this does not mean that the motivating forces behind these struggles don't have something to teach us.

For some critique is a reason not to learn about a struggle. The anti-ideological ideology of Anarchism often results in a black and white division of reality. Some anarchists seem to think that being against nationalism solves the problem it poses. Yet just as many anti-globalization struggles whose aims diverge from ours may have much to teach us the same is true of National Liberation Struggles. Our analysis could focus on two levels: that of capital and the state's functioning in a specific places (the motivations for struggle) and that of the struggle itself and its strategies. In Irian Jaya at the moment there is an independence movement that is for the most part anti-development. Factions of the movement are against the large mining company in the interior. This is partially a movement against capitalist penetration since Irian Jaya still has large areas where the people's main means of subsistence are independent of capital's grasp. But as I have said, resistance to the penetration of capitalist valorization is a point within many struggles at which analysis may be useful. The reasons that National Liberation Struggles have surfaced and that they have appeared in so many places are important potential points of analysis that we shouldn't ignore. We cannot merely wish away nationalism. National Liberation Struggles (as well as many anti-globalization movements) recuperate revolt that could be directed against the state and capitalism as a whole. We therefore need to be asking why nationalism is so compelling.

The UNAM strike of 1999-2000 was a struggle which, while not ignored, is often viewed as much more separate from the recent anti-globalization protests in the rest of North America than is actually the case. While Mexico City is closer to San Francisco than New York more people from California seemed to be going to Prague in September 2000 than those who acted in solidarity with the UNAM strikers. The strike was another example of a protest against government cutbacks because of IMF pressure, it doesn't take much of a leap to see the obvious connection between this and the anti-globalization protests in Seattle, yet they are not immediately understood as being struggles motivated by the same force—the further globalization of capital. Anarchists have reason to be critical of the UNAM strike, it was not anti-capitalist or anti-state as a whole though such groups were involved in the strike. Many of the strikers were initially even supporters of the PRD, the ruling party in Mexico City. However, after strikers were beaten and arrested,

support for the party waned. The UNAM strike aimed at stopping significant rises in tuition which would have prevented sizable portions of the student body from continuing their education. Tuition hikes are a mechanism of exclusion, they increase the divisions between classes. The UNAM strike was a struggle against capital's attempts to place more people in a marginalized position so that they can be more easily and thoroughly exploited.

Regardless of our level of distance from critique of the UNAM strike, there is something to be learned from the students' tactics. The students engaged in dialogue with the government. The rector called the students to a last chance dialogue the day before troops invaded the campus. They were led to believe that they had a chance to achieve their goals through dialogue but they were deceived. UNAM economics professor Alfredo Velarde summarized the government's strategy: "The government scorned the struggle of the students and then applied the same strategy they do with the Zapatistas. Since the beginning of the student movement, they let the conflict rot, then feigned dialogue, and refused to fulfill the agreements which they signed, as happened with the San Andres accords." Javier Elorige put it even more simply: "It's the same thing, they dialogue to buy time and in the end they finish it up with brutal force, negotiate to buy time and see who they can beat up in the meantime." The experience of the UNAM strikers is a reminder that dialogue with the state is a futile process.

Thus far we have discussed the value of analyzing struggles which one is critical of, this was not meant to imply that therefore one should extend solidarity to any struggle. On the other hand, critique is not a reason in itself to rule out solidarity. When we are critical of those who share our aims, critical solidarity is a way for disagreements over strategy, tactics and organization to be aired and discussed without trying to block each other's actions. If we continually block the actions of others no action will take place. Notably, since Seattle theoretical divisions have taken on less importance; now that there is plenty to do theoretical divisions give way to concerns of practical importance. This was particularly clear in the call for a revolutionary Anti-Capitalist Block at the A16 Washington DC protest, which was a significant call for solidarity and joint action by all those who consider themselves to be anti-capitalist revolutionaries. As a minority within the movement of the exploited, anarchists must find ways to work and interact with those they disagree with. At the same time this doesn't mean that disagreements should be hidden. It is important that the concept of critical solidarity be understood widely, for all too often a critical attitude is taken to mean lack of support. We can be critical of the Zapatistas while we act in solidarity with the struggle of the excluded in Chiapas against the Mexican state and the imposition of neo-liberal economics. It is always more important to act in solidarity with people's decision to create their own lives, than to agree with their theoretical perspective or the tactics they choose. It is the solidarity with the becoming-active of others that is most vital.

Along with a critical solidarity that is always open to the autonomous action of others we need to build a revolutionary solidarity. Revolu-

tionary solidarity should be active and in conflict with the structures of domination. Revolutionary solidarity allows us to move far beyond the “send a check” style solidarity that so pervades the left as well as the solidarity that relies on petitioning the state for relief or mercy. Revolutionary solidarity communicates the link between the exploitation and repression of others and our own fate; and it shows people the points at which capitalism or the state operate in similar ways in different places. It does this through action not propaganda. By creating links between the struggles against the power structures that form the state and capital, revolutionary solidarity has the potential to take our local struggles beyond artificial divisions between the north and south to a global level.

Assault on the Border

by Leila and sasha k

The next WTO ministerial will meet within the safe borders of Qatar. This is no surprise; did anyone really believe all this talk of dialogue? During the Seattle meeting, an official from China commented that if the meetings were held in his country there wouldn't be such problems as we saw in the streets. And so it is. Some British biotech firms are shifting their genetic-crop testing precisely to China; no elves of the night there yet. Quebec's new wall is being built to protect the FTAA meetings. So what is to be done? More city based Global Days of Action anyway? How about an assault on the border?

There has been a lot of talk about globalization as the disappearance of the nation-state or the border, but the truth is that exclusion is the other face of capitalist globalization. Borders are getting more flexible for the flow of capital and commodities and stricter for people. Those who cross borders illegally are facing harsher treatment. This is necessary for the continued accumulation of capital. Labor is trapped and separated while capital can easily pick up and move to where labor is the cheapest. Maintaining differences in wage rates is essential to an always-globalizing capital; that is why capitalism can never do without the state and its borders. Thus nationalism isn't an alternative to globalization, as a minority within the anti-globalization movement would have it.

The border is one of capitalism's weak points, both physically and rhetorically. All the talk of globalization and one world fades under the harsh lights of the border patrol and the detention centers. Every week we hear more horror stories of human transport, of escape and capture: escape from low wages and destroyed lives and capture within new regimes of precariousness and powerlessness. And the immigrants keep coming. And the walls must be built higher, the penalties harsher.

Instead of another Global Day of Action in the cities, instead of activist tourism to Qatar, let's target the border, the detention center, the gated community, the sweatshop (the sweatshop is the child of the border after all). We need to fight the regime that identifies some as illegal and others as legal. This division enforces a precariousness upon us all, a precariousness that disciplines each of us and opens us to greater exploitation. A continued focus on the WTO and financial capital builds the impression that we are only against a certain type of capitalism. It also opens the movement to co-optation by nationalists and the far right. A focus on borders will expose

the wrongheaded arguments of the nationalist fair-weather friends within the anti-globalization movement, and it will show that the globalization we desire can only be accomplished through the destruction of the nation-state and capitalism. Immigration struggles are found everywhere; for this one we don't need to follow the bureaucrats on their holiday in the sun. The struggle against borders and detention centers is an ongoing struggle of the excluded, the exploited, to determine our own fate. We are all illegal until no one is illegal. Exclusion kills us all.

The targets are everywhere; you choose the tactics. Such a struggle is not a one-day event.

Section 4: Discussion between sasha k and Chris Dixon on Activism and Organization

Finding Hope After Seattle: Rethinking Radical Activism and Building a Movement¹

by Chris Dixon

Just over a year ago thousands of us were preparing for an uncertain showdown with global capital in Seattle. Yet we barely realized that we were about to initiate some of the most successful protests in recent U.S. history. Indeed, hardly anyone believed that we would have any major impact on corporate globalization. At best, we hoped that we might be a significant blip on the nightly news and perhaps a noticeable inconvenience to trade delegates at the WTO Ministerial.

To our shock, though, what we were able to accomplish spun far beyond our wildest expectations. And it was more than the sheer number of protestors or the final paralysis of the Ministerial. In Seattle we experienced our collective power, learned daily lessons from each other, and realized that we could win. In short, we developed a new capacity for resistance with a vital sense of inspiration.

Now, having recently passed the anniversary of the WTO protests, we sit in a markedly different place. The events of the past year have been a mixed bag, but the momentum of Seattle is still alive. In fact, many are beginning to tentatively refer to ‘the movement’ with seriousness nearly unheard during the last twenty-five years. Now more than ever, then, I think it’s important to take pause to consider where we on the libertarian left stand in relation to what went down in Seattle and what has blossomed from it. As one among a number of anarchists who initiated the Direct Action Network and put out the original call to shut down the Ministerial, I’d like to offer some thoughts to this crucial dialogue.

There are many ways, of course, to critically reflect on this burgeoning movement. For instance, numerous anarchists are rightfully pointing to the lack of clear anti-capitalist analysis, as well as the ludicrous posturing about property damage, coming from many of the organizations involved. Just as important, other anarchists and unaffiliated radicals are thoughtfully warning, in particular, of the dangerous racist dynamics operating in the heart of these activist efforts (see www.tao.ca/~colours² for some of the best of this commentary). Here, though, I want to consider this movement from a different perspective, one that has emerged commonly in activist conversa-

1. “Finding Hope After Seattle: Rethinking Radical Activism and Building a Movement” was originally published in *Onward Spring* 2001 [Editor]

2. No longer a live link. [Editor]

tions: hope.

Many folks admit that Seattle and subsequent mobilizations have forever changed how they think about the potential for social transformation and mass action. As activist Raj Patel observes about the A16 actions against the International Monetary Fund and World Bank in DC, "There was a real feeling, as we sat in the rain on Monday, and as our comrades were arrested, that there is a genuine possibility for progressive social change." In essence, amidst the blockades and police confrontations, scrawled graffiti and tear gas, we've found a renewed sense of hope.

There was no secret to it in Seattle. Our determined and imaginative organizing leading up to the WTO protests, combined with our astounding victories in the streets, was a deeply heartening experience for the thousands of us who were there, not to mention the countless others who watched and celebrated from elsewhere. Using brazen anarchist tactics and decision-making systems, we managed to outwit state authorities, endure police assaults, and create substantial disruption. Our ambitious rhetoric ("shutting down the WTO") for once became a reality. And we left bruised, tired, but profoundly inspired.

Since then, the at times haphazard organizing model from the WTO protests has been redefined and re-created across the globe. International days of action like N30, complete with the requisite abbreviated symbols (A16, S11, S26), are happening more and more. All the while, in many of the communities I visit, I discover that, for every one of us who organized for Seattle, roughly five new folks have been radicalized. Presumably, the hope that we discovered at the WTO Ministerial has grown contagious. What else might explain the dedication of so many to carry Seattle's success from D.C. to London, Windsor to Melbourne, LA to Prague?

Look closely, though. Each successive mobilization has certainly energized, radicalized, and won on its own terms, but each has also been accompanied by a letdown. None can quite live up to the size, widespread media coverage, and success of Seattle. Plus, the time and energy required to organize and even participate in each mobilization is literally staggering, often leaving activists and organizational resources exhausted. And folks truly are tired. In the words of radical journalist L.A. Kauffman, "If there's one point on which everyone in the movement seems to agree, it's that action-hopping is getting old." Meanwhile, state repression has intensified, which translates into more preempted, jailed, and generally worn activists. Consequently, it's no surprise that some are feeling disheartened and uncertain.

We definitely haven't lost our collective sense of hope, but it is waning. We need sources of hope, though, if this really is going to become a sustained movement rather than an historical episode. "Hope," as revolutionary feminist bell hooks says, "is essential to any political struggle for radical change when the overall social climate promotes disillusionment and despair." And this isn't a blithe, feel-good kind of hope. No, this is hope on the ground, hope like we glimpsed in Seattle, real hope generated by the social struggles around us and abroad. Without it, we risk forgetting not only

that we can in fact fundamentally transform society as it is—seemingly immutable but not unalterable—but also that we have the capacity to challenge and change it.

Here, however, is the kicker: if we're going to sustain our hope and this budding movement, we have to seriously rethink what constitutes 'radical activism.' We have to stop solely hinging our hopes and focusing exclusively on mass mobilizations, expecting each to be "the next Seattle." In other words, we have to move beyond the myopic view—often endemic among anarchists—that the most 'important' activism only or mainly happens in the streets, enmeshed in police confrontations. This view sidesteps crucial questions of privilege and avoids the reality that social change happens on multiple levels, all while obscuring other avenues for hope that exist around us.

Questions of privilege

Anarchism is fundamentally about dismantling systems of power. And promisingly, this critical orientation is cropping up throughout the movement. But while successive mass mobilizations since the WTO have directly confronted a number of powerful institutions, they have also managed to replicate patterns of power and exclusion, especially based on race and class. No doubt, many anarchists and other activists realize this. I'm not the first and certainly not the most articulate to level these criticisms. I think, though, that they're worth briefly repeating, particularly since many young white, middle-class radicals (myself included) often acknowledge them without really reflecting on them.

Broadly, they can be distilled into a single question: Who can afford to action-hop? And we must understand that word afford with its many meanings: Who can afford to travel across the country, or even the world? Who can afford to risk their bodies in potentially dangerous police confrontations? Who can afford to be away from family and/or work responsibilities for uncertain periods of time? Who can afford to risk their legal statuses with the possibility of arrest? Altogether, not many people.

A key problem, then, with the focus on mass mobilizations is the underlying idea that we, as people who seek radical social change, must each take great risks and make huge commitments in very prescribed ways—and that all of us can afford to do that. Yet this just doesn't face reality. When many folks are working one, two, or even three jobs, taking care of family members, and dealing with immediate crises, they simply can't devote all of their time to activist efforts. Indeed, many people are concerned about simple survival—feeding their kids, getting some work or getting to work, paying the rent, keeping out of jail, staying healthy with limited or no access to health care.

More to the point, direct action, as many anarchists tend to define it, can be deeply exclusionary. While it undeniably empowers some—mainly white and middle-class—it disempowers others. Used as a central tactic of mass mobilizations, direct action can in fact implicitly assume a certain degree of privilege, with dire consequences. As anti-capitalist organizer Helen

Luu explains, “the emphasis on this method alone often works to exclude people of colour because what is not being taken into account is the relationship between the racist (in)justice system and people of colour.” White working-class and poor people, also frequently veterans of police repression, face some similar forms of marginalization.

Further, in the flurry of action-hopping, the focus has so far remained largely global, with occasional forays into the national. And many mobilization organizers continue to frame issues that way. Whether it’s global capitalism, represented by the WTO and the World Bank, or state authority, in the form of the Republican and Democratic National Conventions (all worthy targets, by the way), the connections to everyday lives are frequently lost. What about privatization of city services as neoliberalism on the home front? What about welfare “reform” as domestic structural adjustment? What about daily police brutality and prison growth as massive state repression? The connections are all there, as are the often unacknowledged activists working to challenge these injustices, yet many white, middle-class radicals simply aren’t seeing them. The tragic result is that we lose critical opportunities for linking the workings of global and national systems to local organizing efforts and, in effect, broadening our resistance.

For those of us who can afford to action-hop, it’s easy to overlook how exclusive and often disconnected mass mobilizations are—especially amidst the dangerous thrills of street skirmishes and arrests. For instance, reporting on the Democratic National Convention protests, activist journalist Larry Everest approvingly quotes a young man, thoroughly bruised from rubber bullets, after a major police confrontation: “Damn, I wish we could do this every day.” The reality, however, is that many folks do do that every day—as unwilling victims of police brutality and a racist, classist legal system. And along with many others, they can’t afford to glibly put themselves in that situation any day—a reality with considerable implications for how this movement is shaping up and where our hope lies.

Rethinking radical activism

I certainly don’t suggest that we give up on mass mobilizations. In fact, we need to continue engaging in major collective actions that significantly challenge the legitimacy of existing institutions. In order to do this effectively, however, we should be creating a healthy, vibrant, truly diverse movement for fundamental social change. One crucial step for those of us who are relatively privileged (and therefore often insulated) is to push our outlook to encompass many forms of and tactics for effective radical activism—that is, many sources of hope.

Let me illustrate this with some wisdom gleaned from longtime radical Peter Bohmer. His striking emphasis is that everyone can contribute to social change in both “small and large ways.” Simple yet crucial, this acknowledges the possibility of seemingly small efforts having important—and far-reaching—results. For example, think about Jon Strange and the other folks in Columbus, Ohio, who crashed an internationally televised “town

hall meeting” with US Secretary of State Madeline Albright in 1998, and successfully raised critical questions about US foreign policy on Iraq. Consider the demise of the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) just a couple of years ago, precipitated by small-scale letter-writing, teach-ins, city council resolutions, public education campaigns, and, yes, mass direct action. Or—something with which I’m more intimate—reflect on the widespread success of a handful of us graduating students at the Evergreen State College in 1999 cajoling our administration into hosting political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal as a commencement speaker. These are just a few more recent examples, buoyed by a history of small contributions having major consequences.

Recognizing small and large ways of contributing to social change means including much that is frequently excluded. Further, it means blurring the line between what might be considered ‘small’ and ‘large.’ Fighting reactionary ballot measures, establishing community and cultural centers, educating others creatively, demanding authentic public oversight of police, creating local institutions for mutual aid, building art installations, organizing in our workplaces, sustaining nurturing relationships, challenging polluters in our communities, constructing alternative media, opposing prison construction, struggling for control over our schools, painting graffiti, planting community gardens, protesting welfare cuts, confronting oppression in our daily lives—these and many more contributions can be immeasurably powerful and deeply inspiring. Seen as complementary demands and tactics, they harbor valuable lessons about challenging power, fermenting social change, and developing directly democratic control over our lives. Indeed, they are the potential building blocks of a vivacious, diverse movement capable of winning key gains and, ultimately, transforming our society.

These examples may not seem especially ‘radical’ to some, particularly those in purist anarchist and other circles that categorically eschew anything that hints of ‘reformism.’ In fact, acknowledging multiple forms of resistance thankfully does call into question the meaning of the word radical. Too often this concept is defined almost exclusively by white, middle-class men, self-appointed bearers of a radical standard. I think we can do better, though; and I mean we in the sense of all of us who struggle in diverse ways to go to the root—to dismantle power and privilege, and fundamentally transform our society. What’s lost in easy dismissals and clean dichotomies is that we all choose a variety of tools, tactics, strategies, and demands based on our circumstances and objectives. We should be learning from this versatility, not condemning it.

Pointing out that there are many ways that people act in their lives—both small and large—doesn’t mean that we can’t be critical, strategic, or focused in what we do and advocate. Neither can we give up our commitment, our demands on each other and ourselves. There are, however, many ways of working to transform the world. Let’s learn from elders like veteran activist Bernice Johnson Reagon. She reminds us that the particular ‘way’ or ‘issue’ that any one of us chooses is not the way or issue. If we assume that it

is, we risk ignoring other possibilities for social change, and we miss out on the inspiring efforts of people all over.

Finding hope

Rethinking radical activism is about understanding social struggles in broad terms and toppling conventional hierarchies of activist 'worth.' Equally crucial, it's also about locating and sustaining hope. Overly fixated on mass mobilizations, we can easily lose sight of what's happening around us in our workplaces, households, classrooms, religious communities, neighborhoods, and local activist groups. Yet these commonplace venues can be just as subversive as street confrontations at major protests, if not more so.

Certainly there is something awe-inspiring and magical (not to mention critically effective) about large, militant actions. The WTO protests, for instance, were successful not only in disrupting the Ministerial, but also in enthusing and inspiring thousands. As anarchist writer Chris Crass notes, though, Seattle "was made possible because of all of the organizing that we do day-to-day, the often unglamorous work that makes social change happen." That is, seemingly small contributions—community outreach, creative educational efforts, coalition-building, and much more—laid the groundwork for the victories at the WTO Ministerial. And the same is true for each of the mobilizations since. The hope that many of us have found in the streets from Seattle to Prague, then, isn't isolated; rather, it stems from the hope that we create every day.

Examples are plentiful. Many of the best, in fact, we will likely never hear about. For one, there are all of the dedicated folks who run radical "resource centers" and "infoshops" out of email accounts, small offices, storefronts, campus buildings, and even their own homes. Often unknown beyond their communities, they provide essential resources and circulate crucial information. There are all of the grassroots welfare rights organizations in both small and large cities, organized by some of the most demonized people in our society. Relying on shoestring budgets and all-out volunteer efforts, they organize incredible mutual aid and determined resistance. There are the courageous indigenous peoples, such as the Gwich'in in Northern Alaska and the Dine'h in Big Mountain, Arizona, struggling for the sanctity of their lands and cultures. Steadily, they confront a colonial project that spans hundreds of years. And there are the efforts of those working covertly in the Animal Liberation Front, the Earth Liberation Front, underground anti-biotechnology groups, and others still unknown. My feeling is that we're going to see more, not less, of these kinds of very direct actions.

Keep in mind that this is only a snapshot. Even these examples don't adequately represent the real breadth of inspirational resistance. Everywhere there are folks who continue to plug away—largely unknown—steadily transforming the world, each day, each week, each month, each year. At times barely audible, at times deafening, these efforts can supply a sustained sense of hope to last us well beyond our memories of Seattle and

other recent mobilizations—and carry us into even bigger, more successful, more innovative ones.

Building a movement

Just over a year after the WTO protests, we are at a crossroads. Actually, we are at many crossroads, with critical questions of strategy, vision, and goals, among others. However, one particularly defining choice concerns how we understand and build this movement. On one hand, we can exclusively pin our hopes on what seasoned radicals Jenn Bowman and Summer Thomas call “activist tourism”: organizing for militant direct actions across the globe, carrying each to a crescendo, moving on after the often anticlimactic outcomes, and calling this ‘the movement.’ On the other hand, we can complement mass mobilizations with a more multidimensional focus on diverse forms of radical activism. And further, we can recognize and ally ourselves with preexisting movements of diverse peoples who are organizing in their communities—and have been for a long time. Obviously, I think the latter holds more promise—more hope—for building a healthy, sustained, inclusive movement (or coalition of movements) struggling for fundamental social change on the edge of the twenty-first century.

We can move in this direction. Indeed, a genuine strength of this burgeoning movement, in my view, is its growing willingness to discuss multiple tactics. Black bloc anarchists in Seattle, for example, managed not only to successfully inflict damage on corporate targets, but also to initiate an ongoing discussion about the many ways that we can and do engage in social struggle. Of course, this discussion isn’t always so civil—at times full of recriminations and self-righteousness—but I think it’s a beginning. If we can steer beyond confining debates about street tactics at mass mobilizations, we can perhaps begin to appreciate and consider diverse tactics and forms of activism in many other areas and circumstances.

I don’t hesitate to say that we are forging a new libertarian politics, an innovative resistance with a vibrant sense of hope. And there is, as radical theorist Michael Albert explains, a “logic” to this dissent: “Raise ever-enlarging threats to agendas that elites hold dear by growing in size and diversifying in focus and tactics until they meet our demands, and then go for more.” Mobilizations are undisputedly crucial flare points for this, moments of gaining ground, captivating public attention, consolidating gains, and solidifying our resolve. Yet they are only one set of tools among a multitude of focuses and tactics.

Writer Naomi Klein, perhaps the most well-respected observer of the recent string of mobilizations, incisively points out that the movement born in Seattle isn’t so much a single movement as a conglomeration of concentrations and campaigns with shifting but often common goals. Together, they’re decentralized, dynamic, innovative, unpredictable, and difficult to control. This essentially anarchist character is their distinct power. Consider the potential power, then, of applying this to an even more extensive movement with a variety of strategies and aims.

Ultimately this is what we must do, for social transformation requires a broad approach encompassing a truly radical movement (or movements) composed by the daily activism of mothers, farmers, people of color, youth, sex workers, immigrants, artists, queers, indigenous peoples, factory laborers, teachers, environmentalists, service employees, poor folks, and all of the other overlapping, diverse sectors of our society.

That is where I find hope after Seattle.

“Activism” and “Anarcho-Purism”

by sasha k

“After Seattle” (words that launched a thousand articles) there has been much talk about how to keep ‘building the movement.’ In “Rethinking Radical Activism and Building the Movement,” Chris Dixon adds his thoughts on the matter. After reading the article one is prompted to ask what of “activism” is rethought and what is the movement to be built? In fact, very little is rethought and a critical look at “activism” is entirely absent from Dixon’s celebratory piece. Dixon focuses his discussion around hope, a hope that he calls “critical”; unfortunately, the hope in Dixon’s article is mostly self-congratulatory and contains almost no critical reflection.

The article contains two “criticisms”: 1. the movement, which for Dixon started in Seattle, not in the third world, is mostly white, and 2. Dixon is critical of any theoretical reflection on the contradiction of the movement, what he calls “purist” anarchism. In linking these two criticisms together, Dixon cuts off any discussion of tactics, strategy, goals and, above all, of the role of the activist/organizer.

There has been much discussion in Europe and especially England about the role of activists within society; in the US, due in a large part to the anti-intellectual nature of the radical milieu, such a discussion has mostly been precluded. (Time is certainly ripe for this discussion in the US) This untheoretical approach allows Dixon to talk in extremely abstract terms. The most glaring example is his use of the term “social change/transformation.” In Dixon’s article social change can mean anything at all; it can be change in any direction for practically any goal as long as it is progressive: more or better of something. But this abstractness is not an accidental omission; it is central to the logic of his argument, it is central to the logic of the activist mentality. The more abstract we are in our goals the more that people join our parade: it is the mentality of numbers. This is the Clintonification of anarchism—Clinton made the Democratic Party so bland and middle of the road that even some Republicans could applaud or join it and Dixon proposes doing the same for anarchism.

We need to ask what is the movement that Dixon wants to build? The movement that Dixon is so enthused about is a movement of activists, of specialists in social change, who stand above and outside of the communities they organize. And for the most part this movement is a collection of single-issue groups. If anything has been inspiring in the US over the last year or so

it is that more people have begun to see themselves as opposed to capitalism in its totality. Yet if we add up a bunch of single-issue campaigns we don't get an anti-capitalist movement, but a reformist movement full of contradictions and led by activists. The movement of the exploited and excluded, which is antagonistic to capitalism and the state, can't be built by welding together a bunch of single issue groups; it is a movement that grows out of our present social conditions and our desires for a different world.

However, it seems that to build a movement led by activists any tactic or goal will do, no matter how contradictory. Dixon lists a set of demands and goals of which none suggest any serious critique of capitalism and the state in their totality: they include, "fighting reactionary ballot measures," "demanding authentic public oversight of police," "building art installations," and "painting graffiti..." As Dixon states, "we all choose a variety of tools, tactics, strategies, and demands based on our circumstances and objectives." And when one's objectives remain vague enough any tool, tactic, strategy or demand will do fine; in fact, they can be "seen as complementary." They can be "seen" as such when we remain abstract and unreflective, but in reality the contradictions remain. Yet for the activist it is the spectacle of unity that is important.

If our tactics and strategies are truly to be "based on our circumstances [the capitalist social relations we are enmeshed within] and our objectives"—for anarchists, presumably, the ending of capitalism and the state, not just some general idea of social change—we should be especially critical of tools, tactics and strategies that contradict these objectives, that lead us in a different direction, or that reproduce the very thing we are trying to eliminate from society. For Dixon, however, the "critical" in his "critical hope" is a criticism of being theoretical or reflexive in our understanding. He is critical of making any distinction that might question the abstractness of his conception of social change, any distinction that might force one to make difficult decisions. While Dixon does state that a more theoretical understanding of capitalism is important, for him this seems to remain a separate project from that of organizing; thus practice and theory become two separate worlds, as if one could be done without the other.

Dixon cuts off the very type of reflexive and theoretical discussion on tactics, strategy and, above all, goals that we now need through the coupling up of the rhetoric of white privilege with charges of anarcho-purism. If you disagree with him it is probably because you are a "white, middle-class," male—and probably an anarcho-purist to boot—so you have no right to talk. Such "purist anarchists" are also critiqued as "self-appointed bearers of a radical standard." And the use of "self-appointed" is telling. In the activist world one needs to claim some authentic, democratic position in order to take on the role of "activist," "organizer," or "theorist." The question is, "who do you represent?" for you can't just represent yourself. But we don't need expert, specialized "theorists," we all need to be reflexive and theoretical in our understanding of social change, not as some vague concept but as something intimately connected to our own desires for a different life.

Unfortunately, it is to just such experts that Dixon turns to bolster his argument: everyone he quotes is either an “activist,” “organizer,” or, god forbid, “theorist”: only one of his expert witnesses is even an anarchist, yet he is still identified as a specialist—as if this were some academic paper—he is an “anarchist writer.”

But who is an anarcho-purist? What is anarcho-purism? It is a term that gets thrown about quite often these days, particularly in activist circles. We should, therefore, try to make our thinking clear on this matter. An anarcho-purism is always a morality as opposed to an ethics. Morality is a statement, such as “thou shalt not,” instead of a question posed in the moment. It is a set, blind standard that rules over behavior. Anarcho-purism is a morality that tries to keep anarchism pure and separate from certain tactics or from working with certain groups for the sake of purity. Dixon’s use of the term “purist anarchists,” however, suggests not only that anarchism shouldn’t be a morality—a suggestion that I would definitely agree with—but that it shouldn’t be an ethics as well. In fact, following Dixon’s logic one would have to conclude that anarchism should have almost no meaning at all.

An anarchist ethics is an affirmation, an affirmation of the creativity, desire and power of the individual; it is an affirmation of the ability of individuals to come together and decide their own fate without the need of any imposed decision coming in from the outside whether in “totalitarian” or “democratic” form. As an ethics, it is both a way of living and a way of relating to others: how can we come together—combine—in a fashion that doesn’t restrict, limit and suppress the desire, creativity and active power of each other? This ethical question is at the heart of anarchism. And it is just such a question that Dixon wipes out as he wipes anarchism clean of any content. As an ethics, anarchism recognizes that there is no escape from social life; the anarchist ethic, after all, grows out of the movement of the exploited and excluded, and it only remains vital within that movement. Living this ethic will mean that one will come into conflict with imposed social order, with hierarchy, with any archy or cracy. To live this ethic is thus not always an easy choice, we can’t make it into a Snickers Bar; anyhow, no matter how drained of content anarchism becomes the masses won’t run to sign up any day soon.

That said, it is also a simple fact of language that those who want to reform the present system are called reformists. There are also many people who wish to end the rule of capital and the state but unwittingly use means that can only bring about a reform of the present system. It is, therefore, obviously important to come to a clear understanding of the results of our actions; this is what theory and critique are for, and it should not be turned into a pleasant game of compliments. Yet, as anarchists, we can work with them towards intermediate aims, while always remaining clear as to how such aims tally with our ultimate goals. There are, however, important limits—limits that are obscured when we hold only an abstract conception of social change. Working to “demand authentic control over the police” might be a small step for social change in some general sense, but ultimately it is a step backwards

as it strengthens the legitimacy of the police and of imposed decision. That is of course, unless one's goal is nicer police and "democratic control over our lives"—the term "democratic," which we hear repeated over and over by activists these days, is another term usually left unthinkingly abstract. "Direct democratic control over our lives" might make a nice slogan, but it is vague enough for most politicians in Washington to use.

Secondly, working with those who attempt to limit my activities, my power of acting, is a combination that would not work well. Strangely, it is most often the activists who try to restrict the actions of others—one only needs to look at D.A.N.'s role in Seattle, believing that they could set rules of engagement for others. This is the ethical question always posed to anarchists; when does combining with others multiply our power to act towards our goals and when does it not? It is an important question, not one to be ignored or vilified. None of this means that there is only one way to act, but that just acting without any thought is more often than not counter productive.

Maybe the investigation of white privilege needs first to turn its gaze on the activist/organizer's role as a specialist in social change. Perhaps it is not that activists have been organizing the wrong people or around the wrong issues, as Dixon's article suggests, but that organizing people is the wrong way to bring about a truly different world. There has, however, been a discussion brewing on "activism" especially since the J18 protests. Some of the more interesting articles include Andrew X's "Give Up Activism," J. Kellstadt's "The Necessity and Impossibility of 'Anti-Activism'" and "Practice and Ideology in the Direct Action Movement" from *Undercurrent*. I will not repeat all their arguments here, but hope to push the discussion forward.

In "Give Up Activism," Andrew X critiques activism as a specialized role separate from society and leading to an inadequate practice. Andrew X argues, therefore, that the practice of activism must be given up. "[T]ackling capitalism will require not only a quantitative change (more actions, more activists) but a qualitative one (we need to discover some more effective form of operating)." This is the problem at the heart of Dixon's argument: it relies solely on getting more people involved, more people organizing and organized, but lacks the reflection necessary to begin to move us towards a qualitatively different practice. If anything, Dixon's arguments reinforce and celebrate the specialized role of the activist as one who stands outside and above the masses—the famous real people—to be organized. But, to use Dixon's words, "we can do better." As Andrew X states, "The 'activist' is a specialist or an expert in social change—yet the harder we cling to this role and notion of what we are, the more we actually impede the change we desire. A real revolution will involve the breaking out of all preconceived roles and the destruction of all specialism—the reclamation of our lives. The seizing control over our own destinies which is the act of revolution will involve the creation of new selves and new forms of interaction and community." Andrew X, however, suggests that breaking out of the role of the activist is no easy task, especially during low points in the struggle against capitalism, but we must "... constantly try to push at the boundaries of our limitations and constraints."

In "The Necessity and Impossibility of 'Anti-Activism,'" J. Kellstadt is supportive but critical of Andrew X's discussion, thus the title of the article. While Kellstadt also sees the limits of activism, s/he argues that it is also impossible to simply give up activism. The most suggestive aspect of Kellstadt's article is that it both notes the subjective elements of choice involved in being an activist and the objective conditions of society that limit our ability to simply give up activism: "I think that a rather high degree of ambivalence and the ability to live the tension of seemingly irreconcilable contradictions is central to the problems of formulating an 'anti-activism' and 'anti-politics.' In short, I argue that we must embrace simultaneously the necessity and the impossibility of 'giving up activism.'" Kellstadt critiques Andrew X for being too subjectivist (that we could simply 'give up activism'): "... the collective human dynamics by which social groups and professions (cops, priests, or activists) emerge out of the division of labor cannot be denied or thrown over by acts of individual will, which is the level at which Andrew X addresses the problem.... The 'role' of the activist is not simply 'self-imposed;' it is also socially-imposed. Capitalist society produces activists the way it produces other specialists, the way it produces, for example, that close cousin of the activist, the intellectual." Thus, while Kellstadt states that we need to operate within the tension between the subjective and the objective, her/his critique often falls back significantly into an overly objectivist position. While committing 'role-suicide' won't make the social position of "the activist" disappear, there are always openings to different types of self-organization. We may not be able to kill the role, but we are not stuck in it either; and, if we are to rid ourselves of capitalism we need to struggle in a different way and not celebrate the role of the activist.

Certainly "giving up activism" isn't revolution in itself; it won't make the social roles that are conditioned by our historical circumstances disappear. Nor will it allow us to "truly appropriate an authentic self." Struggling to organize ourselves in a qualitatively different manner, however, can open the potential of insurrection to overthrow capitalism and the state. For such a potential to open, hope lies not in cheerleading, but in a much more critical and reflexive understanding of our practices and forms of organization.

Reflections on Privilege, Reformism, and Activism

By Chris Dixon

"After Seattle"—these are indeed words that have launched countless articles and even more discussions. Various sectors of the intellectual establishment, from analysts at the Canadian Security Intelligence Service to Sierra Club policy wonks, have sought to make sense of the WTO protests. With an arguably renewed vigor, anti-authoritarians are also reflecting, drawing on previous debates, trying to learn lessons, and searching to understand our broader context. Ultimately, the accuracy of our analysis depends on how well we listen to and learn from one another, and from some perhaps unexpected sources of wisdom. As well, it depends on how limber and innovative we can be together in considering systems of oppressive power and struggles that build collective resistance.

In "'Activism' and 'Anarcho-Purism,'" sasha k contributes to this reflective process with a critical response to my widely-circulated essay "Finding Hope After Seattle." Ostensibly a critique, sasha's piece should also be understood as a bridge between a number of important conversations. In particular, he revisits and weighs in on the developing discussion around the problematic role of the 'activist,' especially within the direct action milieu of the so-called 'anti-globalization movement.' To this end, he insightfully draws from Andrew X's "Give Up Activism", J. Kellstadt's "The Necessity and Impossibility of 'Anti-Activism'", and "Practice and Ideology in the Direct Action Movement" by Undercurrent.

Altogether, sasha offers a thoughtful critique that raises some vital questions. In essence, he argues that (1) I rule out "theoretical reflection on the contradiction of the movement" with the pointed accusation of 'purist anarchist'; (2) my defense of diverse tactics, demands, and strategies makes for "vague," "abstract," and "reformist" objectives lacking any "serious critique of capitalism and the state in their totality"; and worse still, (3) the 'movement' that I seek to build is one of "activists, of specialists in social change, who stand above and outside of the communities they organize." Certainly sasha has more to dish out, but here I'll focus on these, his most substantive criticisms.

Let me first emphasize that these issues aren't simply fodder for an ego battle. I respond to sasha, in fact, only because our differences represent some critical fissures within anti-authoritarian theory. More to the point, his remarks epitomize some perilous oversights on the part of many anarchists.

And though I hesitate to generalize, I'll suggest that much of it comes down to a schism between, on one hand, those who (like sasha) see the state and capitalism as the major constitutive elements of our society; and, on the other hand, those who see diffuse and interlocking systems of oppressive power—such as the state, capitalism, white supremacy, patriarchy, and others—as our social foundations. This schism amounts to two (if not more) substantially different approaches toward social change. In other words, it significantly affects why, where, and how we struggle as well as what we acknowledge as 'struggle.'

And let there be no doubt where I locate myself here: I firmly support the latter approach. Helen Luu articulates it best in her recent essay "Personal reflections on anti-racist organizing": "a movement (or movements) that is dedicated to bringing down all forms of oppression simultaneously with challenging global capitalism is the kind of movement/movements we must endeavour to work towards if we are truly serious about fighting for a world that is free and just for all." I'll add that this approach is complex, messy, and rarely straightforward. It involves doing what some smugly eschew: understanding that systems of power affect all of us in a multiplicity of ways and that we effectively resist them through diverse, even so-called 'reformist,' means. Critically assessing 'activism' is certainly crucial here, as is reflecting on our own role as anti-authoritarians.

Power and privilege

To start, I must make an admission: in "Finding Hope," I irresponsibly parroted an oft-repeated myth of a movement 'born' in Seattle. sasha rightfully critiques my failure here. There is in fact a frequently overlooked context to the WTO protests. Foremost, as Pauline Hwang notes, "What the media and the post-Seattle 'movement' are making a fuss over as 'corporate globalization' or 'capitalist globalization' are the same old imperialist, colonialist and patriarchal and—yes racist—policies that have plagued the planet for centuries." In other words, 'globalization' is nothing new; it has very deep roots.

Likewise, resistance has deep roots. The actions of November 1999 were the outgrowth of centuries of struggle, which arguably began with indigenous resistance to colonization in what was later called 'the Americas.' Even in terms of neoliberalism, spirited defiance is nothing new. Workers in El Salvador, students in Mexico, indigenous people in Nigeria, farmers in India, and welfare recipients in the US, for example, have resisted this latest manifestation of capitalism and colonialism (and its disastrous effects) for decades. And from Manila in 1996 to Vancouver in 1997, Geneva in 1998 to Melbourne in 2000, people have militantly protested international trade summits. Quebec anti-authoritarians, organizing against the Summit of the Americas, have introduced an apt slogan in this regard: "It didn't start in Seattle ... and it sure as hell isn't going to stop with Quebec." In short, this resistance is ongoing, often spearheaded by people of color and indigenous peoples; by no means was it 'born' in Seattle.

It's absolutely critical to make this admission because the myth of the

'Seattle movement' is one prop in a bulwark of white supremacy that sidelines or ignores the central role of people of color in a continuity of resistance. And sasha deserves thanks for confronting my complicity in reinforcing it.

Unfortunately, beyond this important point, he seems otherwise wholly unconcerned with the consequences and dynamics of racism specifically, and of many other systems of power more generally. And this isn't a minor oversight on his part; it's embedded in his assumptions. "The movement of the exploited and excluded," he writes passionately, "which is antagonistic to capitalism and the state ... is a movement that grows out of our present social conditions and our desires for a different world." A noble sentiment for sure, but exactly who does "our" refer to? And what are "our" present social conditions?

If he refers to us, as in all people, then our social conditions are widely divergent as we navigate through a complex matrix of systems that award or oppress us, in finely-tuned degrees, based on our genders, colors, cultures, classes, citizenship statuses, first languages, ages, sexualities, and much more. Certainly we have commonalities in our social conditions, yet also very distinct particularities. Any accurate radical analysis requires a focus on both.

But I don't think sasha, along with the approach that he represents, cares to notice particularities. The presumption is a social reality in which we are all evenly oppressed, largely undifferentiated, "enmeshed," as he says, in "capitalist social relations." This generalization is actually easy to make, assuming one is privileged and insulated enough to ignore the specifics of oppressive systems, especially those that don't fall under the rubric of "capitalism and the state."

Meanwhile, the opposing 'liberatory' vision offered is no better. Take, for instance, sasha's version of an "anarchist ethics": "an affirmation of the creativity, desire and power of the individual; it is an affirmation of the ability of individuals to come together and decide their own fate without the need of any imposed decision coming in from the outside whether in 'totalitarian' or 'democratic' form." Again, a noble sentiment, but what about culture, gender, class, sexuality, race, and the so many other differences and ties between us? Whether we are generalized as the "exploited and excluded" or abstracted as one-dimensional "individuals," the systems of power that differentiate and exploit us don't disappear; and neither does resistance firmly situated in marginalization and difference, from the Lesbian Avengers to the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People in Nigeria.

sasha might have offered some relevant theoretical nuances here. Indeed, he might have refined the stronger elements of his analysis—that is, if he had engaged with my discussion of power and privilege in "Finding Hope." Instead he dismisses it as my "rhetoric of white privilege," suggesting that the more crucial question should concern "the activist/organizer's role as a specialist in social change." Certainly the discussion of 'activism' is compelling as well as attractive in its theoretical subtleties and practical implications. However, it's best considered in tandem with other questions,

not to their exclusion.

What is unfortunately lost in this dismissal is not only my tentative remarks about privilege among white, middle-class ‘radicals,’ but also a considerable history of white supremacy, in particular, as it has undermined social movements in the US. As Robert and Pamela Allen painstakingly document in *Reluctant Reformers*, white privilege has been an Achilles’ heel in major movements from abolitionism to labor, all of which “have either advocated, capitulated before, or otherwise failed to oppose racism at one or more critical junctures in their history.” Far from “rhetoric,” this is very much a reality. And white supremacy isn’t the only system of power with a sordid history in US movements; patriarchy and heterosexism, as well as capitalist class stratification (classism), among many others, have their own tangled legacies and tangible realities, each also affording their own sets of privileges.

Following these histories, then, I argue—as I argued in “Finding Hope”—that, as people ostensibly committed to dismantling oppressive power and privilege, we must consider how our efforts unwittingly replicate power and privilege. Or as Trinh T. Minh-Ha asks: “how can one re-create without re-circulating domination?” Addressing mutually-reinforcing systems of domination, challenging power and privilege as they play out in our movements, honestly and compassionately committing ourselves (beyond mere words) to a struggle against power in all of its forms—these are pieces of an answer. Evading the question, on the other hand, is a disingenuous cop-out. It sadly relinquishes the promise of building broad-based, truly transformative movements capable of revolutionizing our society.

‘Purist anarchism’ and ‘reformism’

Acknowledging power and privilege has fundamental implications for how we, as anti-authoritarians, understand effective ‘resistance’ and true ‘radicalism.’ It raises thorny questions. Thus, as we grapple with these issues, the supposed converse—dreaded ‘reformism’—is kicked around contentiously. If we’re not careful, it threatens to delimit rather than illuminate our discussions. And of course closely connected here is the question of the ‘purist anarchist,’ to which sasha ties particular importance. While I dispute its special significance, I’ll accept it as useful entry point.

First I should be perfectly clear: I use ‘purist anarchist’ in a completely pejorative sense, but not unthinkingly. Indeed, sasha nicely encapsulates this term as “a morality that tries to keep anarchism pure and separate from certain tactics or from working with certain groups for the sake of purity.” For him, however, there is a sharp split between this “morality” (a “thou shalt not”) and an “anarchist ethics.” “As an ethics,” sasha notes, “[anarchism] is both a way of living and a way of relating to others: how can we come together—combine—in a fashion that doesn’t restrict, limit and suppress the desire, creativity and active power of each other?” In his view, then, an anarchist morality is counterproductive while an anarchist ethics is vital to our work.

On this general distinction, he and I largely agree. Our differenc-

es emerge as sasha scathingly accuses me of the “Clintonification of anarchism—Clinton made the Democratic Party so bland and middle of the road that even some Republicans could applaud or join it and Dixon proposes doing the same for anarchism.” sasha finds his evidence in my “abstract” conception of social change and, by implication, the “single issue” and “reformist” struggles that it encompasses. “[F]ollowing Dixon’s logic,” he laments, “one would have to conclude that anarchism should have almost no meaning at all.” Formidable words, but they obscure more than they reveal.

Evidently sasha doesn’t grasp my argument in “Finding Hope.” Or else he disagrees. It’s difficult to tell because, while skillfully sidestepping engagement with my discussion of privilege, he also sidesteps the main thrust of my essay: rethinking radicalism, particularly in the context of privilege. As I wrote, “we have to move beyond the myopic view—often endemic among anarchists—that the most ‘important’ activism only or mainly happens in the streets, enmeshed in police confrontations.” In other words, spheres of traditional ‘radical action’ are limited and limiting. And though I don’t believe that sasha fundamentally disagrees with this criticism, he refuses to accept its broader consequences. For instance, where I question the bounds of ‘radicalism’ with examples of struggles like opposing prison construction and establishing community and cultural centers, he conclusively points to “a set of demands and goals of which none suggest any serious critique of capitalism and the state in their totality.”

There is much more to the “totality” that we all confront than capitalism and the state. That’s unequivocal. Furthermore, a “totality” has an undeniable physical presence, and people do in fact contest and resist it every day through a variety of struggles using a variety of means—not all containing the “serious critique” necessary to satisfy sasha. J. Kellstadt nicely observes this, noting that an ‘activist’ perspective (not unlike sasha’s) overlooks a whole layer of more “everyday” forms of resistance—from slacking off, absenteeism, and sabotage, to shopfloor “counter-planning” and other forms of autonomous and “unofficial” organizing—which conventional activists and leftists (including most anarchists) have a bad track record of acknowledging. And this still leaves out all of those modes of struggle which take place beyond the shopfloor, such as various forms of cultural and sexual revolution.

Unfortunately, sasha doesn’t deign to discuss these all-too-pedestrian realities, many of which potentially embrace the very anarchist ethics he touts. They certainly have bearing on the lives of many folks and speak to a breadth of social struggle, but they apparently don’t constitute a sufficient “critique.”

Even if sasha were to acknowledge their importance, my sense is that he would erect a rationalized theoretical division between Kellstadt’s “everyday forms of resistance” and ‘reformism.’ No doubt, he would use a rhetorical sleight of hand on par with the “simple fact of language that those who want to reform the present system are called reformists.” A seemingly irrefutable, self-apparent statement, this actually glosses over legitimate questions: Are ‘reformists’ so easily discernable and cleanly categorized? Are all ‘reforms’ equal? Can they be part of a long-term revolutionary strategy?

So let's talk plainly about reformism. No matter how much some might wish otherwise, it simply isn't a cut-and-dry issue. And while it actually deserves a book-length examination, here I'll sketch some general considerations. Principally, I ask, assuming that we share the goal of dismantling systems of power and restructuring our entire society in nonhierarchical ways, what role does reform play? Must we eschew it, unconditionally embrace it, or is there another approach?

sasha steadfastly represents one rather limited 'radical' view. To bolster his critique of 'reformism,' for instance, he critically cites one of the examples in my essay: demanding authentic public oversight of police. "[This] might be a small step for social change in some general sense," he argues, "but ultimately it is a step backwards as it strengthens the legitimacy of the police and of imposed decision." I respect the intent of this critique; it makes sense if one is privileged enough to engage with the police on terms of one's own choosing. Yet in real life, it's both simplistic and insulated.

Look at it this way: accepting sasha's argument, are we to wait until the coming insurrectionary upheaval before enjoying an end to police brutality? More specifically, are African-American men to patiently endure the continued targeting of "driving while Black"? Should they hold off their demands for police accountability so as to avoid strengthening "the legitimacy of the police and of imposed decision"? And if they don't, are they 'reformists'? Many folks who experience daily police occupation understand that ending the "imposed decision" (often epitomized by police) will require radical change, and they work toward it. At the same time, they demand authentic public oversight of police forces. The two don't have to be mutually exclusive. I'll even suggest that they can be complementary, especially if we acknowledge the legacies of white supremacy and class stratification embedded in policing.

Ultimately, we need a lucid conception of social change that articulates this kind of complementarity. That is, we need revolutionary strategy that links diverse, everyday struggles and demands to long-term radical objectives, without sacrificing either. Of course, this isn't to say that every so-called 'progressive' ballot initiative or organizing campaign is necessarily radical or strategic. Reforms are not all created equal. But some can fundamentally shake systems of power, leading to enlarged gains and greater space for further advances. Andre Gorz, in his seminal book *Strategy for Labor*, refers to these as "non-reformist" or "structural" reforms. He contends, "a struggle for non-reformist reforms—for anti-capitalist reforms—is one which does not base its validity and its right to exist on capitalist needs, criteria, and rationales. A non-reformist reform is determined not in terms of what can be, but what should be."

Look to history for examples: the end of slavery, the eight-hour workday, desegregation. All were born from long, hard struggles, and none were endpoints. Yet they all struck at the foundations of power (in these cases, the state, white supremacy, and capitalism), and in the process, they created new prospects for revolutionary change. Now consider contemporary struggles:

amnesty for undocumented immigrants, socialized health care, expansive environmental protections, indigenous sovereignty. These and many more are arguably non-reformist reforms as well. None will single-handedly dismantle capitalism or other systems of power, but each has the potential to escalate struggles and sharpen social contradictions.

And we shouldn't misinterpret these efforts as simply meliorative incrementalism, making 'adjustments' to a fundamentally flawed system. Certainly that tendency exists, but there are plenty of other folks working very consciously within a far more radical strategy, pushing for a qualitative shift in struggle. "To fight for alternative solutions," Gorz writes, "and for structural reforms (that is to say, for intermediate objectives) is not to fight for improvements in the capitalist system; it is rather to break it up, to restrict it, to create counter-powers which, instead of creating a new equilibrium, undermine its very foundations." Thankfully, this is one approach among a diverse array of strategies, all of which encompass a breadth of struggles and movements. Altogether, they give me hope.

I presume sasha would see some merit in this analysis. To his credit, he admits that, "as anarchists, we can work with [reformists] towards intermediate aims, while always remaining clear as to how such aims tally with our ultimate goals." This is the traditional anarchist line, and I basically agree with it. Indeed, it implies that some efforts toward reform are compatible with long-term struggles against systems of power, as I have argued. Moreover, in my understanding, it recognizes the importance of articulating—"remaining clear" about—the anti-authoritarian, anti-capitalist, anti-sexist, anti-racist politics that we bring to our work, which is critical for broadening and strengthening movements.

But as we bring our politics, let's not kid ourselves. Regardless of our posturing, we don't have all of the answers. As much as an anarchist ethics highlights individual freedom, it also values the importance of openness, dialogue, and growth. In the words of Carlos Fernandez, "We need to keep our lives open, experiencing difference, learning our limits and common grounds." That—beside the obvious strategic importance—is the beauty of working with so-called 'reformists': we have the opportunity to learn from others just as they learn from us, and we grow in the process. If we don't, we're just arrogant assholes—and 'purist anarchists' to boot.

'Activism'

Underlying much of this dialogue is the question of 'activism.' By far, this is sasha's most important contribution in "'Activism' and 'Anarcho-Purism,'" and I would be remiss to ignore it. His strength, in truth, is not so much in introducing new ideas here as in synthesizing those of Andrew X and J. Kellstadt and applying them to the evolving direct action milieu in the US (which, if anything, desperately needs more critical reflection). For the sake of clarity, this cogent discussion warrants a brief review.

In "Give Up Activism," Andrew X warns that the socially-constructed role of 'the activist' is profoundly limiting and woefully inadequate for

the task of doing away with capitalism. "The activist," he notes, "is a specialist or an expert in social change," which contradicts our very intent as anarchists—the abolition of privileged social roles. Moreover, "Activism is based on this misconception that it is only activists who do social change—whereas of course class struggle is happening all the time." Consequently, he argues, we must problematize the activist role.

In "The Necessity and Impossibility of 'Anti-Activism,'" J. Kellstadt agrees with this premise, but complicates Andrew X's critique by adding that a social role cannot simply be 'given up.' "Social groups of whatever kind—be they cops, priests, and parents, or anarchists and activists—come into existence through complicated social processes." And thus they cannot be individually 'willed away.' As a solution, Kellstadt proposes embracing "simultaneously the necessity and the impossibility of 'giving up activism.'" S/he suggests "living the tension" of this irreconcilable contradiction, struggling to revolutionize our society while recognizing that it nonetheless shapes and constrains our efforts and identities.

sasha, meanwhile, develops the substantial common ground between Andrew X and J. Kellstadt. Dialectically rejecting both overly subjective 'role-suicide' and overly objective social or historical determinism, he insists, "there are always openings to different types of self-organization. We may not be able to kill the role, but we are not stuck in it either; and, if we are to rid ourselves of capitalism we need to struggle in a different way and not celebrate the role of the activist."

Regrettably, sasha doesn't elaborate on these "openings to different types of self-organization" or "a different way" of struggling, both of which are potentially rich and especially vital sources of inquiry. But he does find plenty of space to offer my argument in "Finding Hope" as a resounding example of the "activist mentality." As he says, "it relies solely on getting more people involved, more people organizing and organized, but lacks the reflection necessary to begin to move us towards a qualitatively different practice." More damningly, he charges that I "reinforce and celebrate the specialized role of the activist as one who stands outside and above the masses—the famous real people—to be organized."

I will confess that "Finding Hope After Seattle" was never intended as a wholesale consideration of activism, but rather as a critique of some problematic dynamics at the heart of the recent string of summit protests. In essence, I wanted to blow open the confines of the 'protest,' the 'lockdown,' and the 'action.' More so, I sought to ask, with Helen Luu, "Who gets to decide what is 'radical' in the first place and who gets left out because of that definition?" I wanted to strain that term, to push us to recognize the many loci and circumstances of social struggle beyond orchestrated street confrontations—and to find hope in them.

I owe sasha gratitude, then, for connecting this critique to crucial broader questions. Interrogating activism has shed considerable light on my original line of criticism. In fact, the critique of the activist role, especially as sasha synthesizes it, fits well with my more truncated criticisms in "Find-

ing Hope.” And judging from my correspondence and travels, both resonate widely. Indeed, I’ve seen a widespread search among many folks looking to move to the next qualitative step, to constructively push at the bounds of ‘activism’ and ‘radicalism.’

In this regard, it’s instructive to look at James Mumm’s 1998 article “Active Revolution: New Directions in Revolutionary Social Change,” which has captured renewed interest recently. Mumm’s central focus combines aspects of community organizing with anarchist theory. He argues that successful anarchist organizing is fundamentally about building relationships, developing “power with others—power that gives us the opportunity to participate in the decisions which affect our lives.” He sees this process, unfolding in multiple ways and rooted in our everyday lives, as the core of an anarchist revolutionary strategy. Hence he approaches the activist role from a different angle than Andrew X, J. Kellstadt, or sasha, though he is equally critical. Identifying an activist as “a person who is responsible to a defined issue” (which, incidentally, can be anarchism itself), he observes, “The constituency of activism is other activists and potential activists, motivated through their individual moral commitments to a given issue.” Yet, he warns, “primary commitment to an issue is in contradiction to a primary commitment to power with others.”

I don’t agree with all of Mumm’s conclusions, specifically his exclusive insistence on organizing. For him, activism is obviously flawed and therefore organizing is the only remaining answer. And while I don’t deny that organizing in a variety of venues and ways is crucial, I’m simply unwilling to accept it as the answer. With sasha, then, I’ll suggest that we should continue looking for “openings” and “a different way,” always with a commitment to putting theory into practice and vice versa.

That said, let me stress that Mumm has much to offer. His strategy is prefigurative as it seeks to subvert power through organizing nonhierarchically outside often self-involved anarchist and activist circles. As well, it sidesteps some of the pitfalls of activism as it seeks to develop relationships among people rather than mobilizations around issues. In a sense, Mumm resurrects that old adage of ‘base-building’—building organized, rooted bases of resistance—which is part of any successful revolutionary strategy. This is key, for I suspect our collective task ahead will be to redefine and extend the concept of ‘base.’ To greater or lesser degrees, social movements are already doing this, both in traditional spheres such as neighborhoods, workplaces, and schools, as well as in nontraditional ones like cultural centers, borders, prisons, and queer communities, among many others. The question is, are we, as anti-authoritarians, paying attention and how are we participating?

As I mention this, I realize that it is probably right here that sasha and I conclusively part ways. I just don’t think that he is willing to embrace a strategy that would so openly threaten his approach. While he is fiercely skeptical of activists, sasha is equally fierce and deeply exclusionary when it comes to his cherished “anarchist ethic.” As he writes, “[L]iving this ethic will mean that one will come into conflict with imposed social order, with

hierarchy, with any archy or cracy. To live this ethic is thus not always an easy choice, we can't make it into a Snickers Bar; anyhow, no matter how drained of content anarchism becomes the masses won't run to sign up any day soon."

This, then, is the crux. To sasha's mind, anarchists are an insurgent elite, valiant warriors in an eternal conflict with "imposed social order." And with only thinly veiled contempt, he pities "the masses" unwilling to make the "not always easy choice." Perhaps he finds this poetic or inspiring, but frankly it's bullshit. I'm left wondering if he even cares about strengthening or building social movements. Mostly I'm awed by sasha's impressive ability to overlook the obvious parallels between the "specialists in social change" which he so disdains and his celebratory version of those few who gallantly live "the ethic."

In the end, I have no interest in building this kind of radical elite, or a movement of 'activists,' or for that matter, an all-inclusive liberal 'reform' movement. As anarchists, we should be more ambitious than any of those limited options. And we have good reason. A growing contingent of anti-authoritarians is grappling with ways to radically bridge struggles and strengthen resistance. Many, many people are pushing the envelope and experimenting with inspiring projects—from community-rooted anarchist organizing in Bellingham, Washington to networks among anti-authoritarians of color in Montreal. The most worthwhile aspect of critiquing the activist role is in opening up just these kinds of possibilities for innovative modes of organization and sharpened social struggles.

Fortunately our path ahead is forged collectively. Let's endeavor, then, as sasha urges, to bring a true spirit of critical reflection to bear on our efforts. And to borrow a phrase from James Mumm, let's stop trying to create an insular movement of anarchists and instead fight for anti-authoritarian movements. That is, let's build and ally ourselves with vibrant, diverse movements capable of connecting daily struggles to long-term revolutionary efforts and confronting complex systems of power and privilege. I maintain that ultimately that's where hope lies.

Special thanks to Chris Crass and Armin Zomorodi for invaluable feedback on this work.

Dirty Mirrors and Deformed Reflections

by sasha k

My initial response was pointed and limited in scope. It critiqued what I view as some significant problems in Chris' original article ("Finding Hope After Seattle"). It did not state my whole perspective on the problems we face in the world and how to resist and attack capitalism. Unfortunately, this has opened the ground for Chris to imagine a whole "approach" that I "represent" and "epitomize." Most of this is pure invention and assertion, and certainly cannot be found in my initial response nor in my other writings. So much of this response is taken up with showing how little this invention has to do with my perspective. Normally I find correcting such misreadings to be a rather pointless task, but here I believe it does clarify some significant differences in our perspectives as well as—I hope—point towards some theoretical and practical tasks that anarchists must take on under the present circumstances. Additionally, in my initial response to Chris, I did not touch on the points I agree with him on as I was trying to indicate the most problematic aspects of his original article. For example, I never said or implied that I thought anti-racist organizing was unimportant, nor did I dismiss it. I guess I feel that that should be obvious to anarchists (who have been involved in such activity for a long time, although there are plenty of other areas that anarchists need to be involved in), but perhaps it isn't. I hope that this effort at clarification is effective in dismissing some of the most blatant mischaracterizations of my perspective, so that we can develop a more useful discussion.

In my limited critique I didn't elaborate in great detail other "openings to different types of self-organization" as that would be a huge essay in itself. But in the next *Killing King Abacus* (out soon) there is a long (around 10,000 words) article¹ that, while still limited, goes into quite a bit of detail on the matter, and I won't repeat it here.

Let's get some of the more blatant misrepresentations out of the way first:

1: Anarchists as an elite: this certainly isn't the crux. Chris somehow reads my mind, only it must be someone else's: "To sasha's mind, anarchists are an insurgent elite, valiant warriors in an eternal conflict with 'imposed social order.' And with only thinly veiled contempt, he pities 'the masses' unwilling to make the 'not always easy choice.'" I do not in any way consider

1. "The Anarchist Ethic in the Age of the Anti-Globalization Movement" by sasha k and Leila in this Edition page 133 [Editor].

anarchists to be an elite or to be valiant warriors: I do suggest that anarchists are a minority within the struggling multitude and should be willing to admit this; in fact, they have to admit this if they are to work with non-anarchists which is what they must do (we have gone into this in some detail in both *Hot Tide* and *Killing King Abacus*). I also have no contempt for “the masses”—a term I used sarcastically in my initial response as I don’t believe there is anything called “the masses,” which to me implies a level of homogeneity that doesn’t exist in what I usually call the multitude. It would certainly be bullshit to have contempt for those excluded, oppressed and exploited and those of them struggling to end such conditions. I do not have contempt for the excluded and exploited as I am of the excluded and exploited (this, of course, does not mean that we are all equally oppressed). There is nothing in what I have written that indicates any contempt (thinly veiled or otherwise) for the “masses.” Such contempt or pity is much more common among activists who see themselves as standing above the exploited and excluded.

2: In discussing everyday struggles and forms of resistance, Chris’ assumptions about my perspective reach an absurd level, so much so that this misunderstanding seems quite willful, or for the sake of argument. He has somehow decided that I am against everyday forms of struggle, that they don’t fit within my perspective, that I don’t “deign to discuss these all-too-pedestrian realities,” and that to me “they apparently don’t constitute a sufficient ‘critique.’” *Nowhere in my initial response do I attack, put-down, critique, or otherwise disparage such everyday forms of struggle. In fact, I have (over the years and continue to do so) spent a significant portion of time writing about such forms of struggle.* I have always acknowledged and valorized everyday forms of resistance such as slacking off, absenteeism, sabotage, and even shop floor ‘counterplanning,’ and I have taken part in such activity. More to the point, it is exactly forms of autonomous and ‘unofficial’ organizing that I find most powerful. Living in China, it is hard not to understand the value of such struggles, as there are no official forms of struggle allowed, and any attempt to organize lands one in jail. It is out of these forms of non-official and autonomous resistance that the anarchist ethic grows, and this allows anarchists to struggle within—not organize from above—the general population of those excluded and exploited. But instead of paying attention to what I have written, Chris imagines a whole approach that I “represent” and then decides what fits into that imagined perspective and what doesn’t. From someone who claims we should listen carefully to and learn from each other, this blatant misrepresentation and fabrication is quite surprising.

3: Perhaps more damaging (and more bizarre), Chris states that I am “...wholly unconcerned with the consequences and dynamics of racism specifically, and of many other systems of power more generally.” And that this is “embedded in his [sasha k’s] assumptions.” Quite a shock if it was true that an anarchist was unconcerned about racism and other systems of power. Yet, Chris makes no attempt to explain how it is that this is embedded in my assumptions (assumptions that he doesn’t even name). Instead, he constructs a simplistic dichotomy of two types of anti-authoritarians and then asserts

that I am of the worst type of these caricatures and he is of the other. But my perspective has little relation to this caricature, and this will be more clear as this response develops. Just because I believe the state and capitalism need to be destroyed in order to end all oppression and exploitation (I thought this was the minimal definition of an anarchist) it doesn't mean that I believe that they are the only systems of power or hierarchies that need to be dismantled. This isn't to suggest we have no differences in our perspectives; we have many.

Reflecting on which tactics further our goals and which don't isn't just a "rhetorical sleight of hand." After I sent off my initial response I realized that the sentence in which I said calling a reformist was a "simple fact of language" was silly and simplistic—certainly a poor choice of words. Chris is right in saying "it simply isn't a cut-and-dry issue." But that is why we need to seriously reflect on our tactics and goals and not cut off the discussion with simplistic charges of purist anarchism and white privilege. Chris argues that I exclude discussions of race and gender: *never do I suggest that discussions of race and gender should be excluded. I never said that, nor did I imply it.* My initial response focused on the question of activism as a specialized role and as a form of organization. This limited—in scope—critique did not in any way mean that other questions would be "excluded" from discussion. If anything it meant the opposite: A more reflexive look at tactics and goals will, of course, include an understanding of how race, gender, and class along with all unequal power-relations work together to maintain the present social order. And I never said that white privilege was merely rhetoric, that would be an absurd assertion; just because there is rhetoric surrounding an issue doesn't mean that there is no reality to that issue. It is the rhetoric coupled up with an attack on "purist anarchism" that I critiqued as I believe it cut off important discussion on tactics and goals.

In my initial response to Chris's article, I critiqued him for implying that just about any tactic or activity that brings about some change or other to society should be embraced by anarchists. In his response, he is more clear about what counts as a reform worth fighting for and what doesn't. However, we still have significant disagreements about this point, and I still feel that he is not reflexive enough when thinking about tactics and long range goals. (Of course, we both seem to be assuming we have the same long range goals, which might not be the case.) For most anarchists direct action has been the chosen tactic for good reason, yet Chris suggests the use of mediated action as well, and this is what I critiqued him for. The reason anarchists have chosen direct action instead of mediated action is nothing to do with trying to remain morally pure—this is what Chris argued in his initial article—but everything to do with what works. For anarchists, who want to create a world in which people act on their desires instead of being trapped by imposed decision, trapped in conditions of poverty, oppression and alienation, it is usually understood that people can't take back their power to act through means that give that power right back to the state or some other transcendent institution (the church, the Party). We can't use alienated means to end alienation.

The state is a form of alienated power: we have given up our power

or it has been taken from us and it has been instituted in the state form. Alienated power bends back on us and forces us to act in ways we wouldn't otherwise act or to not act in ways we wish to act. Anarchists are for the destruction of alienated power, for people taking back their power to act as they see fit instead of letting the state act for them. This is the essence of direct action; it is the opposite of alienated power; it is acting directly on our desires. If we see something that we feel needs to be done we do it directly and don't ask the state—a form of alienated power—to do it for us. Asking or petitioning the state to act for us is mediated action. Anarchists have recognized that the use of mediated action backfires since instead of learning to act for themselves people remain dependent on the state to act for them. We will not learn to act for ourselves nor will we build power outside of state and capitalist institutions if we use mediated action instead of direct action, if we rely on alienated power to act for us instead of our own power. In fact, in most cases using mediated action only strengthens the imposition of state power and deepens our dependence.

None of this means that anarchists can't work with those who have reformist goals. As I stated before, we must work with others as we are certainly a minority within the excluded, oppressed and exploited. Nor does this mean that reforms won't come about as a result of the actions we take. Let's look at a couple of examples. The campaign against GM foods is a good example of how anarchists can work with non-anarchists. For the most part the campaign against GM foods has used direct action as its means: people have gone out and directly removed what they see as a dangerous technology. As a side effect of this campaign, some governments have instituted reforms in order to limit the use of GM foods. I would guess that these states were acting primarily out of a fear of people taking direct action; they have attempted to bring the issue back into the realm of state policy instead of uncontrollable direct action. Luckily, most of the anti-GM food campaigners haven't given in to state reform and instead have continued with direct action (the reforms will be enacted anyway, with or without our dialogue and compromise). In doing so many have come to learn to act for themselves instead of relying on the state to do it for them.

Compare this to an example of mediated action: Chris states, “[W]e need revolutionary strategy that links diverse, everyday struggles and demands to long-term radical objectives, without sacrificing either. Of course, this isn't to say that every so-called 'progressive' ballot initiative or organizing campaign is necessarily radical or strategic.” Chris suggests that anarchists should work for certain “progressive” ballot measures, ones that enact “non-reformist or structural reforms.” First of all, let's admit that we are at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to ballot measures as we don't have the money to spend to beat our opponents: we are playing in a game that they invented in order to beat us. Secondly, by using petitioning and mediated action we give up our power to the state: not only do we legitimate the state's theft of our power to act, but we learn to rely on the state to act for us. This deconstructs any counter-power we have begun to build through

direct action. It is through just such mediated actions that the state recuperates potentially radical movements. While diversity in struggle sounds good in the abstract, this shouldn't come to mean that anything that brings about whatever change in society is a positive action. We need to make choices as anarchists; not all actions move us in the direction we wish to go, nor are all actions equally effective. It is even more important to be critical in our reflection on tactics considering that we are such a minority within those that are struggling to change the world we live in.

The center of our disagreement seems to be about tactics, yet as Chris correctly points out, it actually stems from our different theoretical understanding of our (as in all humans') present conditions (in all their complexity). To be clear: Yes, I see capitalism and the state as major constitutive elements of our society. Yet, I don't think that this contradicts the fact that there are "diffuse and interlocking systems of oppressive power." In fact, capitalism and the state work with and through such diffuse systems of power. That is why we must simultaneously attempt to bring down all forms of oppression while we attack capitalism and the state. Such a task is certainly "complex, messy, and rarely straightforward." And yes, I do see commonalities in our struggle and our circumstances (Chris critiques me for using the word "our" as if there were no commonalities). Let's try to look at the differences in our perspectives in more detail:

To describe the context of the anti-WTO protests, Chris states, "Foremost, as Pauline Hwang notes, 'What the media and the post-Seattle 'movement' are making a fuss over as 'corporate globalization' or 'capitalist globalization' are the same old imperialist, colonialist and patriarchal and—yes racist—policies that have plagued the planet for centuries.'" Such a perspective has serious implications (as do all perspectives of course). Many people within the 'movement' certainly are "making a fuss" over corporate globalization and others focus on a continually globalizing capitalism—a capitalism that has been a plague on the world for some 500 years. But Chris approvingly cites Hwang's argument that instead of "making a fuss" over capitalism we should focus on imperialism, colonialism, patriarchy and racism. Hwang's perspective in no way suggests a critique of capitalism and the state; in fact, most perspectives that focus on anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism end up defending third-world nationalism (and usually, in the process, the capitalist classes of the third world) in their attack on the racist policies of first-world nations (and they certainly are racist). Yet, even if racism didn't exist, the third world would still find itself exploited and excluded by capitalism. Here I have a serious difference with Hwang and, seemingly, with Chris. I believe that at heart capitalism will destroy the world we live in; it is doing this daily as it daily destroys the lives of those it exploits and oppresses.

A perspective that places imperialism and colonialism at its center often—as in the case of Hwang—excludes a critique of the capitalist logic which is consuming our world and of the oppressive nature of the state which maintains it. Hwang and Chris' perspective moves us in the wrong direction as it forestalls the reflexive development of an understanding of how

oppression and exploitation operate in a complex pattern across the globe; it forestalls an understanding of the totality of our present social conditions.

Again, to be very clear, this in no way implies that capitalism and the state are the cause of all of our problems, nor does it imply that we don't need to deal with the issues of race and gender. In fact, we can't rid our world of exploitation, exclusion, and oppression without dealing with issues such as race and gender, and I would hope this is obvious to most anarchists.

Perspectives that are organized around the simplistic binary sameness/difference construct (this does not, of course, mean that there are not real material basis for such binaries in our world) a series of binaries that are used to valorize struggle or practice. The most commonly used binaries are gender, race, sexual preference and class. (However, in such perspectives class is understood as a cultural category without paying much attention to the class relations of the capitalist regime of value. Thus it is the 'middle class' that stands on the side of sameness and privilege, while if we understood the 'middle class' from a perspective of capitalist social relations we would see that most of them are working class in that they sell their time in order to survive and that surplus value is expropriated from them. But this short response is no place for a detailed class analysis.) The most dangerous effect of such a perspective is that these dichotomies can be used to claim that only those on the side of difference have the right to speak. And this is exactly what I critiqued Chris's original article for: people who question his tactics, who critique them for maintaining or preserving the systems of oppression they are supposed to be dismantling, are in advance named as standing on the wrong side of the dichotomy, and thus the content of their critique is ignored and they are told they have no authority to speak. This is dangerous and it is self-defeating. The vast majority of humans are exploited, excluded and oppressed by a complex regime of interlocking power-relations; while we certainly need to understand our position within such a system, we shouldn't authorize some to be legitimate spokespeople because of their level of suffering (or because of their activist credentials) and others as those to be ignored because they don't stand within enough categories of difference. This is similar to what happened in Maoist China. I certainly agree with Chris that all who wish to end our present nightmare need to reflect on their position in society, yet such reflection shouldn't be used to silence people.

This brings us to another misreading which, more than the others, points to how our perspectives differ; and, therefore, I discuss this misreading in much more detail as I believe it brings up some significant differences in perspective that are important for anarchists to pay attention to. Chris claims that I pay no attention to social particularities or difference. I find this critique especially strange as I usually get critiqued for just the opposite, that I stress the particular too much. Chris states: "I don't think sasha, along with the approach that he represents [that mythical approach I represent], cares to notice particularities. The presumption [*one I most certainly never make*] is a social reality in which we are all evenly oppressed, largely undifferentiated, 'enmeshed,' as he says, in 'capitalist social relations.'" Chris makes no

attempt to explain how it is that I make this “presumption,” and he can’t, as I never do. Somehow from my statement that we are all enmeshed in capitalist social relations, Chris assumes that this means I believe we are all “evenly oppressed, and largely undifferentiated.” Only the most simplistic analysis of capitalist social relations would presume that we are all evenly oppressed or undifferentiated. That is an absurdity. Unfortunately, throughout his response, Chris takes me as the representative of an “approach,” then, instead of discussing what I have said, attacks that imagined approach. But I have very little in common with that approach; in fact, much of what I have written stands in opposition to just such a simplistic approach. Instead of confronting my comments, Chris resorts to creating an easily-knocked-down, cardboard-cut-out of an argument that bares not even the slightest relation to how I understand the complex pattern of our present social conditions or the complex pattern of struggle to free ourselves from them. (I use “ourselves” because it is only in solidarity with others and by joining together with others that we can liberate ourselves from such oppressive conditions, and because there are commonalities in what oppresses us!) If we are to have a discussion, we need to be better at reading each other.

This all points to the need to develop theory and practice in order to understand and attack the complex pattern of exploitation, oppression and exclusion that effects us all. This is not easy: nor can we do so and at the same time avoid the contradictions and tensions that grow out of such a process. Far from ignoring the particular, the tension between the particular and the universal has been central to my writing on anarchism and resistance for some time. Here I quote from my “The Scale of Capitalism and Resistance” from *Hot Tide* 1² and a response to a letter about that article that was printed in *Hot Tide* 2:³

“[The] problem of the individual and society or of class versus the individual, has no simple solution; instead, there will always be a tension in revolutionary practice between scalar levels; one cannot just choose to privilege one and ignore the other. We want to make the point that it is false to conceive of individualism and communism as a problem with a simple solution or a simple choice, and that this has important consequences for revolutionary practice. Thus we are in fact saying that it is only when the individual and class are treated separately as purely theoretical issues that a theoretical solution to the problem can be found, whereas in practice the tension will remain, it cannot be wiped out by theory. We are critiquing the use of the individual and of class as pure theoretical constructs for the very reason that we want to open the fertile space of tension that exists between them in practice.”

And: *“The time for thinking in terms of the ‘mass’ is long gone (if there ever was one); we need to be able to conceptualize resistance without either wiping out our differences, or denying commonality in struggle (there is only one capitalism). There is no homogenous mass, only a multitude of participants in the struggle against capitalism. This seeming*

2. In this Edition page 196 [Editor].

3. In this Edition page 206 [Editor]

contradiction between the desires of an individual and the struggle of the multitude is indeed difficult to attend to but it is enormously important. In moments of struggle we need to make space for our differences while attacking the many headed hydra of capitalism."

Chris critiques me for generalizing about the nature of oppression: specifically he attacks my use of the terms "exploited" and "excluded" as too general and "individual" as abstract and one-dimensional. There is absolutely nothing in my initial response that indicates that I believe individuals are one-dimensional (it might be interesting to hear from Chris what he means by this). As should be clear from the above quotes I am not at all interested in wiping out or ignoring our differences; on the contrary, they are central to my analysis. To be more clear, I believe individuals are enmeshed within a complex network of unequal power-relations. Individuals are both differentiated and homogenized, included and excluded, by such power-relations. The categories of "exploited and excluded" are indeed general, but if I was to name each individual in all their uniqueness, particularity and difference every time I wrote, my response would indeed be a little too long to read in a lifetime. This is, as can be seen from the above quotes, why I use the term multiplicity instead of mass. We all generalize in our analysis, and we must. I am no different from Chris in this matter. Chris uses general categories such as genders, races, and classes, and he should, but let's not fool ourselves here, they are also general categories and we can't communicate without generalizing. It has become commonplace in academic writing to attack other people for using generalities and then blindly using them oneself; let's not repeat that pattern here.

Chris focuses on the marginalized—again a general category if there was one—but somehow he sees this as so much less general than the term "excluded," which I have used interchangeably with "marginalized" for some years. This, of course, is not to say that there aren't significant differences between Chris' perspective and mine; so let's turn back to them. Chris states that resistance is "...firmly situated in marginalization and difference...." Again, this is why certain people are authorized as legitimate representatives of the marginalized and others are excluded from speaking on the topic. For me the vast majority of humans are exploited and excluded, they form the multitude of actors from which resistance and attack grow. As anarchists we are a minority within this current—a minority which, unlike the activist who stands above the masses to organize them, is part of that current.

Humans all live under the capitalist regime of value, and while this unifies us in one sense, it doesn't only homogenize us. Many particularities—differences, if you will—persist under the all encompassing regime of value, and many are transformed and even produced by capitalism. Thus it is simplistic to understand capitalism as simply and only a homogenizing force. It also follows that a perspective that sees social struggle as simply difference versus sameness or heterogeneity versus homogeneity will often find itself operating in complicity with capitalism. This is most commonly articulated as a battle between culture (usually crudely represented as national or

ethnic-national culture) and capitalism.

While I have always tried to work in the tension between our particularities and our commonalities (I believe, as I have stated over and over, that this is what we must do), it seems to me—and correct me if I am wrong—that Chris sees little commonality in the various social struggles around the world. Thus Chris even objects to the use of the term “our” when discussing our present conditions. For Chris they seem to be struggles of difference and identity, and particularities never come to be understood as part of a system—a process—that binds them together. While Chris says he is against capitalism, it seems to drop out of his analysis. Processes seem to turn into things or disappear altogether. If, however, you study the social struggles around the globe—especially, those in the third world—it is notable that most of them revolve around the issue of value. The majority of social struggles that have come to be called the “anti-globalization movement” are struggles resisting the domination and penetration of a single—but complex—regime of value called capitalism. These range from the everyday struggles in the workplace, to struggles over housing and healthcare, to the defense of nature, to attacks on corporations, to the large demonstrations against the imposition of neo-liberal economics and privatization.

One of the central reasons we started *Hot Tide*⁴ was to attack the myth that the “anti-globalization movement” was a first-world movement. We wanted to bring various analyses of struggles from around the world (from different nations, cultures, and positions in the hierarchy of nation-states) together because we think these struggles paint a complex pattern of resistance to and attack on an ever globalizing and penetrating capitalism (see the Hot Tide Anti-authoritarian/anti-capitalist Analysis Page: http://www.reocities.com/kk_abacus/analysis.html). I am reminded of this daily here in China. Just two days ago workers and their families were being dragged off by the police for a sit-in in front of a large corporation right next to the place I live. This wasn't some racist, imperialist or even multi-national corporation, but a Chinese company, the Chinese capitalist class exploiting and impoverishing Chinese workers in order to compete within the global regime of value. And this is happening everywhere around the world.

Yet, I feel that this struggle over value is usually ignored by those for whom identity politics is the center of theory, practice and resistance. Unfortunately, it has been true that many who focus on struggles around value have often, to their detriment, ignored particularities in theory and practice. I don't think I have done this and I have continually tried to work in this tension.

this discussion will continue...

4. In this Edition Section 3 pages 196-214 [Editor].

Section 4: Killing King Abacus elsewhere

A Brief Note On Insurrection

by Leila and sasha k

appeared in *Green Anarchy* Issue 8, 2002

Dear GA and John Zerzan,

We wanted to respond to John Zerzan's comments on insurrectionary anarchism in his review of *Willful Disobedience*. We want to stress we are not responding to the review in general, only to the paragraph on insurrectionary anarchism. In addition, this is meant as a clarification and not meant to start some contentious disagreement: we feel there is no real reason for serious disagreement on the issue of insurrection between green anarchists or primitivists such as Zerzan and us. First of all, insurrectionary anarchism isn't an ideological solution to all social problems, a commodity on the capitalist market of ideologies and opinions, but an ongoing praxis aimed at putting an end to the domination of the state and the continuance of capitalism, which requires analysis and discussion to advance. It is not a simple political brand for public consumption, a role that one can fit into. "Anarchist" modified by the adjective "insurrectionary" has a pretty basic meaning, it signifies that one believes the state won't wither on its own, or that some determined evolution of society won't bring it to extinction, instead, it will take human action to dismantle the present social organization and bring a new world into existence. In this sense, insurrectionary anarchism isn't a narrow ideological understanding of the world, but a developing practice: it asks and attempts to answer the question: if we are to end the present authoritarian social order, how do we go about doing so? Insurrectionary anarchism is the practices and organization of practices to bring this about; it is also a discussion of those practices and their implications. That said, it should be obvious that anarchists that believe the state won't just disappear can have very different views on technology, organization, agriculture, tactics and strategy. Zerzan's critique of insurrectionary anarchism stems from his meeting of "one of their number" in Barcelona, and Zerzan claims this person represents "the insurrectionist viewpoint." According to Zerzan, this person showed no sign of critiquing technology, civilization, or patriarchy. We don't know the person in question, but wish to stress that there is no single "insurrectionist viewpoint;" it isn't an ideological model to emulate. We have had discussions with primitivists who believe there needs to be a massive die-off of the human population and others who aren't against the war in Afghanistan, but we would never suggest they represent all primitivists or that their arguments define primitivism. However, there are plenty

of people who have used the term insurrectionary anarchist for themselves who have a very strong critique of technology and patriarchy, and Zerzan knows this. In the 1980s, the journal *Insurrection* carried on many critiques of technology, as have *Willful Disobedience*, *Killing King Abacus*, *Diavolo in Corpo*, and *Cane Nero*, one could also look at the critiques on the Palabras de Guerra and Ecotopia websites. At the same time, there are anarchists that believe insurrection is necessary yet are old style leftists, and some who don't have a critique of technology.

Zerzan also suggests that insurrectionary anarchism is somehow a "trendy" and "possibly hollow movement." But he knows full well that insurrectionary anarchism isn't some new "movement." Throughout this century, anarchists have called for insurrection, discussed it as a strategy, and argued over its implications. Bakunin, Makhnno, Goldman, Malatesta, Galleani, Bonanno, and —we believe—John Zerzan have been part of this process. *Killing King Abacus* and *Willful Disobedience* are two separate publishing projects that, in part, aim to bring writings on insurrection into discussion.

Leila and sasha,
Killing King Abacus / Hot Tide

The Same Old Empire (Oops, I mean Imperialism)...

by sasha k

appeared in *Aporia Journal* Issue 1, 2003

Before September 11 2001, calling the US an Empire put one in the realm of the paranoid, the left or the academic, but now all that has changed. Everyone is using the word, both pro and con. It has been used so much that President Bush himself has had to respond: "We have no territorial ambitions, we don't seek an empire," Bush remarked on Veterans Day, continuing, "Our nation is committed to freedom for ourselves and for others." Yet, while the word is used all the time these days, it often seems to have little content. It is a shock word, for sure. Or it is assumed that the meaning is simple metaphor: the US Empire is a repeat of the Roman Empire—something made visible by the post-911, moves of the US, especially against Iraq. As a content-less word, Empire stands in the way of understanding; it is the big Thing that stands today unassailable, untheorizable, like totalitarianism and Fascism. There are, however, a couple of accounts of Empire that do attempt to fill out the concept, to spell out its content and to argue that this Empire is truly new, that the present Empire isn't just a repeat of the Roman Empire. The much discussed (at least in the academic world) *Empire* (2000), by Michael Hardt and the Italian autonomist Marxist Antonio Negri (the Hegel of today), came out before the September 11 attacks. Hardt and Negri argue that Empire is a new and progressive (moving forward with history) paradigm of rule or sovereignty, unlike the old forms of sovereignty such as the Roman Empire or capitalist imperialism: "Imperialism was really an extension of the sovereignty of the European nation-states beyond their own boundaries.... In contrast to imperialism, Empire establishes no territorial center of power and does not rely on fixed boundaries or barriers. It is a decentered and deterritorializing apparatus of rule that progressively incorporates the entire global realm within its open, expanding frontiers" (Hardt and Negri, p. xii).

One of the more controversial aspects of Empire is the place the US plays within Empire. While the US occupies a privileged position, it is not the center or even the leader of Empire in the way old imperialist nations ruled over their territories. Within this new imperial sovereignty, power operates through networks and not from territorialized centers. The US plays an important role in this network, but cannot control it. Also, unlike European colonial imperialism and the Empire of Rome, the present Empire has no outside, according to Hardt and Negri. The whole globe is within Empire. Of course Bush's "Axis of Evil" speech was an attempt to define an outside to Empire,

territories with no legitimate government and which act in defiance to the construction of Empire. Yet, when reading Hardt and Negri's book, the paradigmatic approach gives one the impression that we have almost reached communism; all we have to do is throw off the parasitic capitalist class. This is in part because of Negri's particular mutation of autonomist Marxism. Whereas most autonomist Marxists see the working class as fully part of capital but pushing towards a potential autonomy, Hardt and Negri seem to see the working class (or the multitude), which was the force that brought Empire into existence, as autonomous in the present, as outside of capital.

As John Holloway states, "To overlook the internal nature of the relation between labour and capital thus means both to underestimate the containment of labour within capital (and hence overestimate the power of labour against capital) and to underestimate the power of labour as internal contradiction within capital (and hence overestimate the power of capital against labour). If the inter-penetration of power and anti-power is ignored, then we are left with two pure subjects on either side. On the side of capital stands Empire, the perfect subject, and on the side of the working class stands the militant" (Holloway). Hardt and Negri shift from an autonomist Marxist focus on class struggle to a focus on the development of forms of sovereignty. Empire, as a separate subject, is the culmination of such a development, but Hardt and Negri's paradigmatic account often paints Empire as an inevitable or even finished product, and it is to this point that September 11 intervened.

After September 11, *Empire's* thesis has been somewhat weakened. The Empire that has been coming into view over the last year and a half is quite different from Hardt and Negri's idealizing sketch. When asked of this contradiction in an interview after September 11, Negri stated, "What is absolutely new with respect to the book's structure is the fact that the American reaction is configuring itself as a regressive backlash contrary to the imperial tendency" (Negri). This "is an imperial backlash within and against Empire that is linked to old [territorial] structures of power, old methods of command..." (Negri). For Negri, the "gravity of the situation today" lies in the contradiction between the progressive move towards Empire and its network form of power and the Bush administration's regressive move to reinforce territorial forms of power, to rebuild an old style imperialism. Perhaps the inevitable Empire isn't so set in stone after all; but Negri does all he can to argue that the Bush administration is a regressive anti-Empire move, a move against the inevitable development of forms of sovereignty, of the imperial tendency. Yet what makes Bush's Empire a move backwards in history, anachronistic, and the Empire that Negri outlines a move forward? What makes the history of Empire so determined, inevitable? As Ida Dominijanni, interviewing Negri, states, this contradiction "is not negligible. It makes the process of construction of Empire much more accidental than you had described it" (Negri).

Negri's view of capital as an autonomous, economic entity comes back into view here: Negri states in the interview that it is the markets that

form the real obstacle to Bush's war in Iraq. It is capital that is the progressive force that pushes towards imperial sovereignty, not the force of an autonomous working class. This sounds like we are back to the bourgeois revolution, or that the constitution of Empire is the second bourgeois revolution. So what of the power of the multitude? Negri argues that the multitude need to both abstain from the game and form alliances with reformists of the Empire against the reactionaries such as Bush and his cohorts: a new United Front.

Yet, is the Empire Hardt and Negri outline the only form of Empire that can be distinguished from the Roman Empire and the imperialism of an earlier time? Are there other ways of understanding the post 1960's transformations of capitalism or post 1989 shift in forms of sovereignty? Perhaps Bush isn't completely wrong in stating that the US has no territorial ambitions. In a somewhat darker vision than Hardt and Negri, Alain Joxe, of the Interdisciplinary Center for Research on Peace in France, suggests that the US is constructing a different sort of Empire, an Empire of Disorder. This Empire is much more the result of the contingencies of history and the present needs of capitalism. Within this concept of Empire, the actions of the Bush administration and its wars are not simply regressive, but instead take part in the formation of a wholly new Empire that differs as much from the imperialisms of the past as from Hardt and Negri's Empire.

In a new book entitled *Empire of Disorder*, Joxe says the US has refused the imperial role of conquering and subjugating peoples and territories, and instead "it operates on a case-by-case basis, regulating disorder, repressing the symptoms of despair instead of attacking its cause." The disorder of the post-Cold War world is brought about by capitalist globalization, which has increased the divide between rich and poor nations. Instead of trying to solve this problem, the US, manager of this disorder, has attempted to push the disorder to the margins of the world. And it is in these marginal and impoverished regions that the US has unleashed its violent repression, destroying and moving on to other cases of disorder.

The US has no vision or plan to solve the root cause of disorder in the world. "For the first time perhaps, humanity has embarked on an ocean of disorder with no final order insight," remarks Joxe. Any such plan would up set the America's utopian, neo-liberal dream of a free market of chaos from which to extract its profit and of opening global financial markets that can absorb surplus US capital.

All the US center to this Empire of Disorder can offer the poor of the world is a high-tech, permanent war, a war that Vice President Cheney has said will probably last more than a lifetime. Since the first Gulf War, the military has even come up with new theories of war to accomplish this task of managing and marginalizing global disorder; in this "asymmetrical war" new technologies will be vital. This high-tech war is the New Deal of our present world, sucking up the surplus capital that has been a drag on the US economy since the 1970s. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld has backed a plan for a Revolution in Military Affairs that stresses high-tech, light weight and mobile military forces, especially precision bombing to take care of "hot

spots." In the long run, this Revolution in Military Affairs will be used to suppress and destroy a revolution in social affairs that could put an end to neo-liberal capitalism's asymmetrical economy.

The first post-911 war, the war in Afghanistan, was a test case. As David Hendrickson, in "Towards Universal Empire: the Dangerous Quest for Absolute Security," states, "Well after al-Qaeda and the Taliban were routed, when securing a stable government in Afghanistan was clearly the objective to which military operations should have been subordinated, the United States continued to operate under rules of engagement that were more appropriate to the intensive days of the war—to the acute embarrassment of the Karzi government and at serious cost to its political viability. Those failures were not accidental. At bottom they are rooted in an American approach to war that is singularly ill-fitted to the purposes of political reconstruction" (Hendrickson, p. 9). Hendrickson continues, backing up Joxe's thesis, that, for the US, war is now conceived of "as a short and sharp engagement, and the purpose of American arms is to rout the enemy and then get out" (p. 10). Richard Perle, chairman of the Defense Policy Board and close to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, has extraordinarily suggested that the Iraqi transition could be like that of Romania at the end of the cold war, remaining very stable on its own and allowing the US military to leave very quickly. Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz has said that we should look at Afghanistan to see what a bright future the Iraqi people could have. There will be no Pax Americana, no inclusion of the Iraqi people as citizens of empire. As Wolfowitz said in an interview on CNN, it is up to the Iraqi people to build democracy, not the US. The US is, of course, interested only in repressing opposition, using up surplus capital in the exploitation of Iraq and the building of a new, grand war machine and maintaining control over the price of oil. During the Clinton years, the discourse of human rights, the global ideology of left accommodation to capitalism, was linked up to a new type of war, a humanitarian police action to maintain the peace within the neo-liberal Empire. But that Empire has since changed form, and the discourse of human rights is playing a more minor role justifying the Iraqi war than the Kosovo or even Afghan war. As Hendrickson states, "for the American people, the case for a second Iraqi war must ultimately rest not on visions of peace through conquest and enlightened imperial administration but on the ground of 'ultimate national security'" (p. 10). Politics is the mediation of class violence and economy; democracy is the suspension of class/civil war. The discourse of human rights is the present form of left-wing global politics, the left wing of capital's attempt at suspending class war. Even though the new Empire continues to use human rights discourse to buy off its left wing, it offers no true global politics, global democracy, no mediation of violence and economy; it is the military repression of class war.

The Clinton years seems to have lulled leftists into the false sense of inevitability of the future: liberalism and the human rights war seemed to be the form of the future, the singular form of war in the post-Cold War period. But the Kosovo-style, humanitarian war was in part the result of the

post-Cold War US's inability to find the right enemy. Negri's statements on Bush's reactionary status notwithstanding, since September 11, a mutation in this future has occurred, and the relationship between war and Empire has changed as well. The ideal humanitarian police action within the global, neo-liberal Empire is not the only present form war can take within the Empire of Disorder. The abstract "terrorist" and the image of Osama bin Laden as enemy has filled the role of the Other, and has provided much firmer ground for war to stand upon than the humanitarian intervention. This does not mean that the humanitarian or human rights war has disappeared, only that its role within the legitimating structures of war has changed. While human rights discourse still stands as the primary left-wing accommodation to capital, security and paranoia for security for the "civilized" peoples of the world has trumped human rights.

Slavoj Žižek has suggested that today we have two types of war: on the one side we have ethno-religious conflicts with their violation of human rights and we have security wars that result from an attack on a global power (Žižek, p. 93). But neither are truly wars in the old sense of the word. In the first case, we have the intervention of a humanitarian police action. In the second case, of which Afghanistan and Iraq are examples, the enemies are not true legal combatants, they are "rouge states" and terrorists, and are not subject to the rules of war. Not that human rights plays no role in the second type of conflict; it clearly does, but it does so in a different way. It is not the primary justification for war—security for the civilized is—but humanitarian aid is now given by the US military itself to clearly demarcate the line between the "illegal combatants" or "rogue rulers" and the true (and freedom loving) citizens of the attacked state. This is a necessary move to legitimate the category of "rogue state" or "illegal combatants."

The left's attempt to expand the inclusion of more and more people as citizens under the present global regime is exposed in all its weakness under our new conditions. For, ultimately, almost all of us are excluded, and a project of inclusion as citizens within Empire is really just the reinforcing of the democratic mask that claims for us abstract human rights. And unlike the Clinton era rhetoric that went along with such niceties as global human rights, within a general environment of fear, the US government under Bush has managed to make security threats the justification of Empire: not an Empire with a vision, but an Empire of Disorder.

Any attempt to step out of the present, to become autonomous subjects, has always meant giving up on the ideology of accommodation to capitalism, on the idea of an Empire of Human Rights to which we could all belong. For such an Empire is an impossibility for capitalism—class struggle will not disappear—and a mask for its operations.

References

Hardt, Michael and Negri, Antonio. 2000. *Empire*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Hendrickson, David. 2002. "Towards Universal Empire: The Dangerous Quest for Absolute Security." *World Policy Journal*, Vol. xix, No. 3, (Fall).

Holloway, John. 2002. "Going in the Wrong Direction, or Mephistopheles, Not Saint Francis of Assisi." *Historical Materialism*.

Joxe, Alain. 2002. *Empire of Disorder*. New York: Semiotext(e).

Negri, Antonio. 2002. "Imperialist Backlash on Empire: Antonio Negri interviewed by Ida Dominijanni."

Zizek, Slavoj. 2002. *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*. London: Verso.

Thirteen Notes on Class Struggle: Some notes for discussion

by sasha k

appeared in *Green Anarchy* Issue 18, 2004

1. Classes have existed since the beginning of civilization. Civilization has always been a class society.

2. Class is not just an economic category, it is social. Class relations structure and discipline the whole of society, not just the economy.

3. Class social relations have always been linked to a series of other oppressions such as patriarchal social relations and different forms of racism.

4. Classes are one of the primary structures organizing all societies since the beginning of civilization, although the form of class has changed through the development of civilization. This development of class society and social relations has always been intimately linked to the development of technology (thus I call society a "socio-technological regime"). As class society develops so too does social specialization and its technologies. A deep critique of society should always include a critique of class social relations and their links to the dominant material culture of that society, including the technologies that it both makes possible and that make it possible.

5. Class struggle has existed since classes have existed.

6. Class struggle exists even when people don't recognize that they are taking part in it. It exists throughout daily life. One of the ways revolutionaries can intervene in class struggle, therefore, is to help people recognize that that is what they are doing. There are many ways to do this and we need to be creative.

7. When revolutionary, the dispossessed class struggles to end the existence of all classes, although often leftist managers of revolt attempt to channel class struggle recuperate it to capitalist ends in order to put themselves into power over others and into a position to benefit materially. For true revolutionaries those who really attempt to end the rule over life by the state, capitalism and all commodity relations, the discipline of work, patriarchy and the socio-technological regime the auto-destruction of the proletariat/ dispossessed as a class is the goal, not for one class (the dispossessed/ proletariat) to take over the position of another class (the capitalist or ruling class).

The point of class struggle is not to claim workers are better people than capitalists, to morally judge each class, or to celebrate one class over another, but to destroy the social institution of classes as a whole. Class struggle originates in the contradiction between our desires and the way class structures limit, control, exclude and exploit our life. Our struggle begins with our

desires to live in a different way, to break out of class society's disciplining control. Yet the recuperation of class struggle will continue in various guises as long as class relations exist, but this should not make us give up on class struggle, it should make us more careful in our analysis and more creative in the fight for our lives.

8. Class struggle is always global as is capitalism, but it is often recuperated by nationalist forms. We need to find where the revolutionary content of class struggle pushes to break from the nationalist form and put our force behind such a move. Thus it is not simply a matter of ignoring national liberation movements nor certainly of celebrating them but of critical and revolutionary solidarity with the force of class struggle that pushes for the complete destruction of class relations.

9. The root of class struggle is not to be found in economics. Production is not just economic either: it doesn't only take place in factories, but spreads over society as a process of social production and reproduction that includes the control and discipline of workers as well as all other members of society. It is this whole social factory which produces social roles, relations and subjectivities, disciplines our bodies and our minds, and transforms and controls life itself that we aim to destroy.

The would-be leftist managers of class struggle usually try to transform class struggle into an economic struggle, a struggle for greater economic power, for a bigger piece of the pie, for a slight reorganization of the economy. This is the basis for the creation of the leftist bureaucracies, parties and unions this is their lifeblood. Yet since classes aren't economic as much as social in character, for class struggle to be truly radical, for it to move towards the ending of classes as such, it must break away from economic goals and from the leftist managers that push them.

The synthesis of all struggle under one organization makes struggle particularly susceptible to control by leftist managers. Thus for class struggle to maintain its radical force it must remain autonomous, self-managed and self-organized, it must become uncontrolled and uncontrollable, and it must spread and deepen socially. The goal of the dispossessed's revolution is never economic it is anti-economic, it pushes to break out of and destroy economy, all commodity exchange, and the mediation of relationships by all forms of money, ideology and morality.

10. Work is a disciplined behavior within economy. As an activity, it is separated from other aspects of life and into the sphere of economy. As class society has developed and transformed, work has been further and further alienated from our life and our desires. It becomes an activity that disciplines and oppresses us, an activity that we can't control, that instead controls us. The revolutionary class struggle of the dispossessed fights to break all the separations imposed upon us by class society: the separation between ourselves and our activity, between work and play, and between ourselves and those with whom we interact.

11. Within the transforming capitalist system, different regimes of accumulation have organized how the capitalist class accumulates capital

through the exploitation of the labor and energy of the exploited, excluded and dispossessed. Regimes of accumulation are different forms of capitalist labor discipline and organization. In the US and much of Europe, most of the 20th century operated under the Fordist regime of accumulation (this is named after Ford's model of production and its ideology was Keynesianism). Beginning in the 1970s, that regime was replaced by the regime of flexible accumulation (temping, no unions, flexible hours, no guaranteed employment or retirement, outsourcing, the end of welfare, no controls on the movement of capital across borders, the increase in importance of global trade and of technologies of communication, surveillance and control, etc.; its reigning ideology is neo-liberalism and it is often referred to as "globalization").

Many other countries are being pushed to take on the cast off Fordist jobs without the Fordist guarantees for workers (this is true of much of the third-world, for example). But the death of Fordism in some countries does not mean the death of class struggle, only its continued global transformation. This means we need to analyze such transformations and our responses, not that we simply give up on class struggle as some within the anti-civilization milieu seem to be suggesting. The regime of flexible accumulation has been accompanied by an increased financialization and privatization of all forms of social life and the increased commodification of life itself as well as a new looting of the third-world. This has shaped the character of present day class struggle. This transformation of capitalism and class relations should point out new targets for intervention (social, material, technological, etc.) and new contradictions of class society to exploit.

12. As anarchists or revolutionaries, it is not up to us to invent, produce or manage class struggle. Class struggle will continue to occur whether we acknowledge it or not. We can intervene in class struggle, but we don't make it up in entirety. The question, therefore, is not whether we should recognize class struggle or not, but always, how do we intervene in class struggle which will continue whether we intervene or not.

13. Since civilization through all its transformations has always been a class society, the destruction of classes as such through the revolutionary class struggle of the dispossessed will always be a central goal of anti-civilization anarchism. This is one aspect that separates revolutionary activity from the bland leftist managers of revolt who often hang around revolutionary movements hoping to discipline and channel the force of class struggle to their own ends, saving capitalism and all its separations and alienations in the process.

Green Anarchy Editors' Note: *Capital co-opts and so does the Left. Which is not to say that sasha k is even so very leftist. And yet his "Thirteen Notes" express a curious, if predictable, attempt to incorporate what is emerging as a general anti-civ outlook.*

Sasha's approach says, in effect, that one can be opposed to civilization without departing from, say, classical anarchism. Basically, he declares that "true revolutionaries" are against the state and capitalism and therefore are anti-civ. But defining

civilization in this limited way could also mean that syndicalists, anti-state communists, etc. are likewise against civilization. And they are not. "Thirteen Notes," while sufficiently and clearly expressing some important dynamics of class society, avoids mention of some basic institutions (viz. specialization, and domestication/subjugation of nature) which inaugurate class society and drive it forward on its lethal course. To define civilization so as to omit what seem to be its core features and logic doesn't quite get to the heart of it. But now that green anarchy/anarcho-primitivism is an ascendant vision within anarchist circles, it isn't difficult to imagine some folks wanting to appear anti-civ without having to move from older, less adequate conceptions. Or maybe we're being too picky. What do you think?

The Insurrectionary Act and the Self-Organization of Struggle

by sasha k

appeared in *Aporia Journal* Issue 2, 2004

For anarchists the questions of how to act and how to organize are intimately linked. And it is these two questions, not the question of the desired form of a future society, that provide us with the most useful method for understanding the various forms of anarchism that exist. Insurrectionary anarchism is one such form, although it is important to stress that insurrectionary anarchists don't form one unified block, but are extremely varied in their perspectives. Insurrectionary anarchism is not an ideological solution to social problems, a commodity on the capitalist market of ideologies and opinions, but an on-going practice aimed at putting an end to the domination of the state and the continuance of capitalism, which requires analysis and discussion to advance. Historically, most anarchists, except those who believed that society would evolve to the point that it would leave the state behind, have believed that some sort of insurrectionary activity would be necessary to radically transform society. Most simply, this means that the state has to be knocked out of existence by the exploited and excluded, thus anarchists must attack: waiting for the state to disappear is defeat.

I will spell out some implications that some insurrectionary anarchists have drawn from this general problem: if the state will not disappear on its own, how then do we end its existence? Insurrectionary anarchism is primarily a practice, and focuses on the organization of attack (insurrectionary anarchists aren't against organization, but are critical of forms of organization that can impede actions that attack the state and capital). Thus, the adjective "insurrectionary" does not indicate a specific model of the future. Anarchists who believe we must go through an insurrectionary period to rid the world of the institutions of domination and exploitation, moreover, take a variety of positions on the shape of a future society—they could be anarcho-communist, individualist or even primitivist, for example. Many refuse to offer a specific, singular model of the future at all, believing that people will choose a variety of social forms to organize themselves when given the chance. They are critical of groups or tendencies that believe they are "carriers of the truth" and try to impose their ideological and formal solution to the problem of social organization. Instead, many insurrectionary anarchists believe that it is through self-organized struggle that people will learn to live without institutions of domination.

While insurrectionary anarchists are active in many parts of the

world at the moment, the points in this article are particularly influenced by the activities and writings of those in Italy and Greece, which are also the countries where insurrectionary anarchists are the most active. The current, extremely varied Italian insurrectionary anarchist scene, which centers around a number of occupied spaces and publications, exists as an informal network carrying on their struggle outside of all formal organizations. This tendency has taken on the “insurrectionary anarchist” label to distinguish itself from the Italian Anarchist Federation, a platformist organization which officially reject individual acts of revolt, favoring only mass action and an educational and evangelistic practice centering around propaganda in “non-revolutionary periods,” and from the Italian libertarian municipalists who take a largely reformist approach to “anarchist” activity.

Insurrectionary anarchists are not historical determinists; that is, they don't see history as following one set path, as something with which we need to move in tune. On the contrary, history is an open book, and the path that it will take depends on our actions. In this sense, a true act does not happen within context, but to context. To break with the present we must act against context, and not wait for a historically determined time to act, for it will never come. The act does not grow out of context, it happens to context and completely changes the context, turning the impossible of one moment into the possible of the next. And this is the heart of the insurrectionary event. As the insurrectionary event transforms the context of possibility, it also transforms the human and human social relations.

Yet, for an insurrectionary event to occur that opens a break with the present we need to pay attention to the question of organization. Anarchists must do what they can to open and develop the potential of insurrection. Certain forms of organization, however, stifle our potential to truly act against the present and for a new future, to move towards insurrection and a permanent break with the state and capital. Permanent organizations, organizations that attempt to synthesize those struggling into a single, unified organization, and organizations that attempt to mediate struggle are all forms of organization that tend to close the potential of insurrection. These ways of organization formalize and rigidify the relationships of those struggling in ways that limit the flexible combination of our power to act. Our active power, our power to create and transform, is our only weapon, and that which limits such power from within the movement of the exploited and excluded is our greatest weakness. This does not mean that we should remain unorganized (an impossibility—we always have some level of organization no matter how informal); in fact, it poses the very question of organization: how do we combine in a way that promotes our active powers?

1. Against permanent organizations: Permanent organizations tend to take on a logic of their own—a logic that supercedes that of insurrection. One just needs to look at the operations of authoritarian, Leninist groups or leftist, activist organizations to see this at work. It is usually all about building the group, recruiting above all else—permanence becomes the primary goal. Power is separated from those active in struggle and becomes instituted

in the organization. The organizer becomes separated from the organized, and tends to take on the role of disciplining and speaking for the struggle.

2. *Against mediation with power:* As organizations become more permanent and worry about recruiting, they often begin to worry about their image, and attempt to limit the actions of others within the struggle who might give the movement a bad name. The more they institute power within their organization the more they tend to limit direct confrontational action and to encourage dialogue and mediation. Naively, they come to want to harness the power of a mass of bodies in order to get a seat at the table of power. This process is heavily at work in the anti-globalization movement; larger organizations are increasingly attempting to mediate with power. It is also the role unions take in society. For anarchists, of course, being against capitalism and the state in their entirety, there can be no dialogue with instituted power. The willingness of those in power to initiate a dialogue may be a sign of their weakness, but it is also the beginning of our defeat when we limit our active power to join them in discussion.

3. *Formality and informality:* Formal organizations separate the people into formal roles of organizer and organized. The roles of organizer and organized, of course, mirror the very social roles necessary to the operation of the society that we as anarchists are trying to overcome. In addition, formal organization tends to separate decision from the moment and situation of the act itself, separating decision from its execution, and thus limiting the autonomy of action. Both of these tendencies rigidify the social relationships that are vital to those in struggle. Formal organizations often also take on the role of the representation of the "movement," shifting the struggle from social in nature to political. Insurrectionary anarchists tend to promote informal organization because they recognize that we, as anarchists, are part of those struggling, and don't stand outside and above the exploited and excluded politically organizing them.

4. *Organization grows out of struggle, struggle doesn't grow out of organization:* Most formal organizations first attempt to build the organization then organize the struggle or "movement." Insurrectionary anarchists see this as backwards. Informal organization, based on the affinity group, grows out of struggle. Affinity groups come to build links in struggle and then often coordinate actions; but, the level of organization depends on the level of struggle, not on the demands of a formal organization.

5. *Autonomous action and solidarity:* Insurrectionary anarchists recognize that the actions of individuals and affinity groups are autonomous, that no organization should be in a position to discipline the action of others. But autonomous action becomes strong when we act in revolutionary solidarity with others in struggle. Revolutionary solidarity is active and in conflict with the structures of domination; it is direct action that communicates a link between one's struggle and that of others.

Insurrectionary Practice and Capitalist Transformation

A discussion between The Batko Group and sasha k in 2005

This conversation began as an attempt from our side to fill in some of the blanks that the other texts in this issue of *Dissident* doesn't cover completely, and to exchange ideas with one of the editors of *Killing King Abacus*¹, which was a prominent journal of modern insurrectionary anarchism—sasha k.

In this discussion we talk about what our relationship with the left and politics should be, how the changing form of capitalism and the class struggle affects revolutionaries, as well as some theoretical influences. The greatest merit of this discussion is that it approaches the meaning and consequences of the real subsumption for anti-political and insurrectionary struggle. This is also where we disagree the most, and in the discussion two perspectives crystalizes. People from The Batko Group stress the need to historicize the different organizational forms, while Sasha points out the need to see the continuity of the anti-political struggle, and to see the real subsumption as an ongoing process. We are both against strict periodizations, but we approach the problem in different ways. These are very complex questions which needs to be discussed more intricate than we have space for in this issue. That's why the discussion in this issue may feel incomplete. The discussion—which is still going on elsewhere—will continuously be published on our website.

We feel that this discussion, although incomplete and perhaps unfulfilling, is important to include in this issue of *Dissident*. We also hope that this discussion and the problem it highlights will continue elsewhere in society and among revolutionaries.

We also believe that this conversation can function as a bridge to more and deeper discussions on what capitalism really is, how the class struggle has changed, etc—issues which we will continue to confront in next issue of *Dissident* (but also elsewhere, off course).

It should also be noted that Sasha isn't representing anyone but himself, or that everyone in The Batko Group necessarily agree with everything we as individuals express in this conversation.

1. *Killing King Abacus*: A now discontinued American magazine that Sasha did together with Leila and Wolfi. Published two issues 2000–2001. [Sections 1 and 2 in this edition – Editor]

The Batko Group: Our first contact with American insurrectionary anarchism was through *Killing King Abacus* and *Hot Tide*² on the web. And it was after that the word “insurrectionary” began to be used as a label for a specific theoretical current in Sweden. It would be very interesting to get a short history and evaluation of that project—the theoretical background and the discussion that preceded it, what movement it grew out of, your initial aims and what you later accomplished, its impact, and last but not least, why it ended.

Sasha: Well, calling it a “movement” is a bit of a stretch. I’ll primarily speak for myself here and say what KKA was for me, but I will say that the three of us who did KKA, Leila, Wolfi³ and myself, all were involved in the anti-civ⁴, anarchist milieu in the US. For me, at the time, I found the debate in the US anarchist scene somewhat stale. It was increasingly turning into a debate between primitivists and syndicalists, with primitivists claiming that syndicalists did not really step outside of our present society. This was true enough as far as it went. Yet the debate did not really talk that much on how we would actually move forward and act.

The anti-civ milieu that we came out of was influenced by the likes of Camatte, Perlman,⁵ the Situationists,⁶ Surrealists, and anti-state communists. In the debates with syndicalists, the critique of work, the link between the material form of society and social relations, and the critique of the ideology of progress were important. But, I increasingly felt the anti-civ milieu was getting more closed and fixed in its ideas and, in the process of debating with syndicalists and the such, rejecting the importance of class completely. At the same time, largely because of the Marini Trial⁷ and Wolfi’s correspondence with Italian anarchists, we became more aware of the Italian insurrectionary anarchists. It was on a trip to Europe that we decided to do KKA.

2. *Hot Tide Discussion Bulletin*: A smaller bulletin with a more frequent publication that was a compliment to KKA. However, only three issues were published [Sections 3 in this edition – Editor]

3. Wolfi Landstreicher: American anarchist. He is the editor of the anarchist journal *Willful Disobedience* and runs the Venomous Butterfly Anarchist Distribution. He previously published under the pen name “Feral Faun”.

4. Anti-civ: Short for “anti-civilization.” A wide concept, used by everyone from primitivists to Camatte. Examples of typical anti-civ perspectives include the arguments that workers cannot just take over the capitalist mode of production and manage it democratically, and that technical development is not classneutral.

5. Freddy Perlman (1934–1985): An American Marxist who stressed the importance of the fetishism of commodities in Marx’s theories. Married to Lorraine Perlman. His book *Against His-story, Against Leviathan!* has become a big inspiration for primitivists.

6. Situationists: The Situationist International developed, through their paper *Internationale Situationniste* (Paris, 1958–1969), a new reading of Marxism during the 1960s, which came to inspire a big part of the 68-radicalisation and a new found interest in Council Communism. Best-known names and books: Guy Debord *Society of the spectacle*, Rebel Press, 2005. Raoul Vaneigem: *The Revolution of Everyday Life*. Rebel Press; Reprint edition, 2001.

7. The Marini Trial: A huge process in Italy a couple of years ago, where the State tried to crush the anarchist movement and divide the Left by charging about 50 anarchists for being double-organized in a underground terror network. Bonanno and Weir, for example, were sentenced to prison.

The practice and writings of various insurrectionary anarchists seemed to offer a way out of some of the problems of the US anarchist scene. Instead of debating the neutrality to technology or the origin of alienation, the insurrectionary anarchists drew on their own experience of practice on how to act and organize. This was a discussion that didn't seem to be happening to a large extent in the US at the time. So we wanted to reintroduce some of the writings of the insurrectionary anarchists into the US. We also wanted to get away from a rather weak debate on class, which seemed to be caught between, on the one side, a reduced understanding of class and capitalism, which lacked a critique of work as separate from life and of the link between productive forms and social relations while celebrating worker self-management, and, on the other side, a rejection of class struggle. Primitivism has ended up trying so hard to stress that capitalism is just the latest stage of civilization that it has washed out an understanding of capitalism as a specific social form. Another dichotomy within the US milieu that we wanted to move out of was the one that saw individualism and communism as in contradiction. So into this situation we wanted to inject more energy into the discussion of struggles themselves and how we act.

After two issues we had succeeded better than we could have imagined. Yet we had also fallen into a rather long debate with various primitivists as well, which have not really been that useful. It is probably time to move on to other projects. For me, in terms of text projects, this has meant starting the anti-politics.net website, which is trying to bring people together in terms of how they relate to struggle and to further a thorough critique of capitalism and unfree social relations.

The Batko Group: You say: "After two issues we had succeeded better than we could have imagined." How so? Tell us a little more about that.

Sasha: Well, what I mean is that we generated more discussion than we thought we would. And the ideas and concepts we were translating in from Italy have been quite widely discussed. In turn, several articles from KKA were then translated into other languages as well. And this discussion has brought some people together in interesting ways. The anti-politics.net forum is one example.

The Batko Group: You refer a lot to the Primitivist and "anti-civ" movement, partly as a problem/opposition but also as a part of your background. Here in Sweden (and we believe in the whole of Europe) this current is a more or less non-existing phenomenon, or at least very marginal and unheard of in any debates. Do you have an analysis on why this current has gained so much influence in the USA? The consensus over here (across the whole spectra of anarchists and left-wing commies) is that they—generally speaking—just are confused nut heads. Camatte and the Situationists, on the other hand, seems like unlikely influences if that is the case. And there are apparent connections

between early writings of Zerzan⁸ and the US school of Autonomous Marxism, like Harry Cleaver⁹ and *Midnight Notes*.¹⁰

Sasha: First off, I want to be clear that for me and many others, anti-civ and primitivist are not the same thing. I would say there are a couple of reasons why primitivism might attract more people here in the US than in Europe. First, America actually has more of a wilderness to try to defend, and there was a pretty radical environmental movement here. Secondly, I think that American anti-communism (as in being against anything communist even anti-state communism) is a very big influence on the American scene. I think the influence of primitivism is actually waning now in America. More and more people, while possibly initially interested in the critique, are finding primitivism to be too rigid of an ideology. So I wouldn't say that Primitivism has that wide a following at all. But those that do consider themselves Primitivists are very dedicated to what they are doing.

Camatte has definitely been an influence on the anti-civ critique, especially on Perlman. And Perlman was an influence on KKA. But in the US only a small number of Camatte's articles have been translated into English, mostly only his newest stuff. In Europe, you might have a bit of a different view of Camatte because of that. The Situationists were an influence on Perlman, but not really on Primitivism. In fact, I think they could use a good dose of reading the situationists once in a while. The Primitivists like to name everybody else as a leftist, but they don't seem to understand what the left is other than that it is bad. Reading the situationists could be good for them in that sense, but I doubt that is really on their agenda.

The Batko Group: This discussion was not supposed to develop into a discussion about primitivists. It's really not that interesting. But, after we sent you the question "Do you have an analysis on why this current has gained so much influence in the USA?," some of us discussed the issue and came up with a theory of our own:

Sooner or later all struggles become recuperated. But depending on their history and the current hegemony, the recuperation takes different forms. In Europe we have a long tradition of social-democratic and Leninist dominance within the formal workers-movement and also in the capitalist state. So in Europe almost every struggle or movement in one form or another gets recuperated by these gigantic "left-wing" institutions and/or their ideology. In the US on the other hand (as you point out), you have an extreme anti-communist tradition, and you don't have the same traditions of an institutionalized workers-movement in power, so as a result the recuperation

8. John Zerzan (born 1943): American primitivist. See for example *Elements of Refusal* (1988), *Future Primitive* (1994), *Against Civilization: A Reader* (1998) and *Running on Emptiness* (2002).

9. Harry Cleaver: American Marxist who coined the concept "Autonomous Marxism." Most known for his book *Reading Capital Politically*, AK Press/ AntiTheses, 2000.

10. *Midnight Notes*: An Autonomous Marxist magazine in America. The magazine *Zero-work* from the 1970s was a precursor to *Midnight Notes*.

takes other forms as well.

The environmental movement over here probably emerged more or less in the same way as on your continent (and the amount of wilderness to defend is probably not a big factor) with one reformist wing, from the start just in it for the mediation and building of green-parties and so on, and one radical wing more in line with a direct-action movement. But the difference is (we think) that over here the radical wing got recuperated mainly into the existing Leninist perspectives and more or less disappeared from the map. In the US there was no existing "alternative" perspective big enough to suck up the environmental movement and (which is important) other struggles connected to it. So it kept the shape of an environmental movement and adapted a straight up liberal ideology, much in the same way as parts of the revolutionary workers-movement already had done in Europe.

This theory is a simplification, but the point is that primitivism, even though it seems like it, isn't a unique phenomenon at all. It's just a different expression of recuperated struggles. Basically it fills the exact same role as Leninism and social-democracy within the "activist-movement" over here. And just as all Leninist-influenced projects and theories is not all bad, there is a gray-scale within your "activist-movement" but more across the environmental axis than the left/right axis.

Sasha: Well, I don't think that is quite the way I'd put it. I don't really see primitivists as acting as a recuperator for capitalism. But I do see it as a rather ideological take on the present. It seems to mix an activist ideology with essentialism in terms of human nature, or "primal nature." But I think they play a different role than the leftists in Leninist or social democratic parties do. But enough on primitivism.

The Batko Group: Our main sources for self-labelled insurrectional anarchist theory has been Bonanno texts, the English magazine *Insurrection*,¹¹ publications from Elephant Editions¹² and Bratach Dubh¹³ and stuff from KKA. But of course there is also a lot of non-anarchist theory with an insurrectional content. For example different kinds of "alternative" Marxism, like the situationists and the autonomous theories from Italy or the French ultra left. The consensus in Sweden seems to be (among the few that read him) that Bonanno is more of historical interest (as the "father" of this current) than an actual theoretical must-read. What are your theoretical influences (both anarchist and non anarchist), and what historical movements/events do you think your theoretical roots grew out of? How have your theoretical discussion developed over time, and where do you stand now? Here in Sweden the

11. *Insurrection*: See "About Insurrectionary Organization" in this issue of *Dissident*.

[*Insurrection* was an anarchist magazine of the 1980's coming out of the UK edited by Jean Weir – Editor]

12. Elephant Editions: Anarchist publisher that has, for example, published English translations of Bonanno. See their homepage: http://www.geocities.com/elephant_editions/

13. *Bratach Dubh*: Precursor to Elephant Editions that mostly published pamphlets at first.

latest input of new insurrectionary theory was the publication of a Gilles Dauvé anthology last year.

Sasha: I actually found several of Bonanno's texts and concepts very important and an inspiration. *Diavolo in Corpo*¹⁴ and *Canenero*¹⁵ were also very important inspirations for us. For us in KKA, I would say that Bonanno's reading on individualism and communism as not in contradiction was very useful; for example, thinking of communism as equal access to the conditions of our existence, an overcoming of the separations that have been imposed upon us, instead of as a celebration of a naturalized conception of working class culture and life, is important. I personally found Bonanno's *The Anarchist Tension*¹⁶ very interesting in the way it defines anarchism as a tension. But even more important has been the idea of practice that developed out of the Italian experience: the centrality of attack instead of compromise (a critique of politics, therefore, and representation), informal organization, organization as growing out of struggle and affinity instead of producing struggle (which seems to be the US way of understanding organization), permanent conflictuality, revolutionary solidarity, etc.. Bonanno and others have all written about these practices. Other influences for us are varied: we were all influenced by the situationists, Freddy and Loraine Perlman (especially *Letters of Insurgence*¹⁷), and by surrealism¹⁸. Wolfi, like Bonanno and others in Italy, is a reader of Stirner.¹⁹ I would say Dauvé and some other anti-state communists were important for me: Dauvé's *When Insurrections Die*²⁰ influenced me a lot. It was one of the first texts we put on our original website.

As to recent developments: with the primitivists seeming to completely reject class struggle these days, we have less and less in common. I would say that their critique of class struggle (as we can see in the latest

14. *Diavolo in Corpo*: An Italian insurrectionalist magazine. [Articles from *Diavolo in Corpo* can be found in this edition on pages 24, 43, 119, 123 and 152—Editor]

15. *Canenero*: An Italian insurrectionalist magazine. [Articles from *Canenero* can be found in this edition on page 59—Editor]

16. Alfredo Bonanno *The Anarchist Tension*. Elephant Editions, 1998.

17. Probably referring to Freddy Perlman *Letters of Insurgents*. Black & Red, 2002. [Reprinted by Left Bank Books 2014—Editor]

18. Surrealism is a cultural, artistic, and intellectual movement which is described by its founder André Breton as “[p]sychic automatism in its pure state, by which one proposes to express—verbally, by means of the written word, or in any other manner—the actual functioning of thought. Dictated by the thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern.” Together with Dadaism, it was one of the primary artistic and critical movements that influenced the Situationists.

19. Max Stirner (1806–1856): German left Hegelian. He was of major importance to Marx' development of historical materialism. He also inspired Nietzsche. Most famous work: *The Ego and Its Own*, Rebel Press, 1993. So-called “individualist anarchism” has Stirner as a key philosopher, but Stirner never called himself “anarchist”.

20. Gilles Dauvé *When Insurrections Die*, Antagonism Press, 2000.

issue of the US *Green Anarchy*²¹) is still stuck in a critique of the weak class politics of syndicalists, instead of taking class and class struggle seriously. So I am interested in continuing to look at class struggle in a more thorough way instead of just rejecting a weak version of it, to push class struggle as the struggle to end all classes, for the self-abolition of the dispossessed, the auto-destruction of the proletariat. I have been living on and off in China and the sharpening conflicts here have helped me in this respect. Sure there are a lot of contradictions within these struggles, but we can't just step outside of them and find some pure subject to attack totality, some pure human nature untouched by society's contradictions. It doesn't exist; it never has. Struggle begins within our contradictions. Struggle is a process in which people develop deeper understandings of what they confront and how to confront it. And in this process we also learn from the struggle of others. Through this process of struggle can spread and deepen. But none of this is determined; it is a very contingent process.

The Batko Group: What do insurrectionalists do? As we understand it, insurrectionary anarchists try to point out the social character of class struggle, and that anarchist shouldn't organize as a political organization separated from the class. Anarchist ought to organize and fight foremost as exploited/excluded. The question "what do insurrectionalists do?" might at first therefore seem quite strange, but still there are political anarchist groups calling themselves insurrectionalist around. So, what do these insurrectionalist groups you know about do? What ought to be their purpose vs. do any of them live up to this?

Sasha: They do many different things, of course. But the main point I would make is that insurrectionaries try to act from where they stand, instead of focusing on organizing others to act. We don't stand outside of the exploited and excluded, the dispossessed, we act as members of the dispossessed. Yet I would stress that we recognize that, while struggle begins with our own desires it expands from there through revolutionary solidarity: thus insurrectionaries often act in solidarity with others who seem to share our desires and struggles. Insurrectionary anarchists also pay close attention to how struggles spread. Thus they tend to support small actions that can be easily reproduced by others, such as acts of sabotage—although we shouldn't fetishize sabotage either—for it is these types of actions that we spread in an uncontrollable way. It is uncontrollability, and not their formally organized character, that will make struggles strong.

In the struggle against the high speed railway in Italy, insurrectionary anarchists intervened with acts against the railway, and soon a huge number of acts of sabotage against the railway spread socially well beyond the anarchist milieu. It is clear that anarchists will never be the main force within revolutionary moments, so if acts don't generalize socially and un-

21. *Green Anarchy*: The most prominent "anarcho-primitivist" magazine, from Oregon—USA. One of the editors is John Zerzan.

controllably beyond the anarchist milieu then the struggle will fail. So the key is not to organize everyone who struggles into anarchist organizations or federations, but to intervene in ways that can help the social spread and deepening of uncontrollable revolt. And it is through becoming uncontrollable that individuals and groups will be creating new social relations beyond capitalism and the state. The targets of such struggles are all over the place. Insurrectionary anarchists have intervened in struggles over the building of railways, new factories and mines, in wildcat strikes, in solidarity with interned immigrants, against war and the building of military bases, in occupying spaces, and many more areas.

The Batko Group: You seem to have had quite a lot of contact with Italian anarchists. Can you tell us something about your view on the origin and development of the insurrectionary theory in Italy, and its status and practices today? (Due to the language barrier we sadly have almost no knowledge about the anarchist debate and contemporary theories in either Italy, Greece or even Spain.)

Sasha: Most of the contact I have in Italy were made through Wolfi. He is also the one that knows that situation the best. So maybe you should talk to him about this question. I speak Chinese but no Italian or Greek. I did spend some time there. (There is an article in *Do or Die* that touches on the development of insurrectionary anarchism in Italy that you could look at.²²) As it says, we in the US were interested in the insurrectionary anarchist critique of the movements of the 1970s. Much of the Italian insurrectionary anarchist critique of the movements of the 1970s focused on the forms of organization that shaped the forces of struggle and out of this a more developed idea of informal organization grew. A critique of the authoritarian organizations of the 70s, whose members often believed they were in a privileged position to struggle as compared to the proletariat as a whole, was further refined in the struggles of the 1980s, such as the early 1980s struggle against a military base that was to house nuclear weapons in Comiso, Sicily.

Anarchists were very active in that struggle, which was organized into self-managed leagues. These ad hoc, autonomous leagues took three general principles to guide the organization of struggle: permanent conflict, self-management and attack. Permanent conflict meant that the struggle would remain in conflict with the construction of the base until it was defeated without mediating or negotiating. The leagues were self-generated and self-managed: they refused permanent delegation of representatives and the professionalization of struggle. The leagues were organizations of attack on the construction of the base, not the defense of the interests of this or that group. This style of organization allowed groups to take the actions they saw as most effective while still being able to coordinate attack when useful, thus keeping open the potential of struggle to spread. It also kept the focus of organization on the goal of ending the construction of the base instead

22. See "Insurrectionary Anarchy!" in *Do or Die* issue 10.

of the building of permanent organizations, for which mediating with state institutions for a share of power usually becomes the focus and limiting the autonomy of struggle.

As the anarchists involved in the Comiso struggle understood, one of the central reasons that social struggles are kept from developing in a positive direction is the prevalence of forms of organization that cut us off from our own power to act and close off the potential of insurrection: these are permanent organizations, those that synthesize all struggle within a single organization, and organizations that mediate struggles with the institutions of domination.

One of the things we were doing was to develop this critique into a critique of activism. In the 1990s and even more so in the last 5 years (since Seattle in 1999), US activists have loudly celebrated their role and identity as activists. This is something that we wanted to be critical of. I recognize that capitalist society pushes us into the role of the activist and organizer, but to be revolutionary means to always try to break with that role and not celebrate it and become fully identified by it, placed, controlled. Such identification is part of a process of closing the potential of uncontrollability. I would say that this is one of the most important cleavages in the US scene: between those who celebrate the role of the activist and organizer and those that try to break with it.²³ I feel that the insurrectionary anarchist critique and practice that was developed in Italy was a good way to discuss this problem and to think of ways to break from it. Of course, the situationists were influential on this as well. One of the main points of insurrectionary anarchism is that insurrection is a process of becoming uncontrollable—the insurrection is the moment when the state begins to lose control and also its own coherence. The whole activist dichotomy of organizer / organized, of course, fights against that process.

The Batko Group: Do you think Bonanno's analysis of "post-industrial" capitalism is accurate? The social outbursts in the early nineteenths, with the L.A. riots,²⁴ Poll tax in the UK,²⁵ the street protests in France and so on,

23. For more reading we recommend the article "The Necessity and Impossibility of Anti-Activism" by J. Kellstadt

24. The LA Riots: The 1992 Los Angeles riots, also known as the LA riots, the Rodney King uprising or the Rodney King riots, were sparked on April 29, 1992 when a mostly white jury acquitted four police officers accused in the videotaped beating of black motorist Rodney King. The riot continued for three days and was crushed by a massive police and military operation. See "The Rebellion in Los Angeles: The Context of a Proletarian Uprising" in *Aufheben* issue 1.

25. Poll Tax Riots: riots in London 1990 which started when the cops attacked a big demonstration against the so-called "Poll Tax," an attempted tax reform introduced by Margaret Thatcher. The tax said that "all shall pay equal" which was the Thatcherist way of redistributing wealth—the rich pay less, the poor pay more. A little comparison: the duke of Westminster paid £10 255 in taxes before and £417 after the Poll Tax. His probably underpaid gardener was also obligated to pay £417. The Poll Tax's official name was the Community Charge, but it was renamed Poll Tax after a tax reform in 1381 which led to a peasant rebellion. See Danny Burns: *Poll tax rebellion*. AK Press, 1996.

seemed to confirm the thesis of the excluded, but what about today?²⁶ Did these riots, social outbursts and insurrections in your opinion fail to communicate or spread?

Sasha: I would say that Bonanno captured some aspects of the changes going on within capitalism. Class relations changed a lot beginning in the late 1970s. The shift from a Fordist regime of accumulation to neoliberal or flexible accumulation did mean that a lot more people came to be socially and economically excluded, expelled from the normal operations of capitalism. And the excluded often are more likely to take part in rebellious activity. Also in *From Riot to Insurrection*,²⁷ I think Bonanno is right to pay attention to the role that technology plays in the disciplining of the work force in this shift. Workers today are not only excluded from the benefits of capitalist restructuring, but it is harder and harder for people to understand how society even operates, as they have been excluded from the technical knowledge that constructs production, workers have been deskilled again. This is linked to the increased atomization of both our daily lives, we split from each other, and of the production process. All of this can make it harder to imagine a different world. Yet I think Bonanno also overestimated the ability of capitalism to expel the worker—remembering that this text was produced something like 20 years ago.

Other than Bonanno, who was looking at this shift rather early in the process, not many anarchists have tried to think about what this shift in capitalism means for anti-capitalist rebellion; instead, they simply suggest we need to do more of the same, applying organizational forms from a different era, when the relationship between the dispossessed and capital was very different. An organizational structure that attempts to synthesize the struggles of the excluded into a single organization, organizations that often take the factory as their model, will fail. We will find that the struggles of the dispossessed, when they are active, will always be ahead of such organizations.

Instead of trying to synthesize struggles into a permanent anarchist organization or attempt to have the organization produce struggle, we need to see how struggles grow organization. This makes us ask what class struggle is for us. To me, class struggle is not, as it is for many leftists, about the proletariat taking power and managing the affairs of society; it is not a celebration of proletarian culture, such as we had in the USSR. Class struggle, for me, is the struggle for the auto-destruction, the self-abolition, of the dispossessed class; it is the struggle to end the existence of all classes as such.

So the question of how a riot of the excluded, of which we have seen a lot over the last decade, turns into an insurrection is very important. Living in China for several year out of the last decade has allowed me to watch this shift happen in another social and political context; this same process is happening as they shift from their state capitalist version of Fordism to

26. Street protests in France 1996 against the Neoliberal restructuring. See “The Class Struggles in France” in *Aufheben* issue 5.

27. Alfredo Bonanno *From Riot to Insurrection*. Elephant Editions, 1998.

a more flexible regime of accumulation and a lot of people, especially rural residents, are being excluded. Increasingly there are riots taking place, and they are growing in size as well—some up towards 100,000 participants and continuing for several days. People active in these events are beginning to communicate with each other—this is an important activity that we can take part in. Methods of struggle are spreading between areas both through direct communication and through imitation. Some of these struggles seem to be developing more intermediate aim. The anti-neoliberal-capitalist riots in Latin America also spread and deepened. In the 1990s in Europe and the US there was a large amount of circulation between these riots. And this process is not over, even if things in the west seem to have quieted down somewhat at the moment. None of this, of course, happens without a response from capital, and we can see neo-conservatism in the US as a response to the contradictions of neo-liberalism.

How do pro-revolutionaries such as ourselves take part in these struggles, in the insurrectionary process? We can neither replace the struggle of the dispossessed (for we will always be a minority within the dispossessed) nor can we stand outside of it to organize it or synthesize the struggle into our organizations. This is the difficult position we are in. So we have to find ways of acting within the struggles of the dispossessed, of communicating methods we feel are appropriate—both through action and words—of pushing struggles forwards in an insurrectionary direction. Certain types of organizational forms and practices block this process, and we need to be critical of them. And we can note that these organizational forms and practices are often linked up to a perspective that does not fully leave capitalism behind—this is no accident. Leftist and activist practices are really part of the left wing of capitalism—seeking, in the end, to self-manage capitalism in a more human and organized fashion. And this often involves a nostalgia for Fordist capitalism.

The Batko Group: Even if Bonanno is correct in his analysis (about the spread of struggle in the social terrain and so on), isn't it also possible to argue that the shift of battleground from the workplace to the streets was a result of us (as a global working class) being pushed back to a much more defensive position as a result of the capitalist restructuring? What do you think about the argument that in order to regain momentum in the class-struggle we must find a way back to the workplace? Not because of any romanticism about "real workers" or anything like that, but because that is the place where we are. That's our reality where we (consciously or unconsciously) are struggling with our comrades every day, and as long as the revolutionary struggle is fought separate from the point of exploitation (as in the globalisation-movement) we can't really make an impact as revolutionaries. We just reinforce the division between politics (as something you do in your spare time) and what we perceive as "real life" (work).

Sasha: Well, I don't think that is the only place that we are. But I do agree that a split between politics as something one does in their spare time (or worse, what one does for a living) separate from everyday life is a big problem. This is, of course, one of the points of anti-politics. Work, however, is also a separated activity. We need to overcome both, and to do that is part of the insurrectionary or revolutionary process itself. I also do agree that anti-globalization globe-trotting is a problem—again it becomes either a vacation or a job. I think the idea of struggle spreading across the social terrain is exactly a critique of these positions. It is when it becomes a separated activity, separated from everyday life, that it becomes weak and more controllable. And that is also one of the roots of activism.

The Batko Group: You write that “[l]eftist and activists practices are really part of the left wing of capitalism—seeking, in the end, to self-manage capitalism in a more human and organized fashion. And this often involves a nostalgia for Fordist capitalism.” We agree with that. But both your projects and ours, started as projects WITHIN and FOR this left-wing of capitalism. Now we and other groups are moving away from activism and leftism, out from the bubble, in to reality. But it isn't the working class, or the dispossessed, that reads our papers and discuss our theories. So how do we spread our theories to the working class? And do we need to? One idea some of us have is that perhaps we do not need to further the political project, meaning not develop the political organization, but focusing on development of the class struggle *per se*.

Sasha: Yes, we all begin within capitalism. We are trying to break out. But we are also of the dispossessed. At the same time, you are right that the working class in general don't read our papers. The point of journals like KKA was not, however, propaganda. It was more to find like-minded people, people we had a certain degree of affinity with, and communicate with them, make connections with them, and maybe move onto project with them. We aren't taking the role of waking up the working class. That said, I'm not sure I understand your last statement: what does “focusing on the development of the class struggle *per se*” mean? If I hear more from you on this perhaps we can discuss this point further.

The Batko Group: We think that the real subsumption of labor under capital is a central issue here. If the capital-relation has colonized the entire social organism and made all social activities productive, that requires of us as communists to deepen our critique of synthesis. In that sense the insurrectional perspective makes perfect sense and becomes an essential tool. The organization of attack, the unification of organizational form and direct action, is the direct assault on value. This, then, means that political organization has come to an end. The point now is to dissolve (capital's) organization (of life). So, instead of furthering the political project, which has come to an end with the real subsumption and insurrectionary organization of attack, the focus should be on the class

struggle, the attacks on value. However, while these attacks become more “lethal” to capital and operates as negations we know that these negations will either be recuperated and lead to reforms or they’ll get overcome by capital. As we already know, capitals limit is capital itself, which is class struggle. So, as the real subsumption and organizations of attack increases the blows against capital, the (temporary) negations, we now need to develop the class struggle, or rather, to transcend class struggle. Attack and with-draw, in order to constitute communist relations. We see this as a way to go beyond the negation/affirmation dichotomy.

Sasha: Ok. I hope I am reading you right here. If not, certainly correct me. This seems somewhat influenced by Negri and Hardt’s thesis in *Empire*. And I am pretty suspect of some key aspects of it. With Negri there is the idea that the political project of Leninism made sense until the 1970s when everything changed and now we are in a new period. And what you have said above seems to mirror this sentiment. “The political project ... has come to an end,” you say. But I would ask if it ever made any sense at all. I would say that the political project was always a recuperative project. That goes for Leninism, Maoism, Trotskyism and any form of leftism, including, unfortunately, much of anarchism.

I do agree, however, that things have changed since the 1970s. Capitalism certainly has moved from formal to real subsumption for the most part—a shift from extensive capture to intensification, a social deepening of capital. Although there are increasing numbers of people who are excluded from this process and pushed into the human warehouses in the form of slums or rural poverty. But I don’t see this as meaning a shift from political to anti-political struggle. I feel anti-political struggle always made more sense for those trying to end the domination (formal or real) of capitalism than political struggle. Political struggle, of course, always was an attempt to moderate capitalism—it was always and is always a struggle to control the development of capitalism and control its the distribution of its benefits. I would say, therefore, that we should have been developing the class struggle of the proletariat to autodestruct from the beginning of capitalism. In fact, I believe that anarchy and communism has always been possible, even before the existence of capitalism.

I do think that attack on capitalism is different in the period of real as compared to formal subsumption. During the period of formal subsumption, struggles were often split between anti-imperialist struggles and anti-capitalist struggles in countries that were under real subsumption. This is really no longer true. I feel this opens the potential for greater connections around the globe. Struggles can become global much quicker under the present conditions. Revolutionary solidarity attacks more directly the heart of capitalism under these conditions. I would like to hear more by what you mean about overcoming the negation/affirmation dichotomy and more on what you think has changed with the global shift to real subsumption.

The Batko Group: When we define capitalism we include primitive accumulation, formal subsumption, real subsumption and so on. So when we talk about real subsumption we do not talk about it as a strict periodization. All these historical tendencies within capitalism are just tendencies. We do, as you say, have tendencies of primitive accumulation and formal subsumption today, even though it's real subsumption that is most dominant. The political projects, such as platformism and so on, are products of the formal subsumption. It's natural when the capital-relation is forced upon us, and doesn't seem to occupy all aspects of social life, to try to establish autonomous areas and fight capitalism as something intrusive. Sure, it can be argued that this wasn't the "right" solution, but we have to consider the material conditions which these political projects evolved. Otherwise, we fall into voluntarism. It was the political projects of the formal subsumption that pushed capitalism into real subsumption; hence, the political project has now come to an end.

Political struggles were always struggles for power. While the Marxists saw the state as something to be conquered, the anarchists saw it as the biggest enemy. Today, however, state and capital cannot so easily be separated anymore, and this is also a result of the real subsumption. Political struggles makes no sense. The material conditions for political struggle is no more. So, we don't justify Leninism, or platformism, or any thing like that, we are not interested in moral considerations on contra-factual statements. What we are saying is that anti-political struggle is the only thing that makes sense today. We think it's important to point this out. Otherwise we easily fall into voluntarism.

We see the anti-political, insurrectionary project as potentially overcoming the negation/affirmation-dichotomy for two reasons. First off, the perspective of permanent conflictuality negates the capital-relation constantly through faceless resistance and non-mediating organization (with affinity groups formed in struggle). But we know that negation isn't enough. However, with the unification of direct action and organizational form (the organization of attack) unmediated affinity is formed between people, but a temporary and fleeing, you could call it "rhizomatic," affinity. We see this as a constituting communistic activity. It attacks and with draws from capitalism. We act in a cramped space, trying to make the impossible possible. It isn't a new ideal to be realized because it isn't satisfying desires, but rather constantly producing new desires.

Sasha: I see much better now what your argument is, although we still have points of disagreement. Also, I know platformism is something that you are grappling with, but for me it isn't something I dwell too much upon. I would say that there is still very much a material basis for the political project you talk of even under real subsumption or domination. First, I don't see that platformism was really ever a product of being outside of the real domination of capital. Its material basis was always inside and always political. In other words, I don't see that political project as a project of formal domination versus real domination. The specific political project you talk of was

always of real domination in the first place. I would say it was always operating within a society in which the labor process was transformed and fully dominated by capital.

Second, the material basis for the political project, of whatever type, is always there under capitalism—there will always be managers of revolt ready and willing to represent us and then call due their benefits, to, in the end, save capitalism. Platformism, of course, has never really had the chance to play much of a role, political or otherwise; and we don't know what would happen if platformists or platformist organizations had such a chance. Perhaps their organizations of representation and management would dissolve into a general social insurrection; perhaps they would attempt to tighten the reins of management. But there is just as much a basis for that today as there was in the past—assuming we reached a more revolutionary moment.

Anyhow, political recuperation of struggle is not the cause of the weakness of revolutionary tendencies so much as a sign of the weakness itself. Recuperation works exactly because our revolution is manageable, controllable. Becoming uncontrollable is the insurrectionary force. And this is, of course, the problem with specialization, especially militant or military specialization and its spectacularization—it is so much more controllable. What we need instead is social generalization. Again, Spain is an example of this problem.

The way you say that “political struggles make no sense” under the conditions of real subsumption seems to carry within it a judgment upon the political struggles of the past as if they made some sense. You may not want to get into such a historical argument but I think your words do seem to contain it. And I think it isn't something we should avoid. Is that voluntarism? I don't think so. Anyhow, I think we should be very critical of determinism as it is (we don't really have time to get into the problematics of that dichotomy—perhaps some future time!). You say that now that formal domination is mostly complete “anti-political struggle is the only thing that makes sense....” My point is that from a revolutionary perspective anti-political struggle is all that ever made sense. Political struggle simply never was revolutionary in the sense of moving towards a world without a state, wage labor, work, classes, capitalism, etc. We can see that as clearly in the moment of Russia as in Spain.

What seems to be happening in your above schema, is that you see the political project as being “progressive” (thus the critique of “voluntarism”?) during a certain era, but no longer; it has become regressive now. Or at least I think you imply that—correct me if I am wrong. I, however, don't see the negation of capitalism in such a progressive, teleological schema. Instead, I see it as a radical break, as ending the progressive trajectory itself. During the era when platformism came into existence, I would argue, there was as much of a material basis for this break (a break from the political project which is also a break from capitalism and all that it entails) as there is now.

I would say that the state was never as autonomous as you seem to be implying it was, say a century ago. And the case of Russia and Leninism

illustrates this quite well. So the state is not something we can use in the revolutionary project; it isn't now and it wasn't then. Certainly its integration was different than today, but autonomous, never. The conquering of the state links up with a progressivist view. The state is used to develop the forces of production in the place of the market and individual capitalists—looking at Russia or China, we have seen very clearly where that leads. Delinking is a form of developmentalism, whether Maoist or Leninist or Stalinist or nationalist.

The Batko Group: What would you say is the biggest strengths and weaknesses of insurrectionalist theories? Our impression from this talk and your writings in *Killing King Abacus* is that you seem to have a broad range of influences. Are there any particular theories you consider to be of special interest? Apart from the anarchist insurrectionalists our biggest influence is Dauvé and Camatte. One reason is because they relate the need for insurrectionary organizing (even though they don't use the same concepts) to the real subsumption. This has also led us to realize that we need to reread Marx. In this sense insurrectionalist theories sometimes feel "incomplete" and need to be complemented. What aspects in insurrectionalist theories would you say we need to be critical of, and what needs to be developed in your opinion?

Sasha: I certainly read Dauvé and Camatte as well. Dauvé's newer writings have been an influence in particular. I think what some people miss in insurrectionary writings is the strategic take on our present situation. Insurrectionary writings focus on the present and on revolt. There is less on an understanding of our changing circumstances. This allows some to view insurrection in a very a-historic way. And people tend to just chase after insurrections wherever they occur, without any understanding of a general condition of these uprisings.

Although, Bonanno has done some writing that push against this tendency, as we have already discussed. More thinking on our present conditions and how they affect our attack and its organization would be useful, yes. This does seem to be something that people within the anti-political/insurrectionary milieu are doing. But I would be wary of arguments that say that everything had changed at some certain point in time, such as the 1970s. Real subsumption is important, but it doesn't change everything. That, too, is a rather a-historical perspective.

Also, I would say that there really isn't anything called "insurrectionalist theory" per se. Insurrection is a process of becoming uncontrollable, not a branch of theory. Insurrectionary anarchism, if such a thing exists, is a tendency that discusses this process and takes part in its practice in a way that attempts to consciously push things further. People like Bonanno have been very useful in this discussion, but so have countless others who are unnamed or not named "insurrectionary anarchists" at least.

Changing Suns Press Wearables

Changing Suns Press Black T-Shirt

\$30



red ink on front

Changing Suns Press Black Hoodie

\$50



red ink on front
left breast



white ink on back
off cented to the right

To Kill King Abacus is to create relations without measure. If we aim to destroy capitalism we cannot reproduce its necrophilic logic which reduces relationships to numbers. To Kill King Abacus is to destroy the social net which privileges mediated transactions and images over direct relations. Because money is a general equivalent and thus is nearly limitless in its applications, it conquers other signifiers of value; capitalism transforms other value systems into itself. To Kill King Abacus is to disrupt this process of quantification. Money may be the most indiscriminate of whores but capitalism is not the only system which measures value. Justice, morality, law and culture itself are all value systems which weigh, judge and channel human action. We want to create relations which defy such equations. We therefore have no need for standardizing models within our struggle. In the absence of value systems desire shoots in new directions. Insurrection is desire rebelling against value.



ISBN 978-0-9951551-0-7



9 780995 155107