



Rolling Thunder

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an anarchist journal of dangerous living

The system runs on the blood and sweat of our hijacked lives;
the more we invest ourselves in surviving according to its terms,
the more difficult it is to do otherwise.

Seizing back our time and energy from its jaws
is the essence of and the precondition for any real resistance.

The paralyzing commonsense notion that everyone,
even the most radical of the radical, plays a role in the status quo
hides the subversive possibility that all of us—even radicals—
can refuse our roles.

“From the perspective of the slave who rebels, power is both the bosses’ orders
and the obedience of the other slaves who carry them out.”

—*Jean Weir*

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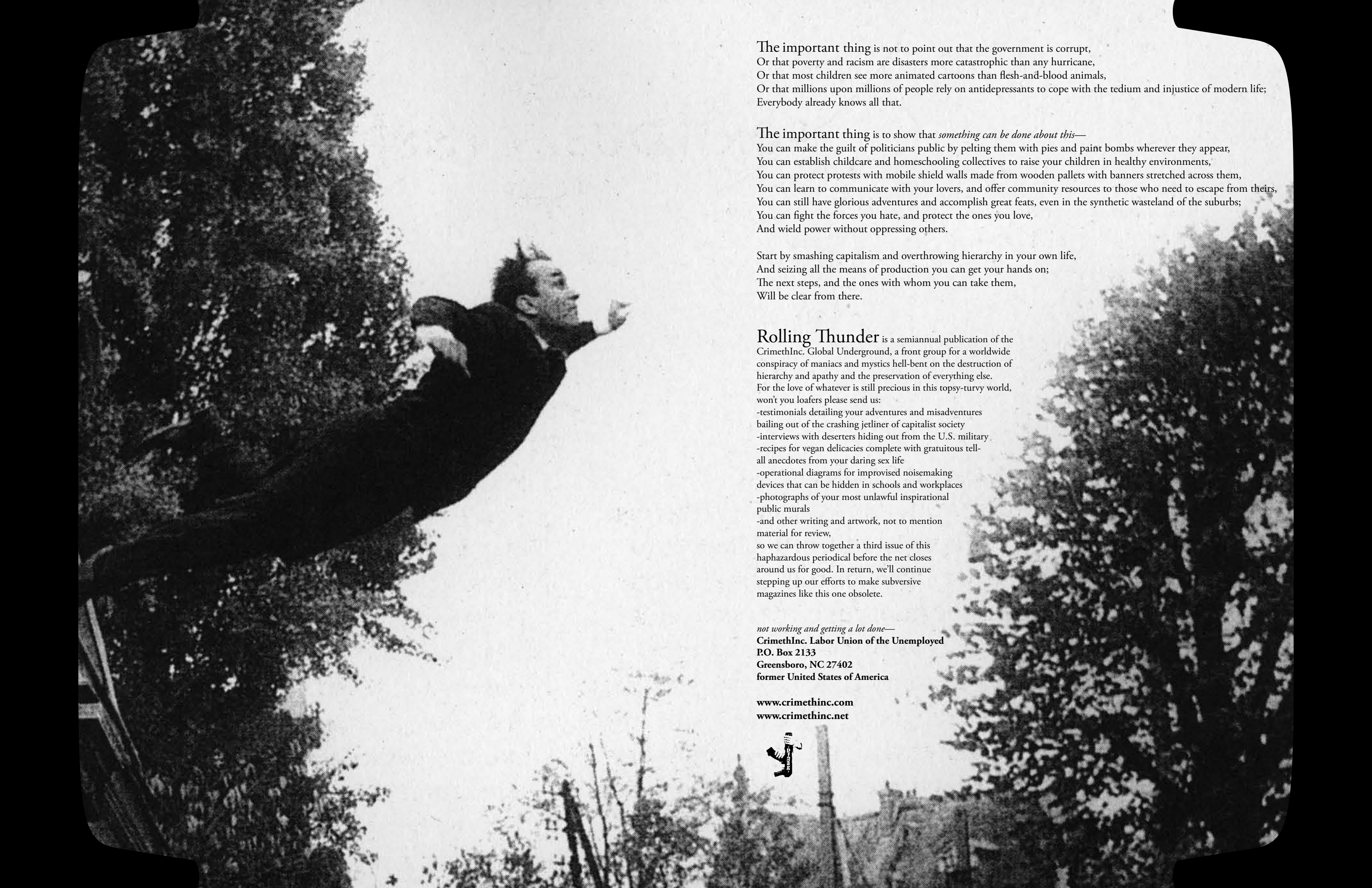
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There is a boy who lives in a world of gas stations and factories, under what he calls capitalism. He calls himself an anti-capitalist, and it's true: if you look into his eyes, you will see anti-capitalism. You will see: anti-men and anti-women, taking buses—anti-buses—through anti-streets, to go to work in anti-factories, and the buses stop for anti-gas at anti-stations. Anti-aircrafts fill the air, anti-heroes swallow antidepressants, and under their arms is antiperspirant; every life form is antibiotic. Antifascists walk the streets after dark, anticipating trouble. Anti-authoritarians hold sway, waging anti-war on behalf of the anti-statist, anti-imperialist struggle. Anti-intellectuals debate anti-matters of consequence. It is truly an anti-empire.

But the end of the old order will mean the end of the old opposition, too.

“The persistent ones finish in the hands of the terrorist state; the terrorist but passive ideologues and terror-inspired masses keep away from danger while applauding these isolated fighters, never ready themselves, these shy inhibited ones, to take direct part in the struggle.”

—from *Solideridad Obrera*, an underground paper in Paris in 1952; reprinted in *Sabate: Guerrilla Extraordinaire*



The important thing is not to point out that the government is corrupt,
Or that poverty and racism are disasters more catastrophic than any hurricane,
Or that most children see more animated cartoons than flesh-and-blood animals,
Or that millions upon millions of people rely on antidepressants to cope with the tedium and injustice of modern life;
Everybody already knows all that.

The important thing is to show that *something can be done about this*—
You can make the guilt of politicians public by pelting them with pies and paint bombs wherever they appear,
You can establish childcare and homeschooling collectives to raise your children in healthy environments,
You can protect protests with mobile shield walls made from wooden pallets with banners stretched across them,
You can learn to communicate with your lovers, and offer community resources to those who need to escape from theirs,
You can still have glorious adventures and accomplish great feats, even in the synthetic wasteland of the suburbs;
You can fight the forces you hate, and protect the ones you love,
And wield power without oppressing others.

Start by smashing capitalism and overthrowing hierarchy in your own life,
And seizing all the means of production you can get your hands on;
The next steps, and the ones with whom you can take them,
Will be clear from there.

Rolling Thunder is a semiannual publication of the CrimethInc. Global Underground, a front group for a worldwide conspiracy of maniacs and mystics hell-bent on the destruction of hierarchy and apathy and the preservation of everything else. For the love of whatever is still precious in this topsy-turvy world, won't you loafers please send us:

- testimonials detailing your adventures and misadventures bailing out of the crashing jetliner of capitalist society
- interviews with deserters hiding out from the U.S. military
- recipes for vegan delicacies complete with gratuitous tell-all anecdotes from your daring sex life
- operational diagrams for improvised noisemaking devices that can be hidden in schools and workplaces
- photographs of your most unlawful inspirational public murals
- and other writing and artwork, not to mention material for review,

so we can throw together a third issue of this haphazardous periodical before the net closes around us for good. In return, we'll continue stepping up our efforts to make subversive magazines like this one obsolete.

not working and getting a lot done—

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Glossary of Terms, Continued

Abstractions—Those who cannot directly seize the power over others they desire are drawn to concepts such as God, the Future, History, and Nature that are so infinite that they can only be conceived of when they are cut down to a manageable size—for example, when they are framed in a certain way by a representative. As many are anxious about these matters, such representatives are generally in high demand, and can wield great influence over others through the selection process of what they include in their frame: “The Lord created Man to be the custodian of His creation,” “women are innately intuitive,” “the history of civilization is the history of the class struggle.” So it is that for God we have priests, for History historians, for Nature scientists, for Revolution theorists—though every human being possesses in his or her own experience alone enough raw material to come to draw equally valid conclusions regarding any of these infinitely vague subjects.

Anarchist—A term commonly misunderstood to denote a person who believes that people should have control over their own lives, not those of others. In practice, it doesn't matter what a person believes “should” be the case, as even the most murderous executives have idle ideas about how nice things should be (couched in hypocritical hymns about “peace on earth and goodwill towards men,” for example); it only matters what one *does*. Ideally, an anarchist would be a person who, in every instance, acted in such a way that her destiny was in her hands, while enabling others to take control of their own destinies—a person for whom nothing would be impossible, and with whom one would become aware of one's own limitless powers.

Of course, to *call* oneself an anarchist in good faith is not to claim that one is entirely free, internally or externally, from hierarchies; at best, it is a humble declaration that one aspires to side with the parts of oneself and the world that oppose and undermine hierarchy.

Complicity—Domination is a relationship, not a condition; it depends on the participation of both parties. Hierarchical power is not just the gun in the policeman's hand; it is just as much the obedience of the ones who act as if it is always pointed at them. It is not just the government and the executives and the armed forces: it extends through society from top to bottom, as an interlocking web of control and compliance. Sometimes all it takes to be complicit in the oppression of millions is to be a slave who dies of natural causes.

Diplomacy—Contrary to popular belief, revolution isn't simply a matter of getting guns into the hands of enough revolutionaries. If those guns are to do any good, the insurgents must first be exquisitely skilled in the art of working together and sorting out disagreements. One would think self-proclaimed anarchists, being proponents of cooperation, mutual aid, and the abolition of hierarchy, would excel in social skills such as conflict resolution and the ability to make others feel comfortable. Sadly, the opposite is often true: being specialists in opposition, they put more energy into opposing each other than into undermining the systems of conflict they would reject. (“When radicals hold a meeting, they sit in a circle, all facing one another; unfortunately, they do the same thing when forming a firing squad.”)

Fantasy—The only bona fide opposition to reality.

Higher Education—A homophonic transcription error, which should properly read “*hire* education”—an enterprise any imbecile can recognize as absurd. Will the teachers never learn?

Iatrogenic—A medical term indicating an ailment caused by a cure¹, such as impotence induced by antidepressants, addiction to prescription painkillers, or unhealthy dependence on indoor heating and air conditioning. “There was an old lady who swallowed a fly...”

Innocent Bystander—A contradiction in terms.

Loyal Opposition—The tacit tolerance existing between two camps that present themselves as opposing poles while maintaining a conspiracy of silence regarding any other options or ways of framing the subject. Popular examples include democrats and republicans, terrorists and warmongers, capitalism and communism, marriage and adultery (see *Monogamy*), puritanism and debauchery, individualism and collectivism, selfishness and generosity.

Monogamy—An institution that protects romantic partners from learning how to be comfortable with and supportive of each other's desires (and often, from learning of them at all)—and, for that matter, from learning how to establish intimacy and trust outside the smothering security of the couple bubble. (see *figure i*)

From Elaine Morgan's *The Descent of Woman*: “[There is] evidence that the tightness of the pair bond in a species is a fairly reliable indicator of its level of aggressiveness towards its own kind. That figures. If you hate the guts of everybody around you, it becomes absolutely necessary to evolve a system that exempts at least one other individual from your general hostility; otherwise the species would never survive.”

¹ From Ivan Illich's *Tools for Conviviality*: “Foremost among today's iatrogenic (doctor-induced) diseases is the pretense of doctors that they provide their clients with superior health. This, while new sicknesses are constantly defined and institutionalized, and the cost of enabling people to survive in unhealthy cities and sickening jobs continues to skyrocket. The monopoly of the medical profession now extends over an increasing range of everyday occurrences in every person's life, and preservation of the sick life of medically dependent people in an unhealthy environment has become its principal business.”

Morality—No forbidding allowed.

Paranoia—In suspicion we trust.

Practicality—A fool's virtue, usually invoked by those with stunted imaginations (or, worse, those who have a stake in others' imaginations remaining stunted), that places more value upon reacting to the world as it is perceived to be than on exploring routes to more desirable worlds. Even in the most ostensibly radical circles, a false pragmatism that is more about accepting the status quo than transcending it can masquerade as simple common sense². In an insane world, the approach that seems the most outlandish and quixotic is often the most realistic and sensible.

Progress—The process by which those who have wrecked one relationship or opportunity can wreck another instead of learning from their mistakes. Industrial technology, for example, far from eradicating all human problems, is now the source of the most pressing ones (see *Iatrogenic*)—but don't worry, all this can be solved with more computer technology. Similarly, European refugees brought to the Americas all the afflictions they fled, wreaking even more terrible havoc upon those continents, rather than figuring out how to cure them at home—and some still talk about moving on to space! A child might ask how, if we haven't figured out how to responsibly use the knowledge or resources we currently have, we think we can trust ourselves with more, or that more could somehow make things better.

² *Primitivist, enamored with assault rifles, jokingly referring to the trick bicycle in the Folk Science chapter of a certain well-known revolutionary manual*: “So are you going to use bikes that do cartwheels to protect yourselves from tanks?” *CrimethInc. agent, all too familiar with this line of questioning*: “No, the Safety Bike is designed to protect its riders from the perils to which ‘conventional’ bicycles expose them—for example, the risks associated with showing up to work on time, which currently pose a much greater threat to human beings in this part of the world than tanks do.”

Protection Racket—A scam in which a gang, institution, or social system offers you protection—for a price, of course—from dangers to which it exposes you. (see *Higher Education, Insurance, National Security*, etc.)

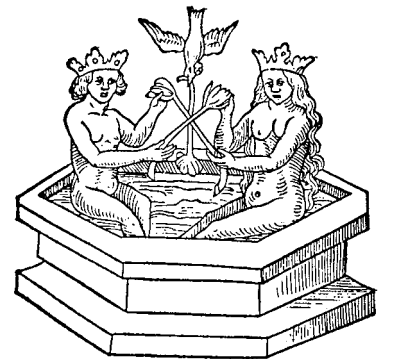
Puppet Government—A redundancy. When power itself pulls the strings and competition reigns supreme, no one can determine his own destiny, not even the king. As every tyrant learns too late, there are no rulers—only slaves, and free human beings.

Radical Art—Oh please. Less avant, more garde!

Systematic—Every individual and situation is unique, but it can be useful to look for common threads. Consistently refusing to do so may indicate a pathological fear of coming to terms with an inconvenient state of affairs, such as one's oppression at the hands of bloodthirsty tyrants. Without an analysis of the dynamics that give rise to them, unfortunately, it can be hard to keep oneself out of such circumstances. (see *The Forest for the Trees*—or don't, as the case may be.)

Some, hearing a critique of the social role of police officers and politicians, protest that it may apply to most of them, but they know some who are really good people (“Sure, we have to abolish governments and all that, but here in [liberal oasis] there are such nice folks on the town council! I feel responsible to abide by their wishes, even though that means calling everything off.”). This brings to mind the story of the man who, tormented by fleas, managed to catch one between his fingers. He scrutinized it for a long time before, to the shock of his companions, placing it back at the spot on his neck where had he caught it. His friends, confounded, inquired why on earth he would do such a thing. “That wasn't the one that was biting me,” he responded.

COURTSHIP



OBLIGATION



RESIGNATION

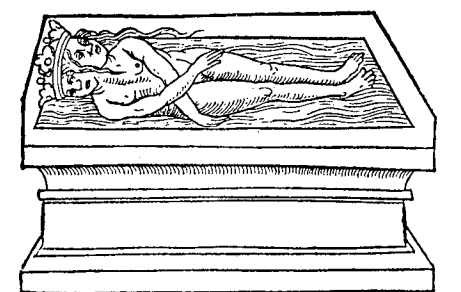


figure i.: the three stages of marriage

Word of the Issue: Charity

Charity is the means by which the bourgeois, having already snatched up almost everything else for themselves, attempt to corner the market on benevolence.

Individual charitable acts can be criticized for being aimed more at assuaging guilty consciences than actually solving problems, or for distracting attention from the roots of those problems—but charity itself, even at its most apparently effective and well-intentioned, is essentially a demonstration of power in a system based on competition and humiliation. In every act of charity,

the subtext is that those who offer the handouts have their act together to such an extent that they not only can provide for themselves—the ultimate measure of worth in our individualistic capitalist society—but also have enough left over to share with others, while those on the receiving end cannot even take care of their own needs. This is why such assistance is often not received with the groveling gratitude benefactors expect: in contrast to other gift-giving, charity glorifies the one who offers it, and humiliates the recipient. At bottom, the benefactor is not

there to assist the one in need; the one in need is there to confirm the status of the benefactor. The philanthropist gives, but on his terms, thus emphasizing his property rights and position of privilege: charity is the opposite of sharing.

Everyone knows that, as a rule, the less people have, the more they are willing to share; this says a lot about the effects of wealth on human beings. In place of charity, we would do well to develop ways of assisting one another in which we share not only resources but also, more importantly, control over them.



figure ii.

figure iii.

LETTERS

Dear Rolling Thunder Editors,

Hey, this is Patrick. I met one of you at the Fayetteville, NC war protest March 19th—I bought a copy of *Inside Front* and told about our anarchist theory/activism group here in Fredericksburg, VA. We also discussed the recent Crime-Inc. book *Recipes for Disaster*, and I have a success story/suggestion regarding one of the entries.

Recently, the Living Wage Campaign here at the University of Mary Washington staged a lockdown/sit-in in the office of our administrative executive vice president's office using lockboxes modeled after those in the Blockades/Lockdowns section of *RfD*. The lockdown involved three weeks of constant planning, including press releases, direct action training, and lockbox building. We worked hard to set the context for the event: we called on the administration to form a committee with the Living Wage Coalition to study the problem of poverty wages at the school, issued a public denouncement of their swift refusal, held a

rally outside the building two days before the lockdown, sent letters to local papers, and so on.

In the end, the action went off without a hitch. First, the VP rejected our initial demand (a decoy, of sorts) that the administration implement a living wage immediately, told the police to arrest us, and left. Thanks to the resiliency of the lockboxes, however, the cops could not remove us, and two hours later we agreed to voluntarily unlock ourselves and leave if the VP would accede to our secondary demand: to agree to form the committee he had previously refused to form, and let us go without any disciplinary action. After half an hour of negotiations, he acquiesced, and we unlocked and left without ever revealing to the cops or the locksmith they brought in how our lockboxes worked. In fact, we got to keep them!

We are currently working on the details of the committee. In retrospect, though every second of planning and careful thought we put into this was crucial to its success, we would have not succeeded at all if not

for the lockboxes. None of us had seen lockboxes before, and had we just used chains, we would have been carried out in twenty minutes. But because neither the police nor the locksmith could remove our lockboxes—in fact, the latter even called them ingenious—the VP had to grant our secondary demands, which was our goal in the first place. So, thanks to everyone involved with *RfD*!

Now, as for the suggestion: in *RfD*, the recipe for lockboxes recommends either locking to a central bolt OR locking carabineers together. The success of our lockdown hinged on the very crucial decision to do BOTH. After we each locked to the central bolts, one person in each lockbox used her or his index finger to find the other's carabineer, and then clip to it without unclipping from the bolt. The cops saw the central bolt as a weak point of our lockboxes immediately. Although our central bolts were very secure and we superglued the nuts to the bolts, after the bolt cutters the cops brought in failed, the locksmith was able to remove one of our bolts

with a pair of vice grips and a wrench after about twenty minutes. However, after painstakingly removing the bolt, he went to remove one of our arms and found us still locked to one another. Discouraged, he sat down to have lunch, and our secondary negotiations began. Had we been clipped only to the bolt, our secondary demands would not have been heard.

So, thanks again, and if you print more editions of *RfD*, you should consider suggesting that people lock to the central bolt and to one another's carabineers.

Here are links to some articles about our action:

<http://richmond.indymedia.org/feature/display/10304/index.php>

<http://dc.indymedia.org/feature/display/120804/index.php> (pics)

<http://www.fredericksburg.com/News/FLS/2005/042005/04122005/1730109>

Thanks again,
Patrick

“Anarchism is a philosophy that advocates for complete liberty, freedom, and equality.

The nuances are myriad and complex. Regardless of their intellectual or social merit, though, it is not necessary for the law enforcement professional to completely understand them all to confront the challenges posed by their advocates.¹”

-*Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 28:201–223, 2005: Anarchist Direct Actions: A Challenge for Law Enforcement, by Randy Borum (University of South Florida) and Chuck Tilby (Eugene, Oregon Police Department); available online.

I must say we're surprised at you, dear readers. We thought it inevitable that the directive on the back cover of our first issue (“PUNCH COPS IN THE FACE,” accompanied by a photo—yes, from an action some of us organized, not just some Greek riot porn downloaded off the internet—of someone doing exactly that) would draw at least one angry, critical letter. Perhaps inciting violence against police officers is no longer all that controversial, as everyone now recognizes it to be a necessary part of the struggle for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; or perhaps our critics have given us up as fanatical beyond hope of reform. Apparently we're going to have to work harder, if we are to shock people out of complacency² and into helping us fill our Letters section! In the meantime, we may as well go over some of the typical objections raised to such notions, since even if all of you are confirmed cop-punchers you still probably rub shoulders occasionally with people who are not.

Criticism of anti-police sentiments usually falls into one of five categories. The first such argument is that the police, as our fellow workers, are also exploited members of the proletariat, and should therefore be our allies. Unfortunately, as anyone who has tried to do anything in the real world knows, there is a vast gap between “should” and “is.” The police exist to enforce the will of the powerful; anyone who has not had a bad experience with them is likely either privi-

leged or submissive. Today's police officers, at least in North America³, know exactly what they're getting into when they join the force; people in uniform don't just get cats out of trees in this country. Yes, most take the job because of what they feel to be economic necessity, but needing a paycheck is no excuse for obeying orders to evict families, harass young men of color, or pepper spray demonstrators; those whose consciences can be bought are everyone else's enemies, not potential allies.

This argument could be made a little more persuasive if it was couched in strategic terms, rather than Marxist abstractions: for example, “Every revolution succeeds at the moment the armed forces refuse to make war on their fellows; therefore we should focus on seducing the police to our side of the barricades.” But again, the police are not just any workers; they are the ones who have most deliberately chosen to base their livelihoods and value systems upon the prevailing order, and thus are the least likely to be sympathetic to those who struggle against hierarchy. This being the case, it makes sense to focus on opposing the police, not on seeking solidarity with them. So long as they serve their masters, they cannot be our allies; by publicly deriding the police as an institution, we encourage them to cease to be police officers, so we can find common cause with them.

The second argument is that the police can win any confrontation, so we shouldn't in-

vest ourselves in strategies that involve confronting them⁴. It may seem that, with all their guns and armor and equipment, the police are invincible, but this is an illusion. They are limited by all sorts of invisible constraints—bureaucracy, public opinion, their own need to avoid inconvenient escalation. This is why a motley crowd armed only with the tear gas canisters shot at them can hold off a larger, more organized, better equipped force; contests between social unrest and military might are not played out according to the rules of military engagement. Those who have studied the police, who can predict what they are prepared for and what they can and cannot do, can usually outsmart and outmaneuver them. Such small victories can be inspiring for those who chafe under the heel of police repression, as well as instrumental in accomplishing concrete goals. In the collective unconscious of our society, the police are the ultimate bastion of reality, the force that ensures that things stay the way they are; to fight them and win, however temporarily, is to show that reality is negotiable.

The third argument is that the police are a mere distraction from the real enemy, not worth our wrath or attention. Alas, state power is not just the politicians; they would be powerless without the millions who do their bidding. When we contest their control, we are also contesting the submission of their flunkies, and we are sure sooner or later to come up against those of the latter who

insist on submitting. That being said, it's true that the police are no more integral to hierarchy than the oppressive dynamics in our own communities; they are simply the external manifestation, on a larger scale, of the same phenomena. If we are to contest hierarchy everywhere, rather than specializing in combating certain forms of it while leaving others unchallenged, we have to be prepared to take it on both in the streets and in our own bedrooms; we can't expect to win on one front without fighting on the other. We shouldn't fetishize confrontations with uniformed foes; we shouldn't forget the power imbalances in our own ranks—but neither should we be content merely to manage the details of our own oppression in a non-hierarchical manner⁵.

The fourth and most despicable argument is that we need police. According to this line of thinking, even if we can aspire to live in a society without police in the distant future, we need them today, for people are not ready to live with each other in peace without armed enforcers. As if the social imbalances and submissiveness maintained by the violence of the police are peace! Opponents of the police need not even answer this charge, however. It's not as if a police-free society is suddenly going to appear overnight, for good or for ill, just because someone spray paints “Fuck the Police” on a wall—if only it was so easy! The protracted struggle it is going to take to free our communities of police repression



Police officer paying an exorbitant \$7 for a copy of the first issue of Rolling Thunder.

will probably go on as long as it takes us to learn to coexist peacefully; indeed, no community incapable of sorting out its own conflicts can expect to triumph against a more powerful occupying force. In the meantime, anti-police sentiments should be seen as objections to one of the most advanced and egregious forms of conflict between human beings, not arguments that without police there would be no conflict at all; and those who argue that the police sometimes do good things bear the burden of proving that those same good things could not be accomplished at least as well by other means.

The final and most nuanced objection to militant resistance is the pacifist critique of violence itself. According to this account, violence is inherently a form of domination, and thus inconsistent with opposition to domination; those who engage in violence play the same game as their oppressors, thereby losing from the outset. This perspective is not shared by the

editors or publishers of this journal. In our view, in some cases violence enforces unequal power dynamics, while in other cases it contests them—that is to say, there is such a thing as self-defense. For those whose value system is still descended from Christianity, not engaging in immoral behavior is the top priority, at whatever cost; for the rest of us, who are free of superstitious prohibitions, the most important thing is what will work, in a given context, to make the world a better place. Sometimes—to name an obvious example, in the struggle against Nazi Germany—this may include violence.

To make this clear: yes, cops are people too, and deserve the same respect due all living things. The point is not that they deserve to suffer, or that we have to bring them to justice—that's Christian morality again, dealing in currencies of superstition and resentment. The point is that, in purely pragmatic terms, in order that other people not have to suf-

fer, it is necessary that the police be opposed by whatever means necessary. Perhaps the only compelling argument that could be made against our last issue's cover design is that it included the playful line “If you crave revenge...” Though it can be empowering for those who have spent their lives under the heel of oppression to contemplate finally settling the score with their oppressors, a real liberation struggle does not focus on exacting revenge but rather on solving problems so that all might have better lives. Therefore, while it may even sometimes be necessary to set police on fire, this should not be done out of a spirit of vengeful self-righteousness, but from a place of careful thought and compassion—if not for the police themselves, then for all those who would otherwise suffer at their hands.

One could make the argument that a magazine cover encouraging people to fight the police does more to publicize disapproval of them than

to cause actual assaults; what a text says literally and the effects it has in the real world are very different things. In that case, the real purpose of such a magazine cover would be to delegitimize the authority of the police and demoralize individual police officers. One could even argue that, in doing so, such a magazine cover was doing a service not only for those who suffer police oppression, but also for the families of police officers and even for the officers themselves—for not only do police officers have a disproportionately high rate of domestic violence and child abuse, they also get killed, commit suicide, and become addicts with alarming frequency. Anything that encourages police officers to quit their jobs is in their best interest, as well as the interest of their loved ones and society at large. Therefore, we can implore, with confidence and no small degree of compassion:

LOVE COPS. PUNCH THEM IN THE FACE.

¹ This is convenient both for police administrators who know their officers to be too stupid to understand anarchist ideas, and for those who fear they are not.

² To be fair, this is a tall order, as we have to compete with both the mind-numbing violence of the police and the mind-numbed response of liberals and pacifists who would oppose it with mere petitioning.

³ To the credit of police outside the so-called First World, they sometimes are more connected to the struggle of the oppressed. Your humble editor once visited a shantytown outside Montevideo in which, among a thousand impoverished families, there lived a police officer who couldn't afford to pay rent with his meager salary. When the police came to evict the place and its residents responded by erecting an enormous burning barricade in the highway, his neighbors had to hide him so his fellow officers wouldn't recognize him.

⁴ I once heard an aging liberal make this argument in a meeting hastily called to carp about an anarchist engagement with the police in which the anarchists had gained the upper hand. You could cut the irony in the air with a knife. Some people are thrilled when the Zapatistas or others far away in space, time, and culture confront and defeat their oppressors, and gladly use the photographs from those engagements to illustrate their publications, but oppose doing anything of the sort here in the heart of the beast, where the powers that would destroy the Zapatistas and others are most deeply rooted.

⁵ Not to make an ad hominem attack, but just as there is a sort of person who would rather physically fight external enemies than acknowledge his own shortcomings, there is another sort who prefers the comparatively safe project of critiquing his radical comrades to the risky business of confronting the armed enforcers of social inequality.

At this moment, an employee in a grocery store is setting out genetically engineered produce rather than tending the garden in her own yard;

A dishwasher is sweating over a steaming sink while dishes stack up unwashed in his kitchen at home;

A line cook is taking orders from strangers instead of cooking for a neighborhood barbecue;

An advertising executive is composing jingles for laundry detergent rather than making up bedtime stories for his nieces;

A poor woman is watching rich people's children at a daycare program rather than spending time with her own;

A child is being dropped off there to be cared for by strangers rather than those who know and love him;

A sociology student is doing an ethnographic study of squatters rather than actually participating in the activities that interest her;

An activist, tired from a hard day's work, is putting on a Hollywood movie for entertainment;

A man who could be exploring his sexuality with a partner is masturbating to internet pornography;

A demonstrator who has unique perspectives and reasons to protest is carrying a prefabricated sign issued by a bureaucratic organization;

And a would-be revolutionary who left behind everything he knew to pursue an engaged, beautiful, meaningful life is making references to television programs with his fellow dropouts in utter boredom and dejection.

DROPPING OUT

The system runs on the blood and sweat of our hijacked lives. The more we invest ourselves in surviving according to its terms, the more difficult it is to do otherwise. Seizing back our time and energy from its jaws is the essence of and the precondition for any real resistance.

The paralyzing commonsense notion that everyone, even the most radical of the radical, plays a role in the status quo hides the subversive possibility that all of us—even radicals—can refuse our roles. Dropping out means refusing to play our parts, removing ourselves from the circuitry and reclaiming our lives.

If you are a student, it means rejecting institutional instruction in favor of self-education.

If you are an employee, it means refusing to take orders, ceasing to sell your time and labor and conscience for a wage and developing projects of your own instead.

If you are a tenant, it means not fattening the pockets of landlords, but inventing new ways to secure and use space.

If you are a consumer, it means ceasing to make purchases, reducing your needs, and finding other sources for what you require.

If you are a producer, it means seizing the means of production, and applying—or not applying—them outside the logic of capitalism.

If you are a traveler, it means going off the beaten path.

If you are an artist, it means living creatively, not creating commodities in place of life.

If you are a girl or boy, it means becoming inscrutable to the gender binary system, a living counterexample to the equation *All ___s are ___*.

If you are a lover, it means refusing the expectations and obligations of conventional romance.

If you have white skin, it means challenging the racist structures that make this an advantage.

In a hierarchical society, it means refusing to command or obey.

In legal terms, it means ceasing to recognize the authority of judges, courts, and police, sorting out conflicts without recourse to armed strangers or impersonal institutions and defending yourself and your community against their incursions.

In moral terms, it means rejecting the authority of any code beyond the dictates of your own conscience, becoming a law unto yourself.

In aesthetic terms, it means shunning conventional norms in order to develop new standards and values.

In political terms, it means refusing to be represented or to represent others, finding ways to wield political power outside the established channels.

In terms of socialization, it means unlearning your conditioning so that you neither accept your prescribed role nor impose such roles upon others.

In terms of ambition, it means redefining success.

And if you are already a dropout, it means finding ways to reconnect to others on your own terms.



Take It from Us . . .

. . . dropping out is controversial. At the risk of stating the obvious, the publishers and editors of this magazine, not to mention many of the contributors, are hardcore dropouts: we don't hold jobs, we don't go shopping, we don't hang out in bars. We've rejected the rat race of diplomas, promotions, and retirement plans in hopes of building a new world of our own. The cultural norms portrayed on prime time television are not our cultural norms; the values of aspiring homeowners and dutiful patriots are not our values. Hoping to abolish wage slavery, patriarchy, and alienation in general, we have begun by doing our best to abolish them in our own lives, hoping thus to set a precedent of following up words with action. Rather than asking whether the conditions are ripe for revolution, we accept that we may never know, so this is as good a time as any to find out.

A Revolutionary Vindication of Refusal, Marginality, and Subculture

This decision puts us in the margins of this society—and those margins are much maligned, not only by conservatives¹ but also by our fellow would-be revolutionaries². The very idea that one might seek to change society by abandoning it sounds contradictory to some ears. Many have assumed that we and others like us are not, in fact, revolutionaries, but mere hedonists—that our efforts to survive outside the system are simply a private solution to the problems of capitalism, offering nothing to the billions who still suffer in its clutches.

1 No matter if all the ways to participate in this society are utterly meaningless, oppressive, and environmentally destructive—you have to pay your own way, even if that means doing so at everyone else's expense! Dropping out is irresponsible, self-destructive, a sin against God, a betrayal of your poor parents, a slap in the face of those poor bastards who have to work, and a violation of the terms of your probation—and besides, no other way of life is possible, so how dare you even daydream?

2 Over the past decade, the CrimethInc. ex-Workers' Collective has been target number one for the defenders of employment; we've endured enough slander and ridicule to shame even the notoriously vicious radical community into sympathy, and been subjected to every conceivable argument against our refusals of work and consumerism. Oddly enough, none of this has inspired any of us to go back to our jobs washing dishes and delivering pizza.

Some fellow dropouts have even made the same error, misunderstanding our exhortations to self-liberation as alibis for selfish liberation, thinking—insanely—that they can somehow free themselves from global capitalism without coming to blows with it or finding common cause with others.

On the contrary, we have no illusions that we can lead the lives we wish to lead while others are oppressed and the world is ruled by greed and violence. Dropping out, for us, is first and foremost a strategy for revolutionary struggle against all the structures of domination; it is the most effective starting place we see for ourselves and others like us to take on the powers that be. In refusing to participate in the system, we're trying to overthrow the government, abolish all hierarchies, and topple Western civilization. In the following pages, we explore how social change can be effected from the margins of society, attempt to distinguish this approach from

other strategies for social change, and offer constructive criticism to those with whom we share this project.

Choose Your Paradox

In using the expression “dropping out,” we're not just talking about leaving school or quitting a job; for us, the expression designates a shift in the center of gravity of one's activities and values. You can hold a job and a lease and still be engaged in the project of dropping out—it's a question of where you invest the bulk of your energy and which social currents you contribute to.



Likewise, let's make it clear that we're not trying to establish a new moral code. Christian moralism, centered as it is on obedience to divine ordinances, is all about keeping your hands clean regardless of whether or not that makes the world a better place. Ethical systems descended from Christianity tend to be absolutist, demanding categorical rejections of certain kinds of behavior without any reference to their effects in the real world; pacifism is a good example of this, forbidding violence even when that means tolerating worse violence. We're not arguing that if you want to be a revolutionary you can't earn money, buy groceries, or pay rent. We're proposing a general strategy to be applied to whatever extent it proves useful, not a standard of judgment.

It's not possible to keep one's hands clean nowadays, anyway; under global capitalism, everything is a compromise. Employment means giving up one's time and energy to a destructive, oppressive

economy, but unemployment means going without resources that could be used to undermine that economy and being separated from workers with whom one could join forces. Paying rent means supporting the system of private property and the landlords who benefit from it, but in this country squatting rarely offers the stability necessary for a collective living space or community center. Using the internet promotes an alienating medium that replaces face-to-face human interaction, but refusing to do so means passing up the chance to be accessible to many.

The question of what kind of revolution we want to make will also dictate which social and psychological currents we celebrate and draw upon. Are we partisans of the social, or the antisocial? The common, or the uncommon? Do we frame revolution as the culmination of prevalent social values, or their annihilation?

Likewise, which individuals do we want for comrades? Which social classes? Do we keep company with college professors, or high school dropouts? Do we identify with the charity of liberals, or the resentment of the ghetto? Do we side with the union management, the orderly rank and file, or the workers who hate unions and bosses alike? Do we speak like this— We need a movement-building coalition that coordinates and supports the work of existing groups as well as builds linkages and solidarity where none or little exist—or like this— FUCK ALL THIS, HERE WE GO!

If everything is a compromise, then the only question is which compromises are most effective for achieving your goals. If the social change you desire is essentially institutional, then you'd better get a degree and do your best to advance in the institutions; if the hierarchy of privilege and power essential to those institutions doesn't sit well with you, you might be better off working outside them. If your ideal world features factories and paychecks, it's sensible enough to work towards it from the shop floor; if you hope to build a society without exchange economics or industrial pollution, the first step is probably to limit the ways you participate in those.

HOW CAN WE CHANGE THIS SOCIETY WITHOUT DESERTING THE RANKS OF THOSE WHO MAINTAIN IT?

* In Marx's time, for example, communism was portrayed as the ultimate realization of Western science, history, and politics.

As dropouts, we wager that we can do more with our time and ingenuity than we could with anything for which we could trade them on the market. This is an essentially anticapitalist value judgment, prioritizing freedom over property and status, unifying means and ends. We risk isolating ourselves from the rest of humanity, without whom we cannot lead the rich lives we desire or make the revolutionary changes we aspire to; but this risk strikes us as no more dangerous than the risks we would run by remaining within the gears of the system, fighting to survive on its terms without being colonized by its values.

None of this is to argue that only dropouts can be revolutionaries. Suffice it to say that dropouts, like others, can engage in revolutionary struggle, and that this struggle will likely have a different character than the struggles of those in other sectors of society. Ideally, our efforts should complement the efforts of those who fight the system from within—as their efforts should complement ours.

Revolution: From the Center, or the Fringes?

Much of the criticism leveled at those who believe dropping out can be part of a revolutionary strategy seems to proceed from unconscious assumptions about revolution itself. It may be that critics of this approach are still under the spell of the Marxist model of revolution. According to this model, a single idea was to take hold of the working masses, who would organize themselves along class lines to seize the infrastructure and institutions of their society. For this model to work, radicals had to be integrated into those masses, living and thinking and speaking like them so as to wield influence, and people couldn't desert the factories and offices—otherwise,



how would those run once The People had taken power?

Even in its day, this strategy was hardly a recipe for the liberation most of us long for. It prized numbers above individuality, and unity above diversity; it engaged with people according to the roles they played in existing society, rather than the dreams and desires that beckoned them beyond it. Those who wished to apply this strategy had to compete with one another for a monopoly on revolutionary thought and organization the same way corporations compete to dominate the market. And ironically, though it was intended to build the ultimate inclusive mass movement, this approach often left individuals feeling marginalized: their unique perspectives and experiences seemed extraneous, their needs eclipsed by the imperatives of The Struggle, their lives dwarfed by the grand narrative of History.

The masses of Marx's theory live on today as the mainstream of modern society, an even murkier abstraction. Conventional wisdom dictates that those who would foment social change must appeal to this mainstream, and that this is only possible from within its ranks. Following this logic, it would seem that the first duty of the revolutionary is to seem as much like everyone else as possible. By dropping out of society, radicals relinquish the possibility of influencing others, selfishly choosing their own freedom over noble stewardship of The Revolution.

But let us hypothesize that there is another way to work towards revolution: rather than starting in the purported center of society, revolutionaries begin at the so-called fringes, openly refusing to participate and popularizing entirely different ways of life³. In demonstrating the advantages of these ways of life, they draw more and more participants, thus becoming more and more visible and capable of challenging the dominant order. These different ways of living need not be uniform, like the thinking of Marxist revolutionaries; on the contrary, they can be

3 This isn't easy, by any means—the capitalist system thrives precisely because it conspires to make any other way of life impossible, whether that be of indigenous peoples or independent farmers—but that's what the black masks, legal support collectives, and international solidarity are for, you know. As for whether it's possible, that's one of those questions we have to answer by trying it—but orthodox class-struggle revolutionists who doubt it's possible for small groups to transform their lives in any meaningful way can hardly argue that transforming our entire society at once is easier.

endlessly diverse—the more widely varied the options are, the more likely it is that additional participants will be able to find something that resonates with them. The only essential thing is that they offer ways of solving the problems of existence that are fundamentally different from those of the old order—let’s say anticapitalist and non-hierarchical, as a minimum definition—and that they are easily accessible to others.

This latter strategy can still culminate in the revolutionary seizure of the means of production and the abolition of class, privilege, and state power; however, these won’t be carried out by a homogeneous mass under ideological leadership, but rather by autonomous groups acting according to their own desires and cooperating where possible. Better yet, there won’t be a big mess when the revolution begins and everyone suddenly has to adapt to brand new ways of living and relating—that revolution will have been going on for quite some time already.

Dispelling the Specter of the Mainstream Once and for All

Let’s return to the notion that there is a mainstream to which revolutionaries must appeal. Who, exactly, constitutes this mainstream? Every family that has 1.6 children? Everyone who voted for the winner of the last presidential election? Everyone with a car, a credit card, and—be honest about the image that comes to mind here—white skin?

Who—one might better ask—has the most power to designate what is mainstream, and who benefits from the way this is framed? Beyond a doubt, the answer to the first question is the corporate media. They, more than any other force today, represent people to each other. What they portray as common and normal becomes the common idea of what is common, the norm for what is normal. If that is so, the answer to the second question must be the corporate power structure, which the corporate media exist to serve. That is to say: the very notion that there is a mainstream is corporate propaganda. It serves to popularize products (we have to “keep up with the Joneses”), to keep us busy trying to learn about each another from opinion poles instead of neighborhood potlucks, above all to maintain the unsettling feeling that each of us is outnumbered by a homogeneous mass of “normal” people.

Mainstream is not a freestanding term, but half of a dichotomy. The opposite of

“mainstream” is “subcultural”—when critics dismiss the potential of dropout communities, one of their arguments is that these are merely subcultural. Most of the dichotomies presented to us in the capitalist media are false dichotomies—soldier/terrorist, for example, or politics/economics. Could mainstream/subculture also be a false dichotomy?

To return to the mainstream media for an analogy, one thinks of the newscasters on television as having no accent—an accent is what those people down the road have, because they’re not like “everyone else,” even if everyone in the county except the newscasters speaks just like they do. But an outside observer—say, a visitor from New Zealand—could tell you that the newscaster accent is an accent just as sure as the local country accent is; the newscaster accent just seems normal because it gets more airtime.

Likewise, all the characteristics thought of as mainstream in this society are subcultural, as sure as the Rainbow Gathering is subcultural. Following professional football is subcultural, using the internet is subcultural, Protestant Christianity is subcultural no less than Krishna Consciousness is. The people we think of as possessing mainstream qualities aren’t even necessarily any more numerous than those of any other subculture: there are more young people in prison in this country than there are in the Young Republicans and the Young Democrats combined.

Instead of accepting the corporate media portrayal of society as a mainstream surrounded by a lunatic fringe, we might do better to envision it as an interlaced web of overlapping subcultures. Everyone

is part of several subcultures at once: long-distance truck drivers, for example, share common experiences, language, and other reference points, and thus could be said to constitute a subculture; but each also participates in other communities according to ethnicity, hometown, religion, musical taste, and so on. This way of looking at society is all the more useful today as North America becomes more and more multicultural and multiethnic, and new possibilities for long-distance travel and communication enable people to build new social circles around leisure interests.

There are characteristics that the vast majority of the population does have in common, but these are obscured by the notion of a mainstream, not revealed by it. Most everybody has to sell their labor to survive, and resents this on some level as an infringement on their personal autonomy. Most everybody is subject to laws, both judicial and economic, that they had no say in devising. And, as noted above, most everybody has the alienating experience of living in a society in which the corporate media represent us to each other, setting the standards for what is normal without reference to our real lives or longings. This is what we share in modern capitalist society: not a uniform culture, but the imposition of a false uniformity.

So, as it turns out, there are common qualities revolutionaries can draw upon to foment resistance, after all, but these are the opposite of those thought to characterize the mainstream; and radicals who seek to take advantage of them can do so not by acting like “everyone else,” but by dispelling the notion that anyone has to.



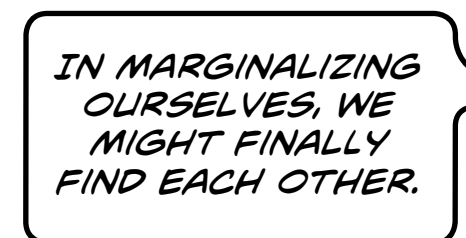
Invisible Monsters

In a society based on standardized norms, everybody is an outsider, in secret⁴ if not overtly. Privately, even the most supposedly typical member of this society knows she isn’t like “everyone else”—otherwise she wouldn’t have so many emotional problems, or have to remove all that unsightly body hair, or have to worry about how to pass drug tests—but keeps it to herself out of fear and shame. Because people hide these dissonances, when they look at each other they see a “mainstream”: a standardized mass of humanity.

A strategy that encourages open marginality strives to find resonance with the secret, unique parts of people that do not correspond to imposed norms—it gambles on the idea that people will come out of the masses to be, openly, the unique individuals they already are. In contrast to the patronizing notion that the masses must be infiltrated and converted, such an approach respects the autonomy, individuality, and intelligence of those with whom it seeks common cause.

Not Waiting for a Seat at the Table, Not Asking for a Piece of the Pie

Of course, the privilege of even appearing normal is unattainable for a great many of us, for the same norms that are associated with the mainstream underlie racism and patriarchy. A man born into the white middle class has a different relationship to those norms than a woman born into a family of Haitian immigrants—even if he experiences them as alienating and constraining, he still benefits from them in ways she never can. Both, however, whether marginalized more by choice or by force, can embrace their position as outsiders at odds with an unjust society.



⁴ Even those who claim to believe in the firm and impersonal rule of law know that personally they are the exceptions to the rule—this explains the ubiquity of traffic violations, for example.

This possibility is a nightmare for conservatives and liberals alike, since both are invested in the capitalist system and know everyone else must be as well for it to go on working. Liberal reformers, to offset this danger, propose to extend some of the advantages of the privileged classes to “underprivileged minorities” without altering the structures that maintain hierarchical privilege. Communities that are already marginal can invest in that strategy, aspiring to a little privilege of their own, or reject and struggle against the entire system. Often it’s necessary to do both at once, just to survive—but does the annual Gay Pride parade in San Francisco really need to be sponsored by a corporate beer manufacturer?

By itself, merely being without privilege does nothing to contest the way privilege is distributed. Norms are maintained by everyone, not just those to whom they give advantages. In India, most billboard advertisements feature light-skinned models, and women apply “fairness cream” to lighten their complexions; neither the ones who produce the makeup nor the ones who consume it can ever be white, but they participate in glorifying whiteness all the same. In this sense, the least privileged can drop out as surely as the most privileged can, insofar as they too can refuse to compete according to the values of the hierarchical system—indeed, the system cannot be overthrown unless they do so. There you have it: practiced as a revolutionary strategy, dropping out is not an expression of privileged selfishness, but a universally applicable method of struggle against privilege itself.

Communities of willful dropouts should make every effort to connect with other outsiders. In nurturing solidarity between all dropouts and outgroups, we can share resources ensuring they get into the powerful hands of those who would not otherwise have access to them; like-

wise, with the perspective of those who experience privilege differently, we can start to remove the blinders that come with privilege.

Insurgent Subcultures

If there is no such thing as the mainstream, no Common Man to appeal to, and standardized norms are inherently repressive, then the approach to seeking radical social change described above as the Marxist model faces major challenges. The alternative approach, on the other hand, looks more promising than ever. If our society is made up of a wide range of subcultures, explicitly subcultural resistance might be the most effective strategy—think of it as a diffuse guerrilla war, rather than a head-on army-to-army confrontation. Radicals can begin wherever they are, in whatever social context, and transform these one by one: women suffering mid-life crises can turn their cloistered suburban homes into collective houses, urban gangs can reinvent themselves as anticapitalist organizations, musicians and listeners can organize networks of venues outside the corporate market. This is dropping out—not as individuals, but as communities.

It is easier to cultivate the kind of dialogue that makes revolutionary aspirations and struggles possible within a subculture than it is to do so in society at large. This is perhaps easiest to discern in the way currents of resistance have developed in ethnic, religious, and gender-based subcultures: for example, the Black Panthers and many groups like them emerged out of urban black communities, just as the Stonewall riots would have been unthinkable without the queer underground of New York City. In both these cases, it wasn’t oppression alone that produced resistance, but also the existence of social structures in which it could flourish: that’s why the forces of racist capitalism conspired to disperse or destabilize urban black neighborhoods after the 1960s, so there could be no more Watts riots or militant-organized breakfast programs.

In a society in which race and gender are considered fixed and essential qualities, predominantly white subcultures are seen as voluntary. It’s interesting to note that they are often referred to derisively as ghettos; this seems to imply that the subcultural segregation of ethnic groups is inevitable, but that for white or middle class people to deliberately distinguish themselves is senseless.

Could it be that this derision hides—perhaps even is intended to hide—the subversive possibility that these subcultures can also develop into sites of resistance? If this is so, social groups such as the punk rock scene and the pagan milieu are not evolutionary dead-ends, but potential starting places for more serious departures from this society. The problem is not that they deviate from mainstream culture, but that often they do not deviate far enough from capitalist social relations. When they do so, however, the results can be explosive.

There are plenty of examples of this—punk rock has been notorious for incubating generations of anarchist troublemakers, just as pagan circles have fostered a network of older anticapitalist activists. Critics charge that these examples not only are limited by their subcultural nature but somehow, simply by being subcultural, limit the potential of the anarchist movement in general. But perhaps that analysis gets it backwards: what if they are effective precisely because they are explicitly subcultural, and the entire anarchist movement could benefit from taking note of this?

In fact, much of the impetus behind the best-known anarchist projects of the past four decades has been distinctly subcultural—it hardly makes sense to discount everything accomplished by self-professed hippies, yippies, punks, and ravers⁵, let alone by those from subcultures associated with ethnicity and gender. If we accept that being openly subcultural can be a strength rather than a weakness, not only for ethnic groups but for predominantly white dropout communities as well, we can move on from bemoaning our successes to honing a strategy that addresses the actual pitfalls of dropping out.

Abandon Without Desertion

The essential problem with dropping out is that it immediately deprives you of one way of life without necessarily providing another. It cannot be emphasized enough that we're not just talking about a few people giving notice at work, but the development of an entire network of dropout communities. This is analogous to the escalation of tactics in militant resistance: if you escalate your tactics alone, you can be isolated and defeated; if you

escalate tactics as a community with the support of other communities, you can gain momentum and shift the balance of power. In dropping out individually, we have to find common cause with each other, or else risk starving to death alone with all our potential wasted.

All too often, dropouts in North America sever the constraints of their former lives and go into a kind of free fall, drifting from one thing to the next without investing themselves anywhere. This is typical of our society in general: starting life without a firm foundation, people tend to hold off on commitment, waiting for the perfect opportunity to come along—when in fact it is commitment that makes things possible in the first place. Instead of wasting our whole lives wandering aimlessly in search of a prefabricated utopia, we'd better get started building the things we want right now—the whole idea behind dropping out is to use our time and creativity constructively, right?

In the opposite extreme, dropouts can settle comfortably into a new way of life that seems to provide for all their needs without actually challenging the status quo. Setting out to live sustainably in an unsustainable civilization is quixotic at best; those who turn their backs on everyone else in going “back to the land” cheat themselves as well as the rest of us out of the world we could make together. Make no mistake about it, the polluters and developers are coming for every last acre sooner or later—until capitalism is smashed, no organic farm is safe, no matter how permacultural.

When dropouts, individually and as communities, find themselves isolated, it is not usually because they have no opportunities to connect with others so much as it is that they are not taking advantage of

the opportunities they do have. Between local and regional communities, family ties, and subcultural circles, everyone in this society participates in several different social continuums at once. Too often, dropouts assume that they should keep their crazy ideas and projects to their own kind; on the contrary, sharing these with people who are not part of your clique can provide surprising results. It's not necessary to go door to door soliciting strangers to join The Movement; all we need to do is connect the people already in our lives to the radical projects in which we're already involved—and vice versa.

To this end, it is paramount that dropouts find ways of meeting their needs in which others can participate. Frameworks that put the resources available to us at the disposal of all, such as Food Not Bombs and the more recent Really Really Free Market model, have demonstrated the potential of this. At their best, they transcend the limits of individual subcultures, offering models of what life could be that are instantly comprehensible to all.

The “Expandable Bubble” Model

Just as critics of dropout strategies hold unconscious assumptions that color their assessments of those strategies, dropouts themselves often hold unconscious ideas about social change. Many seem to be working from a vision of revolution we'll call the “expandable bubble” model. In this approach, a single subcultural space is transformed from within, becoming a bubble on which revolutionaries pin their hopes. The participants think of themselves as living against the grain of society; others, looking on from other subcultures, may interpret that opposition personally. This complicates matters, as the linchpin of this approach is that the bubble must expand to include more and more people: “A

thousand people came to last year's conference—this year we're expecting two thousand. We're really getting somewhere!”

The essential advantage of the bubble model is that it focuses a lot of energy on a limited space. Approaches intended to address a broad range of demographics at once tend to be limited to single issues; within a bubble, on the other hand, it is possible for people to effect a total transformation of their social relationships, if not their whole lives. This gives birth to a host of possibilities that were previously unthinkable. Imagination and desire are produced socially; people need to experience another world firsthand to be able to conceive of it, let alone fight for it.

At the same time, this model has disadvantages. In some ways, it is essentially conservative: in claiming a fragment of the social spectrum as home territory, it implicitly prioritizes the defense of this space over other concerns. The demands of maintaining this territory can occupy those who would otherwise take on more ambitious projects; worse, internal deviations are often perceived to be as dangerous as external enemies. At its worst, the squatting movement spoken so highly of elsewhere in this issue can exhibit these tendencies, degenerating from a movement for total liberation into a rearguard battle to save a few historic properties for an elitist in-group.

This conservative atmosphere can make radical subcultures off-putting for others. Those who are put off are not necessarily closed-minded or faint of heart: it might also be that, feeling constrained by the limitations of their own subculture, they are unlikely to be attracted to another subculture that also seems static and constraining. A mohawk looks a lot less appealing to a woman fed up with having to do her hair for the office every day than it does to a teenager who experiences fashion as one of

the only aspects of his life he can control; unless it is clear that the mohawk is entirely incidental to his critique of capitalism, you can hardly blame her for not listening closely. Often, the less orthodox the culture of a bubble is the more appealing it is likely to be across subcultural lines.

By the same token, radicals should never conflate offering paths to liberation with promoting their own subcultures. It should never appear that, like those who speak of converting the masses, our goal is to assimilate everyone else.

In accounts of why individual bubbles fail to expand, there is often a tension between concerns that they are too different from the rest of society and contentions that they are not different enough. Some might claim that the idiosyncratic terminology and protocol of a given radical demographic are alienating to potential participants; others might argue that these are necessary to address the sexism and racism the subculture has inherited from the world around it, which are even more alienating.

Such debates seem to be predicated on the assumption that the most important thing for bubbles is expansion. For revolutionaries who seek the kind of multiform revolution described above, there are more important questions. Is the culture within the bubble liberating for those who participate in it? Can those within the bubble establish common cause with others outside it?

Subcultural spaces can be ideal for meeting the needs of a specific demographic, but for that same reason their usefulness is limited; it makes more sense to focus on linking them together than expanding them. To see their potential, we can look at

them not as expandable bubbles, but as individual tribes that, together and with others, could form a revolutionary federation.

Ruinous Refugees

Never let it be said that dropouts can do no wrong. Just because we're not operating the machinery of capitalism doesn't mean we're off the hook—as long as that machinery goes on chewing up everything in sight, we're as responsible as everyone else for stopping it. To do our part, we need an explicitly revolutionary program and a nuanced awareness of our part in the dynamics that maintain the status quo. Otherwise, we risk unknowingly forming the front lines of its assaults—like those who, fleeing a land wracked by plague, bear the disease with them everywhere they run.

Let's not forget that North America was colonized by dropouts: in seeking to escape an oppressive society without fully understanding their role in it, European immigrants ended up building an identical society upon the corpses of peoples who had enjoyed the freedoms they sought. Today, the same process takes place on a smaller scale with gentrification: seeking affordable rent, dropouts from the white middle class are often the first wave of outsiders to move into vibrant neighborhoods inhabited by poor people of color; this makes those areas more attractive to corporate developers, driving up housing costs and driving out the original residents. The questions gentrification raises are the questions confronting dropouts in microcosm: how can we do more to undermine capitalism than we do to perpetuate it? How can we build symbiotic relationships with people from other walks of life when everything is set up for us to be dangerous to one another? And seriously, where *are* we supposed to live?

If dropouts do more to alienate others from radical ideas than to enable them to explore alternate ways of life, they are not revolutionaries at all, but defenders of the status quo in an unlikely guise. Dropping out is a point of departure for revolutionary struggle, not a destination.



WITHIN LIMITED SPACES, RADICAL SUBCULTURES ENABLE THE TOTAL TRANSFORMATION OF LIFE, OFFERING A WORKING MODEL OF AN ALTERNATE WORLD...

...BUT THEY TEND TO CONTAIN TRANSFORMATION TO THOSE SPACES.



⁵ Residents of North America may be surprised to see the rave subculture associated with anything besides drugs and dancing, but in Great Britain it has intersected with radical politics to such an extent that the words “raver” and “activist” have been practically interchangeable in some circles.

Undermining Middle Class Values

In the United States today, we rarely see exploited workers organizing as a class against their oppressors. For this to be possible, workers have to see themselves as working class—but many here see themselves as middle class, identifying with those who profit from the hierarchical distribution of wealth rather than with each other. In some ways, this isn't much of a stretch: one could argue that the working class of the United States is the middle class of the world, benefiting from the unrestricted exploitation of workers elsewhere on the planet. In another sense, it is an illusion: thanks to the credit industry, workers are able to maintain the appearance of middle class lifestyles at the expense of being even more at the mercy of the owning class.

Other workers know they are not middle class, but are appeased by the idea that they can achieve middle class status if they work hard enough. In a society with some economic mobility, the desire for greater wealth rarely mobilizes people to fight for major social change; if their goal is mere wealth, simply outcompeting their fellow workers offers better odds than the long shot of revolution. Only riches capitalism cannot provide, such as liberty, dignity, and a sustainable relationship with the natural environment, can motivate a revolutionary struggle in this context.

When so many people's hearts have been colonized by middle class materialism and competitiveness, the first step towards revolt is the subversion of those values. All that is dysfunctional, wretched, and offensive about middle class culture and ideals must be brought to light for all to see. A dropout resistance has a lot to offer here. By acting according to different values, dropouts undermine the assumption that avarice and self-interest are innate aspects of human nature, and show the virtues of other ways of life. It might be that "dropping out" and "mobilizing the working class" are not opposite revolutionary strategies, after all—so long as dropout communities stay humble and connected to other sectors of society, they can contribute to a feedback loop of revolutionary ambitions and tactics. History bears this out: from the train-hopping hobos of the Industrial Workers of the World to the Italian *Autonomia* struggles of the 1970s, successful revolutionary labor organizing has been tied to revolts against work and class themselves.

An Idea Whose Time Has Come

In a social context in which the idea of revolution is itself marginal, it's probably inevitable that revolutionary struggle can only be waged from the fringes. However much theorists of class war might like to see themselves as the voice of the common people, nowadays they are a more obscure demographic than the dropouts they despise.

This is not a coincidence. As production jobs shift overseas, the working class in the United States is suffering a painful transition from a production-oriented economy to a service-oriented one. Workers who once would have worked all their lives at one factory, developing strong relationships and trading strategies for wielding proletarian power, now work more transitory jobs in strip malls and shopping centers. The ranks of their fellow employees rotate constantly; often, they must move from one city to another, leaving behind whatever communities they had begun to form. All this, combined with the demoralization resulting from more and more pointless tasks, serves to undermine the effectiveness of traditional workplace organizing.

Revolutionary momentum has to proceed from some social continuum. If today's workplaces are not opportune sites for forging the necessary social bonds and ambitions, we must mobilize ourselves from alternate sites. If people can't connect as workers and seize control of the workplace, maybe workers can connect as people who despise work and seize control of their lives outside the workplace. This is not to say that workplace organizing is totally obsolete, or that revolutionaries should not make every effort to support radical labor organizing; it is merely to argue that, for some of us, it may make the most sense to do so from outside the workplace. The drawbacks of defecting one by one, without control of the means of production, are obvious—of course it would

be easier if we could all just occupy the factories at once and be done with it—but until that appears possible those of us who can should get things started by declaring the General Strike on an individual basis.

Starting in the 1960s, dropouts have been increasingly important in social upheavals. This, too, is not a coincidence. The increasing mobility of the workforce and meaninglessness of work itself are inconvenient for traditional labor organizers, but they are great strengths for a movement building international networks of dropout communities. If we hope to succeed in fomenting revolution, we need strategies that are appropriate to the times; dropping out is an idea whose time has come.

Without Fear of Extremism

Rather than seeking to assemble a mass at the center of society, the dropout strategy for revolution aims to polarize society—in the words of one famous *déclassé*, to precipitate an open break between all who want the world the way it is and all who do not.

The powers that be currently derive a great part of their apparent invulnerability from the impression that no one seriously opposes them. Most leftists share an unnatural fear of being branded extremist; in recent years, this has rendered them politically impotent. Shifting their platforms closer and closer to those of their opponents in order to give the impression that they represent the political "center," they have ceded the initiative to the right wing, losing more and more ground to them by the year. Right wing conservatives have come out of this appearing principled, self-assured, and dynamic; ideas that seemed absurdly reactionary a decade ago are now taken for granted as premises of political discourse.

Radicals should not make the same mistake. We must articulate and act upon our beliefs calmly, confidently, and as openly



IF THE EXISTING WORKING CLASS HAS NO REVOLUTIONARY TENDENCIES OR ASPIRATIONS, WE MUST CREATE NEW REVOLUTIONARY CLASSES.

YOU NEEDN'T MAKE SUCH SWEEPING GENERALIZATIONS—ALL YOU HAVE TO SAY IS THAT RADICALS WHO DO NOT ALREADY FIND THEMSELVES PART OF A REVOLUTIONARY CLASS MUST CREATE THEIR OWN.



as possible; the perception that we are extremists cannot undo us as decisively as the impression that we have something to hide. Let us wager that it is not the actual content of our ideas that alienates people from us—otherwise, revolution is a long shot indeed—so often as it is the defensiveness and insecurity we must overcome in ourselves. In unabashedly calling things as we see them, we can reframe discussions and open up new territory on the political spectrum; likewise, by fighting injustice wherever we see it, we force oppressive powers to reveal themselves for what they are. We need not gather everyone together under our banner; all we have to do is make explicit the fault lines dividing our society, inspire people to take sides according to their hearts' desires, and call for a final showdown.

Sustainability and Direct Action

Dropout communities must sustain themselves somehow. Unlearning the constructed needs of capitalist society is the fastest way out of poverty—but if such communities are to be more than ghettos for failures and ascetics, they still need access to concrete resources. These can be acquired by conventional means—gardening, buying land collectively, cottage industries, part-time labor—or they can be acquired by crime. The former approach is practical enough, but has the disadvantage of tending to promote a certain complacency; the latter is often not so practical, but it can give us an advantage we otherwise wouldn't have in the market. Say what you will about capitalists being willing to sell us the rope with which to hang them—they certainly won't sell it at a price we can afford at the wages they pay us! Entering into open conflict with a more powerful opponent is always risky, but the premise of revolutionary activity is that these risks can be worthwhile—and anarchists who practice militant direct action are already taking them, anyway.

The direct action movement in the United States differs from its counterparts overseas in that militant tactics are rarely used to acquire resources here. When squatters in Europe win a battle, they secure a physical space in which to develop their culture of resistance, from which they can stage further assaults on private property and capitalism in general. Militant direct action in this country, by contrast, tends to consist of symbolic interruptions of business as usual. Aside from notoriety and the potential future participants it might draw, these do little to provide resources for the movement, while costing a great deal in terms of effort and legal repercussions. This may explain why the militant direct action movement in the United States has such a hard time maintaining momentum between short bursts of activity.

Even if it is sustainable, this doesn't seem to be a recipe for nurturing and expanding communities that practice direct action. We have to have resources to share with others if they are to scale back their current means of providing for themselves enough to join us in our projects. The more direct action puts food on the table, the more widely people will take it up.

There are examples of direct action securing resources in this country, though by and large this takes place on a smaller scale: dumpstering, file sharing, shoplifting and employee theft, even trainhopping. One could make the argument that over the past fifteen years, most of the well-known examples of anarchist activity have been made possible by such sustaining forms of direct action: the spread of Food Not Bombs can be attributed to the popularization of dumpstering, just as the heyday of the 'zine revolution was a direct result of the prevalence of photocopying scams; likewise, the period of 1999 to 2001, during which anti-summit mobilizations reached a peak, was characterized by a proliferation of return scams, shoplifting, and other forms of anti-corporate crime that provided for the needs of many who joined

in these mobilizations. These humble examples highlight how important it is to develop sustaining forms of direct action.

Direct actions that provide for the needs of the participants can be seen as self-interested, but the majority of people are looking to first solve their own problems, and find the selflessness associated with activists in this country impractical if not insane. If we show that we can provide for our needs in a way others can easily see themselves doing, this will come across as a strength rather than a weakness.

Arguing that direct action should sustain our communities does not mean eschewing militant tactics—on the contrary. A century ago, many anarchist projects—newspapers, social clubs, even schools—were funded by bank robberies and wage heists. Perhaps those particular tactics are no longer effective, but there must be other forms of participatory low-intensity warfare that could accomplish the same thing today. If anarchists in this country can discover and popularize militant tactics that provide for their needs and those of their communities, these will almost certainly result in a renaissance of anarchist activity and organizing.

Throwing in your Lot with the Escapees

Dropping out is a gamble, that's for sure. In investing yourself in the alternate universe of the anarchist revolution, most of which has not yet come into existence, you risk throwing your life away for nothing. Who knows, you might be better off throwing your life away installing drywall for some construction magnate, or designing webpages for software companies, or reading books by Hardt and Negri in an ivory tower somewhere, watching the internet for news of the social upheavals you desire. You might end up installing drywall anyway, and regret not cashing in your privilege for a degree and a cushy office job—that is, if you have the choice in the first place.

On the other hand, if you relish a challenge and the ambiguous blessings of an unpredictable life, there's still time to join us behind the grocery stores and barricades—there are more than enough bagels to go around, and more than enough bricks. Of course, dropping out may look different for you than it looks for us—from each according to his means, right? All that really matters is that we all do what it takes to regain control of our lives and the limitless potential we share.

With our lives in our hands and weapons if need be,

your faithful ex-workers

Dropouts, one more effort to be revolutionaries!

IF YOU DON'T STEAL FROM YOUR BOSS



YOU'RE STEALING FROM YOUR FAMILY

Employees keep this country working.

They crowd into offices and factories every morning.

They pave over fields, and park their cars on that pavement.

They convert forests into junk mail, and deliver that junk mail.

They build strip malls and gas stations, and operate cash registers in them by the listless million.

They dump toxic waste into rivers, lakes, and oceans; they stoke the fires that fill the sky with pollution.

Employees are destroying the ozone layer.

Employees are driving species after species into extinction.

Employees slaughter cows and perform medical experiments on monkeys.

Employees throw away truckloads of food rather than share with the hungry.

Employees drive homeless people out of heated buildings into the snow.

They watch your every move through security cameras.

They evict you when you don't pay your rent.

They imprison you when you don't pay your taxes.

They publicly humiliate you when you don't do your homework or make it to work on time.

They disinterestedly enter information about your private life into credit reports and FBI files.

They give you parking tickets and speeding tickets.

They administer standardized exams, reform schools, and lethal injections.

The soldiers that herded people into gas chambers were employees,

As are the soldiers currently occupying Iraq and Afghanistan,

As are the suicide bombers who target them—they are employees of God, if you will, hoping to be paid in paradise.

An employee is a person who is willing to give up responsibility for his actions in return for a wage, and a person is an employee to the extent to which this is the case. The Nuremburg defense—"I was just following orders"—is the anthem and alibi of the employee. Put this way, the willingness to be an employee—to be, if you will, a mercenary—lies at the root of many of the troubles plaguing our species.

Volunteers, by contrast, act on their own judgment and take responsibility for their decisions. Volunteers, too, have done horrible things—but not nearly so many horrible things. You can reason with a person who is acting for herself; she acknowledges that she is accountable for her own decisions. Employees, on the other hand, will do the most unimaginably dumb and destructive things while stubbornly refusing to think about their actions at all.

Whenever you can, refuse to be an employee—use your time, energy, and talents to do what you see fit, rather than to serve others as a mercenary. When you must, work for a wage to survive—but don't think yourself absolved of responsibility for your actions, don't obey unconscionable orders, don't lose your individuality in the ocean of competition and protocol.



I Was a Gender Dropout

You might already suspect that your imagination has been colonized. You might think it vaguely, or you might feel it with every breath, every bone, every bit of your rage. If you grew up in the u.s. of amerika (or most anywhere else, for that matter), it is possible that even your most glorious fantasies, your most intimate imaginings are tainted by the dirty fingerprints of this white-patriarchal-capitalist-bullshit culture. My friends, imperialism isn't just overseas.

Before anything else is possible, the revolutionary must win back her own life and psyche from the forces that colonize it. Your life is your own, your choices are your own—you are *yours*. It is a scene from science fiction, our not-too-distant Orwellian future: one day you are at the office, or at your breakfast table, or the local government ministry, and you find a document that tells you that you have a small chip in your brain that twists your thoughts this way and that, that influences your actions, that can even change your personality. You begin to doubt everything: what makes you angry, what turns you on, what you like to eat. This situation may not be so far from our daily lives. In what ways does the culture in which you live or grew up influence your thinking today? What cultural standards inform who you are? Maybe you have thought about the way your class or your race affects you? What about your gender?

I dropped out of the gender break up soon after exiting my mother's womb—not because of uncanny courage or clarity, but because I wasn't put on a side by my parents and I didn't choose one either. In fact, a stubborn lack of clarity is what kept my four-year-old ass from getting picked for either team. I did not know that there were sides, and certainly not that I was "required" to be on the one my genitals fit with. My mother and guide into this world never said anything about this system to me.

There are boys/men and then there are girls/women, right? Your doctor and lots of other people probably told you that not only are there these two categories alone but that a penis makes a boy and a not-penis (that's right, no mention of the glorious Cunt) makes a girl. I'm still waiting to see the "It's a fabulous person!" balloons coming out of the maternity ward.

It was in the fourth grade, after a long struggle against the existing power structure of gender, that I began puberty and bloodied my nose against the reality that people really did think my genitals meant that I was to exhibit "girl" behavior. I also learned that year that I was not only supposed to stay clean, wear unspeakably horrible, itchy tights, and be not as good at math, but I would never earn as much as my sibling with a penis could—that as I got older I would be underestimated, silenced, and raped. Betrayal grew on my chest. All exits blocked by my body, I readied to stand my ground and fight.

The gender divide is responsible in great part for the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder that approximately half of the population in my community and my country exhibits. Veterans return home from the horrors of war and check their cars for bombs every day; they tackle anyone who so much as taps their shoulder. To have post-traumatic stress disorder is to feel constantly hunted, to *feel like prey*. Two groups of people in the U.S exhibit symptoms of this most deeply felt fear: war veterans and women. The apartheid of sex is combat. Do you hold your keys or another weapon between your knuckles when you walk alone at night? I do. Do you automatically, almost unconsciously, check every room you walk into for escape routes? I do. Do you ever think during sex, "Is this rape?" I have. Does the threat of sexual assault affect how you plan your movement, your company, your living quarters, your clothing? It does mine. I suspect my life would be radically different if I felt I was perceived only as a human in that dark side street. What if my skirt/size/presumed-genitals didn't indicate my role in the violence I am so graphically imagining as I walk down this any-street, any night?

"Mom, what happened to my penis?"
I grab at my lower belly, pulling the fat underneath my belly button.
She tells me some people just don't have them.
"Why is that?"
"I don't know, honey."



The two gender system is perhaps the most invisible and therefore strongest form of social control in our culture. It is a control that rests in our deepest imaginations and our very identities. Gender dictates how we understand and relate to ourselves, others, bathrooms, dark side streets, food. Gender dictates speech patterns, gait, and all other bodily experience. It tells us how others must perceive us and how we must perceive ourselves. As long as we continue to accept the normative gender identity spoon-fed to us, we are the cogs in the machine of our own (and others') oppression.

Sometimes in kindergarten we line up in lines. "Boys here! Girls here!" the teacher will say. That's Mrs. Smith, the one teaching me how to tie my shoes. She holds her hands up to indicate where each line will go. Left hand here for boys' line, right hand there for girls' line. I dutifully line up under her left hand at the front of the line. The back of the line—the coolest place to be—is still a couple of years away. I look up at her expectantly, watching her fingers hover above my face. She looks down at me and her lips twitch. She frowns.

"Girls over here, Lauren," she says, wiggling the fingers of her right hand.

"Uh-huh!" I reply with a happy nod. I am very rule-abiding at this point in life and am sure I heard her instructions correctly, I tell her with my smile.

"Please stand under the proper hand," she repeats.

"..."

"Please stand in the girls' line."

"But I am not a girl..." I murmur.

I am silent. I already told her that I know the rules, why can't she tell I obeyed them? I am confused and embarrassed to have been singled out. Girls play house, girls like dolls, girls wear dresses, girls have bigger stronger bodies than the boys, girls have different cooties, and girls line up on the right. I do not play house; I do not wear dresses. Boy doesn't fit me perfectly, but I know I'm not a girl.

Binary gender divides us into factions we did not choose. Are you from Mars or Venus? Our genitals are supposed to tell us what we should wear, how long we hold eye contact, what professions we are suited for, who we are supposed to date, how much and how often and in what way we love. Gender (along with other factors such as race, age, and class) also tells other people things. It tells them if we are reliable, if we are smart, and to what degree they are allowed to violate our space and our bodies.

I was confused (believe it or not) for years by incidents like these. I did not know that I was a gender outlaw then. Gender was obvious to me when I was young; it was a game people played. It wasn't a game I liked, but people kept insisting that I play it anyhow. My best guess was that girl or boy was what side you chose if you liked dolls or ninja turtles, patty-cake or wrestling. As long as I had to pick a team in this game, my choice was boy. I had never heard of chromosomes. It certainly did not occur to me that adults thought my genitals were supposed to dictate what I liked to do. This notion would have seemed absurd to me if someone had bothered to explain it. No one could see through my pants! And why would anyone with good intent want to know what my

The Fate of the

Black

genitals were like?
My mom had told me that my genitals were strictly my own and no one else was allowed to see or touch them. I would have been appalled had my teacher suggested she knew what they looked like. I do not believe that my teacher could have explained the situation in a way that I would have understood. I do believe that she had internalized her own gender lessons and that she was as unable to vocalize her beliefs about gender as she was genuinely baffled by my “confusion.” If she had been able to explain her understanding of gender to me, I would have been horrified. Actually, I would have dutifully called my mother from school and reported sexual assault, as she had instructed me.

What distinguishes a queer for harassment—or worse!—but her gender deviancy? What is war without real men and women with “enough balls” to fight? What would happen to capitalism without the unpaid emotional and physical labor of countless “good” (read: submissive) women? One step in fighting the systematic control of gender is to examine your gender experience. Are you a real man or a real woman? What do you do when (if) your gender is challenged? Do you feel it superficially, like a fly landing on your arm, or do you feel it deeper, in your bones? Are you offended, do you feel the need to correct the mistake? Remember, it is by facing our own (uncool, scary) truth that we begin to set ourselves free. How have you played along with this system in the past? How about today? What other choices could you make?

I was held back a grade for not passing the gender system, but I passed kindergarten the second time around. I still believed I was a boy, but I learned to be quieter about it. Teachers always got confused when I told them the truth about my gender, so I learned just to stay silent. This worked for about three years. In the fourth grade, I began puberty and found my world increasingly and clearly divided by gender—but I have never stopped resisting.

Consent and non-hierarchical relationships are at the heart of anarchy. The gender system (which is wedded to sex) as I have experienced it is in no way consensual, and it contains seriously fucked up power dynamics. What perpetuates this system is only us, and only our daily interactions. Each person’s gender is unique, and we need to develop new language for each one. It becomes increasingly difficult to coerce or control a person who does not

An account of just how easy it is to establish a temporary community center without rent or deed



feel the need to shave, walk, or live a certain way and who does not demand that others do so. Let’s stop policing ourselves and other people. What is the beauty industry without gender? What are sweatshops if overseers don’t see women as “naturally” accustomed to and suited for boring labor? How is the wage gap justified when it isn’t clear who pays for the date? As we become de-construction workers, we make revolution—a gender evolution. We invoke strategy. We revoke shame. We are women, men, she-men, punks, queers, pirates, bandits, and freedom fighters of every stripe. We are everywhere and we are you. Next time those M and F boxes are staring you in the face, don’t back down, kid! Draw in your own!

- M
- F
- ME!

Pearl &

or, Of Course We Must Risk Something
or, Actually, Squatting in the US is Easy as Pie



My friend and I made it from Baltimore to Chicago. Our destinations were different but our paths came together for a while. We hopped off the train somewhere in downtown Chicago—it had reached freezing temperatures, and we were on a hotshot. I’m not even sure what the wind-chill factor is on a train moving that fast. People had told us it was too cold to travel this time of year. Sure our toes were numb, but we learned to survive in another extreme. The weathered riders told us that the rail cars were unrideable, so we found new holes to hide in. I can hear them around the campfire: *The yard security is impenetrable these days. You should just buy Amtrak tickets.* Unwilling to back down, we became invisible. We didn’t buy Amtrak tickets, and had lots of fun proving them wrong.

Always rentless

My friend's destination was Chicago. Mine was Indianapolis. We said goodbye. I put on my one clean shirt and headed to the on-ramp, despite all the words of caution from the generation who stuck their thumbs out before: *You can't get a ride anymore. You might as well go ahead and buy a car.* I got a ride out of the city pretty quick. Lots of people stopped to pick me up, in spite of all the horror stories they'd presumably been told. Turns out you still can get rides from perfect strangers, people ready to break through the socially constructed barriers that are supposed to keep us from helping each other. I didn't ride the dirty dog.* I got a tan, received free rides, and met fascinating people.

One of these was an amazing Spanish anarchist, who picked me up out of the blue. We talked about different anarchist groups in this country and his. It was right around the time of the elections, and he had been impressed by the Don't (Just) Vote campaign. He told me about Spanish trade unions, and I was impressed myself. We shared stories about our lives and our hopes for the future. The conversation continued. Eventually, he asked if there were squatters in America, like there still are in Europe.

How was I supposed to answer this question when it had been such a stumbling block in my own life? I could still hear in my ears all the horrible rhetoric, glorifying the past and dooming the future, of the older and wiser, hardened, weathered squatters who had told me the days of squatting were over: *Maybe you could get away with it in Europe, but otherwise you should go ahead and get a job and rent an apartment—it's just not worth the trouble.* This had been the story of my life since I left "home" a year and a half earlier: every representative of every echelon of society telling me it was impossible to squat. To maintain hope, I had to shrug off the nagging dismissals of my older squatter friends as well as those of people who had more in common with my parents. It was almost enough to make me and my friends give up.

But as it happened, I was on my way to the Black Pearl, our squat in Indianapolis. It was not your usual squat, by any stretch of the imagination—it was an experiment, a testing ground for an approach to squatting that was new for us. As in our previous experiences, we had still been obliged to look for empty houses, steal locks from Wal-Mart, clean the place up, and pee in buckets. This time, however, we were banking on openness rather than secrecy.

We had a hypothesis as to why squatting was so difficult for so many people. We proposed that squats were always getting busted because those who opened them appeared to be committing a crime: sneaking in through broken windows, dressing in black clothes, maintaining silence, keeping the doors boarded up, and hiding from the neighbors are all suspicious activities. We had been involved for some time in a current within the direct action movement (or the street fighting movement, or the shoplifting

movement, or whatever you want to call it) involving the use of costumes and role-playing to create the illusion that we were law-abiding citizens while we carried out the most unlawful of activities. Likewise, while committing the crime of trespassing, wouldn't it be sensible to appear to be doing something entirely legal? What if we were to move into a house openly, giving all pretenses of being valid home owners, wearing regular clothes, talking to the neighbors, inviting old and new friends over, and starting community projects out of the house as needed?

In the beginning, our idea seemed solid, or at least crazy enough to work—all we needed was a house. We'd looked and looked and looked, until our shiny crowbars were all nicked up and our headlamp batteries ran dim. Luckily, there were tons of buildings to choose from (this is the case in almost any major city, but according to both our experiences and government statistics, it seems that the number of abandoned houses in Indianapolis is especially high), and eventually we found the perfect one. It was a nice yellow duplex in a neighborhood most would describe as rough. With a little research, we discovered it was owned by a German bank. This was perfect for us: we would have no risk of homeowner involvement, and the likelihood was low that any major bank overseas would be particularly concerned about the property.

The next question was how to open a squat in as unremarkable a manner as possible. We began by talking to the neighbors about how we were going to move in. Once everyone in the neighborhood was expecting us, we figured there was little likelihood of the police being called on us for breaking and entering.

We decided upon noon as an especially ordinary time for moving into a squat. It was nice and sunny. We invited all of our friends over for the occasion; later, reflecting on our decisions, we concluded that ten kids on bikes is a bit out of place when most people move in – a couple people in a U-Haul might have appeared more standard, but this minor sloppiness didn't do us any harm. With all of our friends from around town sunning themselves on the lawn and porch, we pulled out our multitools, screwdrivers, and drills and got the boards off the windows and front door. Behind the board, the front door was open, and in three minutes we had our own locks on it. Had any of this taken place at midnight with flashlights, we would have run a higher risk of drawing police involvement, or at least local suspicion.

We had asked our friends from around town to bring things, to further our appearance of legitimacy. Someone showed up with food, others with potted plants, brooms, other odds and ends. We quickly set those up, but our house still seemed barren: it would hardly survive the scrutiny of dubious parties.

What were we to do? "Well, there is a bunch of furniture at the old bookstore that got condemned, and it's trash day..." Perfect. We set off in a friend's van and returned with plenty of furniture, silverware, decorations, tools, and everything else we could get our hands on. Within a couple of days, we had the bottom floor looking like a perfectly harmless suburban home.

We still had no running water or electricity yet, so when the neighbors came over to visit those first nights and found us reading by candlelight, we just told them that the wiring was fucked up—and they brought over more candles. We had friends living five blocks down the street, so we used their bathroom a lot, and brought over water in a cooler from their hose.

Turning on water and electricity in squats is something many others have written on with much greater clarity than I could attempt, so I only mention it to bring up another matter: our water and electric were fixed and turned on thanks to our good relations with the neighborhood. More about this shortly.

From the beginning, we wanted our squat to be a social center. We wanted it to be a place where people could see an illegal squat serving as a resource to the people of the neighborhood; we didn't want others to experience it as a risk, an eyesore, or, even worse, the private project of yet another unsociable group of squatters unwilling to come outside and interact with their neighbors. We came in trying to think of something amazing and fun and useful that we could offer, something in which the community could participate, that would transform the building into a communal space the neighborhood would never again allow to stay empty and unused. We had no precedent to work from, nor much of a specific idea of what we could do with the building other than just sleep in it.

So we asked around. We learned that there were already a lot of feedings for the homeless, and some neighborhood meetings associated with the church; and we didn't have enough space for a community garden unless we knocked the house down. Then finally, someone (I'm not sure who—it could have been a neighbor, a visiting friend, or even me) came up with the idea that we would have a free store. Not just a one-time thing—no, our house would be a 24-hour free store. We'd put everything we could think of out on the porch for free.

This turned out to be the perfect idea. We split up all over the city, grabbing every useful item we could get our hands on. To our delight, this meant we could finally rescue everything we found in the trash: books, clothing, food, toys, whatever, it all ended up out there on our porch! We made some pretty looking fliers, though I don't think it mattered how pretty they were—they had the magic word on them: FREE! Way more people than I would have imagined showed up that week—more than fifty, that's for certain. By the end of it, most every useful item was gone, including every bit of food. It was time to go dumpstering again. Soon, people began putting things they didn't need on our porch, or calling us over to pick them up from their houses.

Next thing I knew, our neighbors were talking politics with us on the front porch—and my friends and I were shocked again and again to discover just how radical the "average" person is. The second week, even more people showed up. Soon thereafter, I had projects to attend to far away; fortunately, I was confident that the keys to the house were in good hands, and that the neighborhood knew what it could do with the space.

Flash forward again to my newfound Spanish comrade and I exchanging stories as we fly down the highway. The full history of the Black Pearl would have taken me a week to tell, so I told him that in fact I could show him a squat in America, albeit an atypical one, and it wouldn't even be twenty blocks out of his way. We pulled into Indianapolis and I dictated directions to him.

As we stepped out of the car, I realized something must have happened while I'd been away. There was a giant trash pile sitting in the front lawn—this didn't seem to be the hallmark of a successful, legitimate-looking squat. I looked in the windows: the house was empty, the walls perfectly flat and white. It was being remodeled. Crestfallen, I persuaded my new acquaintance to drive with me over to my friends' house a couple blocks away, to learn what had happened.

My friends there filled us in. After I left, the free store had enjoyed a few more wildly successful weeks, during each of which it was attended by well over one hundred people, and had received lots more donations from others in the neighborhood. At first, with no one living in the house, there had been a little less energy around the project, but eventually someone from the neighborhood took the initiative and moved in—that front window never did latch. Nobody cared that someone new was living in the house. Eventually two old friends came through town and decided to settle there, taking the place of that occupant; they easily struck up a good relationship of their own with the other denizens of the neighborhood, and the free store continued as a constant presence on the front porch. A family from the neighborhood ended up squatting with them, and one member was an electrician. With their combined skills and resources they turned on the water and electricity.

It turns out I had arrived three days late for the end of the Black Pearl, which was a surprisingly friendly and relaxed occurrence. Remodelers working for the German bank showed up one morning and were surprised to discover people in the house. They asked civilly how soon the occupants could be out, and everyone left that day with no complications.

All in all, our experiment proved that squatting not only is still possible in this country, but can even serve as a starting place for radical community organizing—and all this, at no financial or legal cost to any of us. Perhaps our project would have benefited from a steadier core of volunteers, but it's always possible to learn from our experiences. With nowhere to stay, my friends had left town, so I opted to ride further south with the Spaniard—on to Bloomington, where I would catch up with old comrades and scheme about how the Black Pearl would sail again...

If you are in Indiana and want to work with our squatting collective, contact us at blackpearlsquat@yahoo.com.

*Traveler slang for a Greyhound bus

Never homeless!

RE: Report from the Shopfloor How Unions Lost Their Teeth

MEMO: How I spent my summer in the Midwest
TO: CRIMETHINC. HEADQUARTERS
FROM: AGENT 356592

The summer of the big AFL split, I infiltrated the federation by interning as an organizer for a certain dissident janitors union. The legends of past labor struggles were my introduction to anarchism as a youth, and I wanted to bring back some labor organizing skills to my southeastern town, which had been forgotten by virtually all unions. Today's business unions generally follow a strategy of density: they focus on organizing areas where there is already a sizeable Union presence, leaving historically un-unionized communities like my own to fend for themselves.

Thanks to this strategy, my internship took me to a Midwestern railroad town with a vibrant history of class struggle—though it seemed that much of that militant energy had been tamed by the time I arrived. The local I worked for had been established thirty years earlier, when some uppity janitors realized they didn't have to be treated like dirt. Although the activity of the union had declined, the stories and pictures of picket lines, office occupations, and sabotage by janitors touched a soft spot in my heart, and I had high hopes.

Along with several other interns, I was part of one of two "surveying teams," responsible for initiating contact with janitors and creating a database with information on possible union targets. The work itself was pretty simple, though in the course of gathering intelligence I quickly accrued enough counts of trespassing and breaking and entering to make even a seasoned CrimethInc. agent jealous. All this, and officially sanctioned dumpster diving! Imagine my delight at being knee deep in employee lists, invoices, and office memos instead of rotten produce and dumpster juice. A kid could get used to this.

**We've traded death from
starvation for death from boredom**

The wealthy side of the city had seen the appearance of a lot of office buildings and corporate parks, most of which had not been documented by the union. These were not unionized buildings, yet obviously people were cleaning them. Who were they? It was up to us to solve this mystery.

I haven't spent much time in office buildings, and seeing them from the outside I used to assume they were basically impenetrable catacombs of cubicles staffed by security guards and video cameras. Most of the ones I entered were not, as it turned out, and the ones that were were that much more fun. A couple of us would roll up to the security desk and start talking, making up some excuse or just chatting, trying to get information from the guard. While he was distracted, someone else would sneak into the building and try to find the janitors' closets.

It's one thing to distract a retail employee while your buddy slides

having a great time — plenty
of things on my mind, and
more to bring up when we're
together. Here's the report
you wanted — maybe it can
run as the second in your
series of eyewitness accounts
from the belly of the beast?
— X.

something into her purse. It's another to try to sneak by a fully-armed guard who hasn't seen an exciting day on the job since that bag of popcorn caught fire in the microwave and set off all the sprinklers on the fourth floor. They take their jobs very seriously.

Yet it turns out it's possible. I button my shirt, hold my breath, and go. Look straight ahead and just get on the elevator.

I only had a problem once, when the security guard saw me and told me to wait in the lobby. I disappeared up the stairs when he was distracted and had a heyday in the office, but when I came back down he was looking around for me and I had to hide behind a column. When I heard him talking to another guard, I bolted and didn't look back.

At a fortress-like building, I pretended to smoke until an employee walked out the locked back door. She politely held it open for me and I got to work rummaging through the basement closets and pocketing some nice pens.

Except for my lack of a tie, I fit in fairly well at the offices. I got into character and became an up-and-coming intern for some insurance or telecommunications company. No one really minded when I asked questions or poked my head into the wrong door. No one could have recognized anyone outside of their immediate office anyway—capitalist alienation was on my side for once. To them, I was just another faceless drone aiming for the American Dream.

Janitors' closets tend to be next to bathrooms or in other out-of-the-way places. In each building, I was looking for the name of the janitorial corporation that held sway there; I usually found these written on a trash can or on a container of cleaning chemical. There were about eight national or international cleaning companies operating in the area.

This worked for about half of the sites, but at the others we had to wait until nightfall to try to meet with the janitors themselves. The buildings were usually locked after 6 p.m., but at corporate parks janitors might be found walking between buildings or taking out trash. In our expeditions, we discovered a trend that should not have been surprising: all the non-unionized janitors were Spanish-speaking Latinos. The local union staff didn't have a single Spanish speaker—can you believe that?—so I attempted to speak using the very few Spanish words I knew (*trabajo, durruti, sindicato, nada*).

We had two Spanish-knowledgeable comrades on the intern staff, and they organized a meeting for Latino janitors in the area. Only a dozen or so came, and they reported being threatened by bosses if they attempted to work with the union. The communication barrier was embarrassing on the part of the union, as several of the work problems they raised could have been easily solved by a Spanish-speaking staffer. The local is working on the problem, and I hope they get things rolling soon.

The movement as a whole has been slow in responding to immigrants' needs, especially as it has become entangled with nationalism and legalism and the drudgery that comes with being a mediating part of the status quo.

But it wasn't always like this.

**Our dreams will never
fit in their contracts**

The labor movement was born and bred on sabotage as an illegal underground conspiracy of workers fighting to raise wages and improve working conditions by any means necessary. In the nineteenth century, disgruntled employees met by night and destroyed the wool and cotton mills threatening their livelihoods—to such an extent that "machine breaking" was made a capital offense in England. Early U.S. labor agitators had to fear for their lives, as they were often chased out of town or lynched. Strikes crippled railroads and factories, cops and soldiers attacked picketing workers and families. It seemed the whole world might erupt in a global class war between the haves and have-nots.

Fearing industrial chaos, governments forced employers to yield to some of the workers' demands. Workers' movements were integral to the implementation of the eight hour day, safety and health regulations, and the National Labor Relations Act. The day had been won for the workers, and many on both sides of the class divide felt unions were on their way to redistributing wealth and power once and for all.

But in the course of all this, a funny thing happened. Unions themselves became legitimate players on the political playing field—with clout, bargaining power, and, most of all, healthy bank accounts. The struggles continued, but they began to have less heart. More money, but less heart. Business agents, grievance procedures, lobbyists, closed shops, dues check-off and "labor-friendly" politicians helped integrate—or entangle—unions into the smooth functioning of governments and economies, and it wasn't much longer before they had become pale shadows of their former selves. Were unions still a tool for class war, or just glorified human resources departments?

To return to my summer—the stranglehold of legalization had choked the town's labor movement years before, though many in the movement still showed a radical spirit. The president of my local, a jovial and warm-hearted long-time labor leader, reminisced over the occupation of a prominent downtown office tower and confided that one could seriously disrupt plumbing by flushing tied tampons down a toilet. This indicated not only willingness to be arrested, but also willingness to act without being arrested—an even more desirable trait—and his eyes lit up when I whispered to him some of my own adventures.



However, any direct action was relegated to war stories or video "action footage," thanks to those bank accounts and laws making unions accountable for member action. The bosses can actually sue unions for illegal job actions. The unions are tamed; there is little discussion as to whether promoting a little sabotage is worth de-certification and bankruptcy.

The local had for a time cancelled union meetings because it seemed there simply was nothing to talk about—but with contract negotiations looming on the horizon, it was time to get into gear. At one of the first meetings I attended, a woman spoke up, saying that she had read the contract and that the union wasn't for the worker, it was a tool for the bosses. The officers quickly countered that no, the union is for the workers and she needed to reread the contract. The union is the workers, they said. The union is the workers, and the staff is just employed by the workers.

But over the course of the summer there was a subtle shift from the intern orientation, at which it was hammered into us that "the Union is the Workers," to the confession on-site that the union is a business. Unions need money to run, and to get it, they are in the business of representing workers and handling grievances, and occasionally getting better wages and improving job conditions. The unions' "strategic planning" can also be read as a business strategy: unions have to find areas where there is already a market for their product (the union); job sites with few employees won't be able to repay in dues the cost of establishing the union, so those sites are ignored. On the other hand, organizing a factory of 200+ can get an agitator a position as a sort of business agent—then you're "set for life," I was told.

"The factory works because I do"

The local I worked for was well-established and had "union shop" contracts, according to which workers hired by certain employers were forced to join the union after a certain number of days of employment. In fact, the union didn't even have to meet with the workers for them to sign up; their bosses gave them the union card and made them fill it out. This contributed to the union's disconnection from its membership. Often, members didn't even know they were in a union, or didn't know what it did; and for that matter, the union didn't keep track of its membership. The member lists we were supposed to use to call folks out for rallies were horribly out of date. But what did it matter? The dues were decided at the international level, not the local. The employers deducted dues from paychecks and sent a monthly lump sum.

Collaborating with the boss is good for business, and unions have gotten into the business of collaboration. I had a chance to look at the contract the woman was complaining about. The most disappointing aspect, as always, is the “No Strike/No Lockout” paragraph, which explains that the union cannot strike as long as the terms of the contract are followed. Even better, when there is a legal strike, the union pledges that it will send a “minimal staff” into the striking offices in order to keep them functioning—yes, the union will scab itself!

The union encountered some difficulties reining in its membership in preparation for the upcoming contract negotiations. The union wanted its members to want full-time status, but most of the part-time workers weren't especially interested in changing. This was an example of a complaint I've heard often in my small southern town: the unions, people say, disregard their individual situations and force them to accept what the union says is “better for the whole.”

Though this critique tends to come from conservatives and is disregarded by leftists who think they can figure out what's best for everyone, it has a certain radical undercurrent to it. Most unions have become large and bureaucratic, and their political and economic legitimacy is based on their ability to keep their members in line. The union knows what's best; in order for negotiations to go well, your desires have to fit into a certain box so that the negotiators can squeeze them into an even smaller contract. The union has to be able to give the bosses a promise of stability, a guarantee of the security of the status quo and the smooth running of production. Otherwise, it's out a customer.

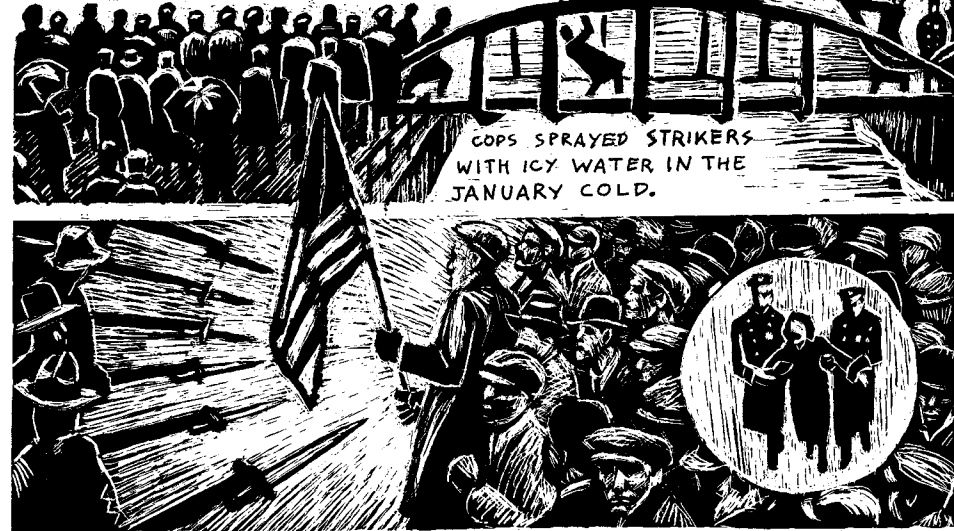
As these unions are inextricably entrenched in the functioning of the economy, of course they're more interested in the right to employment than the right to enjoyment. Business unions are about making sure that everyone wants the same thing, rather than the workers uniting and standing up together for their individual desires.

Consumption Unionism

There were pockets of dissatisfaction within the local, and at moments there seemed to be hope for change within the membership. But the members themselves had been beaten, both by the employers and by the union. One young man explained that the bosses had threatened to deal harshly with disrupters, and he was unwilling to stick his neck out on the job without the support of his co-workers—which was non-existent. Defeat, yet again.

Beyond the institutionalized constraints, the biggest roadblock to a vibrant union was the basic lack of a culture

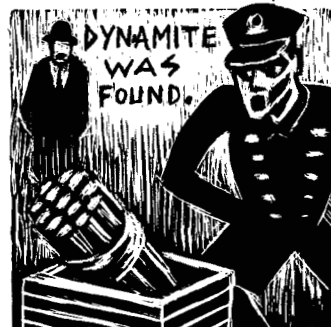
IN THE 1ST DAYS OF THE STRIKE CROWDS OF SINGING STRIKERS BLOCKED BRIDGES, STOPPING NON-STRIKERS FROM GETTING TO WORK.



of solidarity. Folks didn't stick up for one another against the boss. “Union” was just another deduction from wages, not something that existed in the relationships between workers on the job. What good was a union card if it sat idle in your back pocket? Credit cards, discount cards, membership cards. Unionism became just one more thing to consume in order to get a better job, participation optional.

This isn't to say that legalized unions bring no benefits to the workers themselves. U.S. unions pride themselves on raising the standard of living and creating a large middle class. Many unions have helped to bring at least some fragment of the American Dream™ to U.S. families. But this has altogether neutralized these workers' opposition to capitalism, and removed them from participation in social struggle. Middle class workers, thanks to and along with their unions, have been effectively domesticated.

Why struggle against capitalism, one might ask, if one has a working garbage disposal of one's very own? It's a question of values. The workers movement has always struggled for two things: 1) Autonomy, freedom, and power over the workplace and daily life; and 2) Wealth. The bosses and politicians have ceded a fraction of their wealth but have not given up any power. Workers who might want to fight for more autonomy or power are held hostage by the middle-class lifestyle they already have; to strive for freedom would mean to risk their little hard-won comfort. Indignity at work is the price you have to pay to live the dream of two cars and a pile of debts.



Putting the “Work” back in “Ex-Worker”

Here, amid all this cooption and concession, I see opportunities for anarchist intervention and participation in the labor struggles of today. My home town, for example, as a place most unions have ignored, is a prime site for a renaissance of labor organizing without money, limitations, or institutions.

And outside our punk and activist ghettos, we dropout anarchists have a lot to offer. We're used to living on next to nothing, so bosses can't threaten us; if we can link up with others fed up with their power, we can threaten them. Our lust for freedom and autonomy, and our willingness to go without the consolation prizes of convenience, could help us develop new methods of cooperation and workplace action that no union today can even consider. We've acted outside formal structures for so many years that we take all the benefits of being able to do so for granted; in league with our fellow work-haters, we could open new avenues for genuine revolt. We've dumpstered meals for hundreds for our own conferences; let's make sure there's never a hungry belly at a picket line. Our infoshops and Food Not Bombs groups have given us good practice building community organs; let's offer working parents daycare and free breakfast for their kids. And fun—fun is almost an ideology for most of us; let's share our games and schemes and optimism with workers and co-workers, so that no one ever has to go home and waste away in front of the TV again. The togetherness that comes from those is exactly the foundation that makes collective resistance possible.

Us dropouts have a lot going for us that today's union organizers don't. Unlike most of them, we have no overhead. We can steal or scam what we need to fight with, squat or dumpster what we need to get by, and travel by rail or by thumb just as the I.W.W. union faithfuls used to. The money we raise for labor organizing can be put to better use than staff salaries or rental cars. As an intern with the established union, I still had to compute everything according to the scarcity logic of capitalism—from the pizza we ate to turning on the lights in the office, we were always reminded that we were spending or wasting our members' hard-earned money. Organizers who don't depend on dues for their livelihoods, on the other hand, can look at workers as real people and not just potential sources of income. Such union representatives could be collaborators against the bosses, not agents for them.

This isn't to say we revolutionaries should spend all our time doing grunt work for the “real” labor movement. If we're serious about this, we can make our own connections with grassroots labor militants and act on our own terms outside the bureaucratic institutions that have been holding the movement back. The formal labor movement still has plenty of organizers and members with radical visions and vibrant spirits, but perhaps we can do some things they want to but can't: wheatpasting, visiting houses, smashing offices...

And this participation can go both ways: if we get involved in labor struggles, other labor activists will be more likely to join in ours. In the middle of the summer, I invited my fellow interns and the local staff to join in an anti-G8 solidarity rally organized by the regional Anarchist Action group. The union staff was excited to meet other potential allies, and the anarchist group was very interested in labor involvement, though the two hadn't worked together before. After work, wearing our bright red union shirts and bearing dumpstered buckets for festive drumming, we joined in a parade that ended at the local Board of Trade. In the course

of this unpermitted march, we were corralled, pepper sprayed, and beaten, but I was surprised and impressed by the willingness of the interns to stick through the action and not back down. Though short-lived, it was an exciting and inspiring few blocks in the streets, chanting class war slogans alongside the folks with whom I had taken my first meaningful steps into the class war.

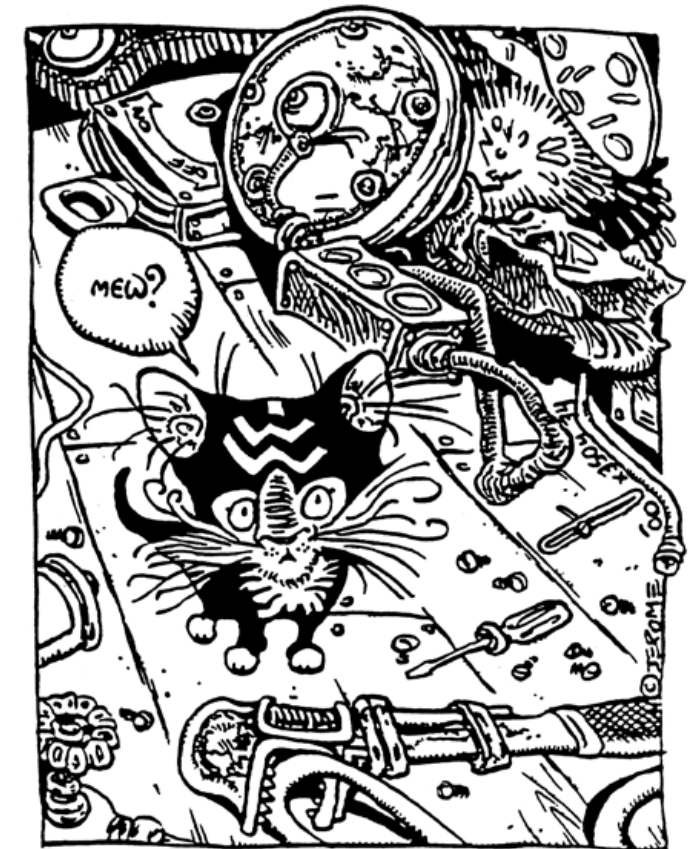
Epilogue

Ironically enough, as I finish this report a strike has struck, of all places, right outside my home town. The company wants to cut pensions and jack up health-care costs. The cement plants employ most of the people in the area, and only one of them is unionized. The other plants are watching—the bosses nervously, the workers excitedly. If the strikers get their demands, there's a good chance there will be inspiration for the union to move into the other sites.

And so, after all my ranting and raving against unions and their contracts and compromises, a few of us went down to hang out with the workers and bring lots and lots of dumpstered food. The picket is strong—every worker in this 100+ employee plant is off the job in this right-to-work¹ state. Scabs are having trouble keeping up output: after a week, four customers have already stopped ordering.

I got a chance to talk to the folks down there with their drawls, John Deere caps, Harley t-shirts, and, of course, sweet tea. They are sticking together and they all support the union. It's inspiring to find another bastion of resistance in this once-hopeless humid town. I got some numbers, and we are going to keep in touch. They enjoyed the d.i.y. mashed potatoes and I promised to bring more.

I didn't talk anarchism on the picket line—I didn't need to. They know what's up. Every southern working class redneck knows she's been abandoned by the politicians and that their bosses don't care about them. The question is what we can do about this, together.



¹ “Right to Work” is a euphemism for scab-friendly.

Cycles of Abuse and. Survival

We live in an emotionally abusive society. Emotional abuse takes place in everyday living situations, intimate partnerships, family dynamics, friendships, acquaintances, and workplace and project collaborations. Living in a society in which we are isolated and feel insignificant, we are forced to cultivate coping skills and tools to protect our own vulnerability. However, the same tools we develop for survival can inadvertently be used to abuse ourselves, as well as others.

Because of an intimate partnership going awry, I began to evaluate my relationships, past and present. The dynamics within this partnership often left me feeling confused and even crazy. I found myself questioning my reality, feeling I was inept at understanding her needs, and making excuses to myself for why some—no, many—of our interactions left me feeling hurt and angry. I learned I was caught up in a cycle of abuse.

I originally entered this relationship with a lot of compassion because I sensed I was becoming involved with someone who had been hurt deeply and had fears of intimacy. Over the time we spent together I learned very few details of where these

fears originated from because trust was a difficult issue for her as well. My main focus in our relationship was to stand by her at all costs so that eventually she might feel she could trust me. However, the more I tried to stand by her and make myself available for her needs, the more distance I felt.

It began with loud and aggressively vocalized boundaries spoken with enough force that they felt like laws instead of collaborative agreements. I was never asked how I felt about these boundaries or what my needs were. They were just demands necessary in order for her to feel safe. Some boundaries seemed reasonable, especially with the few short explanations that came with them; some seemed isolating and confusing. I would agree with these boundaries while thinking to myself, “She needs time, space. Be patient until she feels safe.” The boundaries started small. “No public displays of affection, no interruptions while I’m working, no cuddling while sleeping—be sure to stay on your side of the bed.” Essentially, give me space, give me space, give me space. Over time I began feeling more and more alienated. It came to a point where I would rarely see her at all during the day, and if I did it was for a short time and obviously at

great effort on her part. I would wait throughout the day for an opportunity to see her. And then, when she was ready for bed she would come to find me. I sensed true vulnerability on her part when she would ask if I wanted to sleep in her bed each night, and over time, more desperate for affection and validation, I would never say no.

In the attempts I would make at opening discussion about my feelings, my feelings were minimized. I always left feeling I was to blame for our relationship not working. I would try to bring up contradictions between her actions and words and attempt to explain my confusion. I would be told those words were never spoken. I almost always left confused, frightened, and emotionally drained. On a couple of occasions I became so overwhelmed by my feelings of not being heard or my emotions not being acknowledged, and I lost control and began yelling. At this point, she would say, “I can’t be here with you if you’re yelling,” and she would leave—rightly so.

I sound like I’m describing a monster, but am I? Fuck no. Not even close.

There’s a question that keeps coming back to me over and over again. If she were writing this herself from her perspective, what would her perception be? Would I sound like a monster? Maybe.

She left town for a couple of months before our relationship as lovers ended. By this time I was sincerely questioning my sanity, my intentions, and what kind of baggage I was bringing to the relationship. The only thing I was hearing from her at this time was that she was feeling confined, trapped, overwhelmed, and guilty. I wanted this relationship to work. I felt as if I were to blame, and I decided to spend the time she was away going back to places in myself that earlier in my life, I had decided were too painful to acknowledge.

I grew up in a home of domestic violence. It was here, as a child, that I learned to suppress my feelings and disassociate myself from my emotions until eventually I became almost numb to any emotion at all. I learned to avoid chaos and pain by assessing every person in a room before entering it. By taking in my father’s posture and stance, his facial expressions and his silence or way of speaking, I would figure out whether I could relax and climb into his lap, or if I should sit and remain still. I learned if it was safer to retreat quietly to my room or run as far and fast as I could. This is also where I

learned that women were “stupid” and the only value of a woman was her beauty. My father’s constant compliments of my beauty became another form of abuse amidst the violence, and beauty eventually became my only source of validation. This lasted for thirteen years before my mother and I were able to escape. By this time my tools for survival were deeply ingrained in my being. My desires never to look back and never to lose my freedom were so strong that I was unable to foresee the ways I would bring these tools to every relationship from that point forward.

In general, my relationships—whether as friends, lovers, co-workers, or family—were short-lived and distant. I moved from place to place and job to job, never allowing anyone too close or allowing myself to feel too much. From having grown up in a situation where boundaries were not allowed, it never occurred to me that I could establish safe and open communication about my needs. Instead, I either had no physical boundaries at all or an emotional brick wall that was impassable to others, and whether there was the wall or no boundary at all depended upon my perception of who was in power. Speak of my beauty, and the wall would move, allowing one access to my physical space even if it wasn’t what I wanted. With beauty as my only validation, my father’s abuse continued on through me.

After spending days on end allowing memories to surface, allowing myself to feel the emotions I never let myself have when I was younger, and bringing myself to a place of acceptance, I began to form a passion for analyzing power and control dynamics. I began doing research and speaking to others about domestic violence, trying desperately to find a way to make sense of it all. Through of my research, I came across a power wheel showing the different kinds of interactions that form an abusive situation. Reflecting on this, and reading personal accounts and examples of abuse, power, and control, I was forced to look at another relationship that I had left behind as well: my marriage.

My marriage lasted for seven years. Looking back at myself, I had to admit that I had been abusive to my partner during this time. Throughout this marriage I lived with the intense fear of intimacy that I had carried with me since I was a child. When I agreed to marriage, I no longer felt I could make excuses for why my relationship wasn’t working

and leave it behind. I had to try and stick it out because I had made the commitment. I also wasn't in a place to address the fears I carried with me, so my fears became my control. They controlled me, and I controlled my partner.

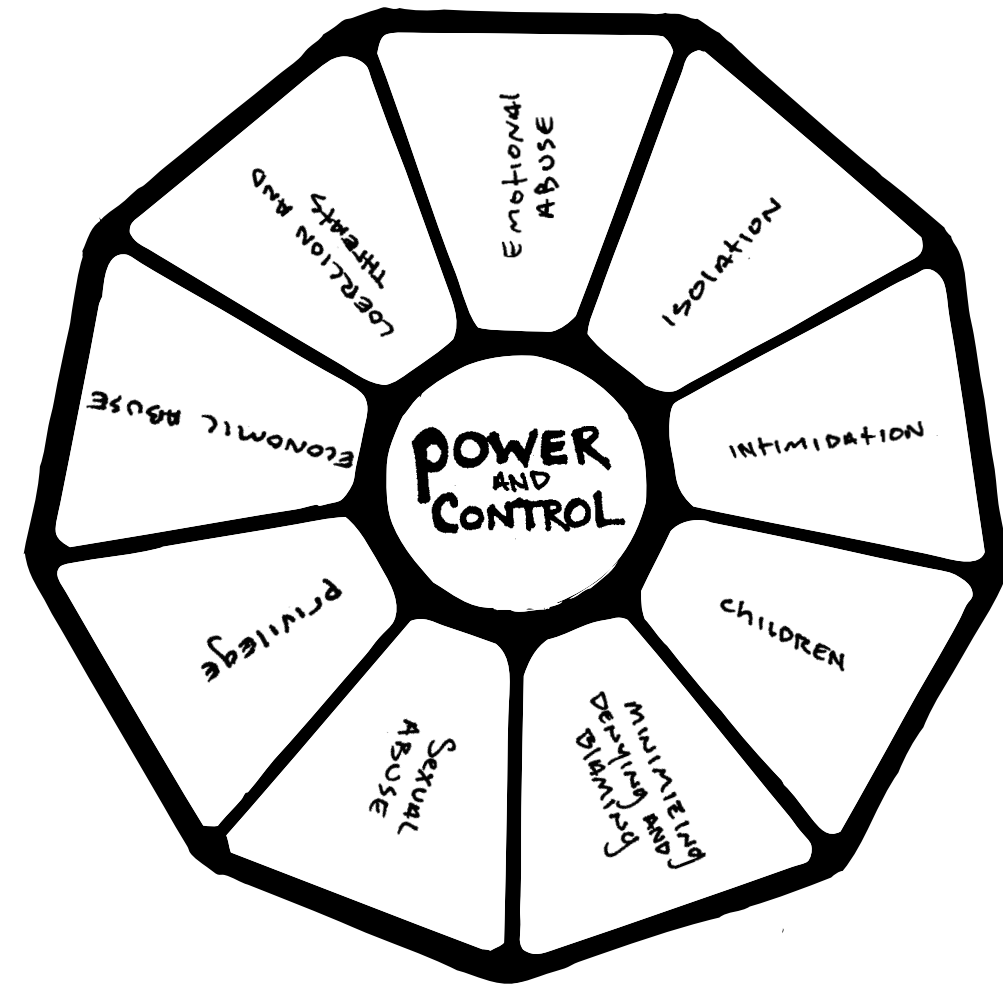
We had a child together, which increased my feelings of entrapment. I told him that I feared we wouldn't be able to feed and house her because he was irresponsible with his money. By the time the seven years was over, I had full control over his money and mine; he had an allowance and handed all of his paychecks over to me. I had used our child's presence as a way to control my partner. I used his desire for a place of his own for writing as a way to isolate him from my space, which was the rest of the house—all six rooms. He and all of his things lived in a separate room in the house. He never had much time to write, though, because as soon as he came in the door I needed my space. If he was at home, he was responsible for watching our daughter. I used his privilege against him to make him feel guilty about being well-educated and having more opportunities than I did. He wanted to go to school, but he couldn't because I said we couldn't afford it and we couldn't take on another loan. He wanted to play music with his friends, but he couldn't because I needed time for myself since I was with our daughter all day. I also refused to pay for childcare or apply for monetary help with childcare so we could both have free time.

When he tried to talk to me about his loss of freedom and his lack of input into our lives, I would minimize his efforts and blame his irresponsibility and selfishness. The majority of the time my body language—the way I sighed in frustration over the house being a mess and stomped around in anger while I was cleaning things up—prevented him from ever feeling as if he could approach me to talk. This was a form of intimidation I used to avoid conversations I knew I didn't want to have. In the few times he was actually able to get close enough to confront me with his feelings of entrapment, especially if he began to say something that made sense to me about my controlling behavior, the fear of having to face myself became so intense that the quickest way to stop the thoughts and to shut him up was to throw whatever object was closest to me in his direction. At this point, everything would stop. He would leave, feeling defeated. I would walk away, blaming him for not listening to me. Eventually, he resorted to lying and manipulation to find a little personal freedom. I continually confronted him about his lying, but I had no understanding at the time that he didn't feel safe enough to tell me the truth.

I sound like a monster here, but I know I'm not. I genuinely did feel as if he were the one in control. That's the most terrifying thought of all. My ideas about the construction of gender distorted my perspective, and I truly did not see the power I held over him. I thought that because he was a man and I was a woman, I was not capable of abusing him. I never made the connection that I was continually abusing myself by telling myself all the same things my father had said to me when I was younger. I never made the connection that I was re-enacting the same methods of control that my father had used on my mother and me. I have always been, and still am, the frightened little girl that physically left home, but still I act as I would to avoid the chaos of that home. The only difference is that now I can see it. Now I can make the connections.

Not everyone grew up in a violent household. Not everyone's experiences are like mine. But now that I'm aware, I see daily amongst friends, family, and community so many fears and so few ways to cope with them. I see rooms full of people turn quiet and still or get up and leave because one person is carrying their bad day in their body posture, huffing around the room. I see people having intense conversations and one person talking incessantly, desperately trying NOT to hear a conversation that's hitting too close to emotional home. I see people who say they had healthy, happy childhoods evading, isolating, intimidating, and alienating in ways that are as damaging as violence to themselves and others, even though the methods are subtle and less aggressive. It seems there's something, somewhere, in everyone I meet.

There's a multitude of ways to be affected by societal abuses, even if they aren't recognized as such because they aren't blatantly violent or verbally aggressive. It seems everyone around me is constantly in survival mode, including me, but I have learned that I can't call my observations out on any one individual. I myself wouldn't have heard and didn't hear when someone would call me out. I made excuses and justified my abusive behaviors, because I wasn't ready or willing to explore that part of myself yet. I just wasn't in a place safe enough to do so. Also, I have learned that I can't prove my trustworthiness to anyone in order to be there for that person. Doing so, I will only set myself up to accept abusive behavior. The only thing I can do for anyone else is to take responsibility for the things that are mine. I can only walk away from an abusive situation, not turn it around and try to fix it. I can only take care of myself, challenge my own internalized abusive behavior, and figure out ways to stop abusing myself.



Using Emotional Abuse: Putting someone down or making them feel bad about themselves, calling them names, making them think they're crazy, humiliating them and making them feel guilty.

Using Isolation: Controlling what someone does, who they see and talk to, what they read, where they go, limiting their outside involvement, using jealousy to justify actions.

Using Intimidation: Making someone afraid by using looks, gestures, or loud voice, destroying their property, abusing pets, displaying weapons.

Using Children: Making someone feel guilty about the children, using children to give messages, using visitation to harass someone, threatening to take the children away.

Minimizing, Denying, Blaming: Making light of abuse and not taking concerns about it seriously, saying abuse didn't happen, shifting responsibility for abusive behavior, saying they caused it.

Sexual Abuse: Making someone do sexual things against their will, physically attacking the sexual parts of the body, treating them like a sex object.

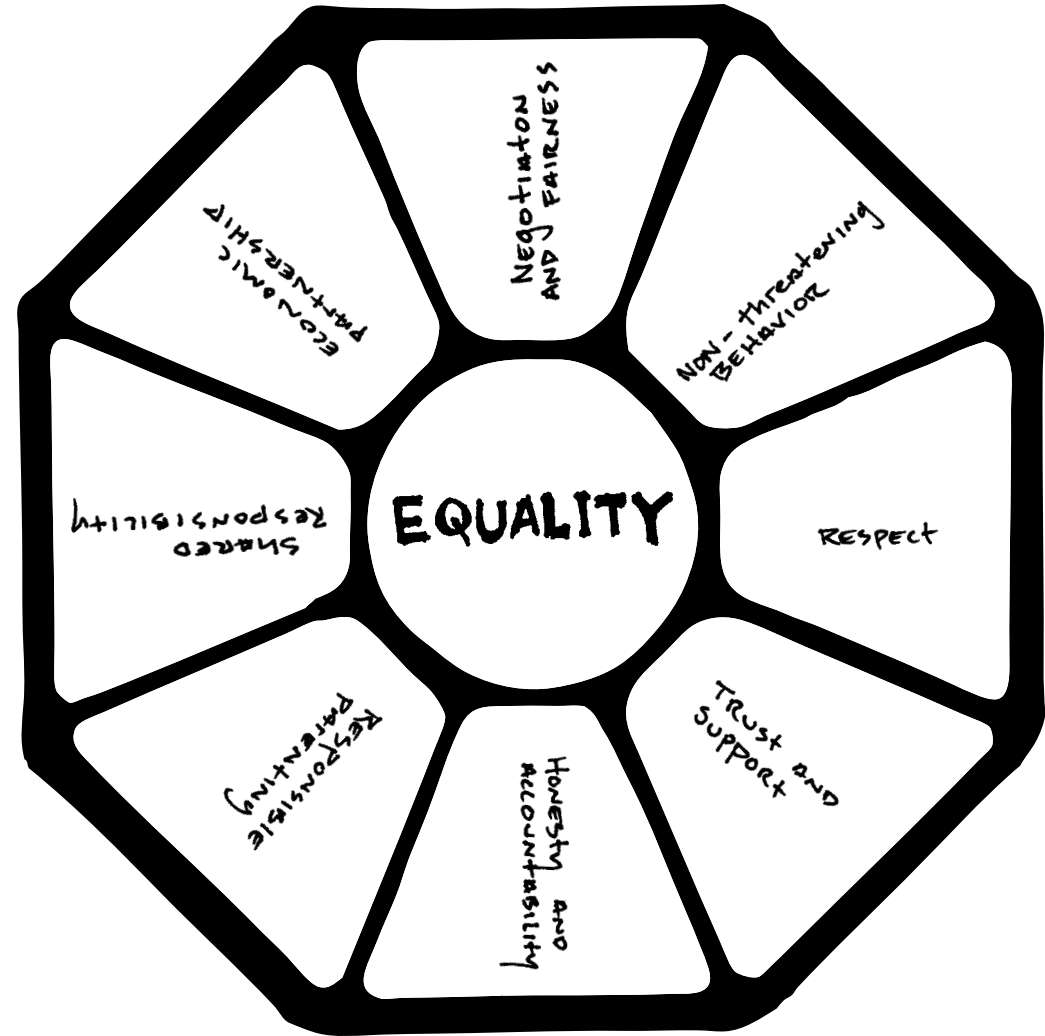
Using Privilege: Treating someone like a servant, making all the "big" decisions in a relationship, being the one to define gender roles.

Using Economic Abuse: Preventing someone from getting or keeping a job, making them ask for money, giving them an allowance, taking their money, not letting them know about or have access to family income.

Using Coercion & Threats: Making and/or carrying out threats to do something to hurt a partner, threatening to leave, threatening suicide.



New Orleans: Preview of the End of the World— or Interruption of It



Negotiation and Fairness: Seeking mutually satisfying resolutions to conflict, accepting change, being willing to compromise.

Non-Threatening Behavior: Talking and acting so that others feel safe and comfortable expressing themselves and doing things.

Respect: Listening to others non-judgmentally, being emotionally affirming and understanding, valuing opinions.

Trust and Support: Supporting others' goals in their lives, respecting their right to their own feelings, friends, activities and opinions.

Honesty and Accountability: Accepting responsibility for self, acknowledging past use of violence, admitting being wrong, communicating openly and truthfully.

Responsible Parenting: Sharing parental responsibilities, being a positive non-violent role model for the children.

Shared Responsibility: Mutually agreeing on a fair distribution of work, making family decisions together.

Economic Partnership: Making money decisions together, making sure both partners benefit from financial agreements.

“You know the only reason we’ve been fed? Some men out of prison have been breaking into buildings, getting food for us and bringing it back here.”
-Sadique Jabbar, quoted in the San Francisco Chronicle, 3/3/2005, speaking from the New Orleans Convention Center

“The national guard from Oregon is in charge of our section of the city. A dozen of them come by every morning to get coffee and compare information with us. They say they are constantly being fed lies. One night, two of them came by and dropped off three boxes of rice they had expropriated. They apologized, fearing it wasn’t vegan; they said we were doing a better job of getting meals out than anybody else. One said he knew some Food Not Bombs kids from Portland, and had a lot of respect for them. Much of this city is essentially operating on a gift economy—we share food with people, and sometimes they show up with cases of beer for us. The hugs and looks of gratitude are soul-nourishing, to say the least.


“One night while we were listening to some old timey music, an SUV full of New Orleans police rolled up. First they hassled me for not being inside the gate of my residence, but then they told stories about how fucked up the relief efforts were and how all the regular cops had quit and the department was deputizing people off the street. At the house, we have a creepy George Bush punching bag with FEMA scrawled across its forehead. The locals like it. As the police were leaving, the head cop saw it, and asked if he could take a whack. He beat the shit out of it with his nightstick.”
-from the report of an anarchist relief volunteer

The aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans offered us a glimpse of what we can expect to see on a broader scale should the economic and ecological crises some predict come to pass. Those who wish to be prepared for such crises should study it carefully. When upheavals disrupt existing support systems and the ways of life that depend on them, anarchist alternatives, whether identified as such or not, come to the forefront; but such situations are always marked by intense conflicts, as the powers that be scramble to regain their footing.

Clearly, the first priority of the government was not to offer assistance to the afflicted, but to establish control. Where this was impossible, troops quarantined the chaos to a dead zone, sealing off escape routes, cutting off water and other life support systems, and denying access to institutional relief groups and independent efforts alike. The corporate media dutifully painted this zone with colors from the propagandist’s palette, presenting rumors as facts wherever necessary to depict life outside police control as nasty, brutish, and short; this was easy to accomplish, as the damage of the storm only exacerbated the damage already done by capitalism. As soon as the situation had been framed thus, government rhetoric shifted from rescue to repression¹. Talk about putting the “disaster” in disaster relief!

Thanks to the government embargo on information as well as food, water, and movement, only the webpages of a few scattered survivors offered a glimpse into what was really going on inside the city. Despite the efforts of the police and

¹ Sending forces into the city after the flood, Louisiana Governor Kathleen Blanco bragged, “They have M-16s and are locked and loaded. These troops know how to shoot and kill and I expect they will.” Likewise, Brigadier General Gary Jones told the Army Times, “This place is going to look like Little Somalia. We’re going to go out and take this city back. This will be a combat operation to get this city under control.” Having been wrested temporarily from government control by the natural disaster, New Orleans suddenly became a part of the Third World, to be occupied and pacified.



“On Sunday, Sept. 4th—almost a full week after Katrina struck—New Orleans remained a zone of anarchy, despite President Bush’s call for “zero tolerance” of lawbreakers. These house fires in the city’s most beautiful district were believed to have been set by arsonist-looters traveling by boat.”
—*Time Magazine*

military to bar access to the area, a great part of the relief work was carried out by autonomous individuals who slipped through police lines to offer selfless aid to their fellows—not to mention those inside the dead zone who went to great lengths to help one another.²

After the flood, New Orleans became a microcosm of a post-apocalyptic world. A strange mix of eccentrics, altruists, individualists, paupers, anarchists, soldiers, and police populated the ruined landscape, alternately assisting one another and vying for control. One resident, returning to the city a full two months after the hurricane, compared the atmosphere to that of an anarchist mobilization: everywhere she went there were spraypainted demands (“electricians not lentils,” “no more hippy food”), people handing out fliers, and police and soldiers making random stops to emphasize their precarious power.

For many who lived through it, Hurricane Katrina undermined the utopian assurances of the capitalist system, erasing the buffer between the First World and the Third. All the conveniences and guarantees offered, at a price, by industrial society—the water, food, and electricity that appear as if out of nowhere, the constant flow of information and goods, the protection of the authorities—were transformed into health hazards, liabilities, and bureaucracy. At the same time, when the façade of civil society was torn away, the camaraderie, cooperation, and compassion that make life worth living remained, all the more obvious in its absence.

Some have praised the corporate media for their critical coverage of the state response to the hurricane, but one might sooner ask where this outrage was *before* the storm hit. New Orleans was the principal port of the slave trade, and descendants of the people who suffered that injustice have lived there ever since without much improvement in their living conditions. These residents of New Orleans were *already* living in a disaster. Poverty rates were among the highest in the country; in the months leading up to the hurricane, ten residents were killed by police officers and two different policemen were indicted for committing rape while in uniform. The skull-and-crossbones logo improvised by officers during the heady days of the post-hurricane occupation made explicit what many in New Orleans already knew: the police there literally formed the vanguard of death, separating people from the resources they needed and imposing suffering more aggressively than any storm could.

By interrupting the disaster of everyday life, the hurricane exposed observers to tragedies to which they were not yet desensitized; by focusing on the flaws of relief efforts, corporate media directed attention away from the ongoing disaster of capitalism and back to the exceptional case of a particular natural disaster. During the hurricane, some impoverished residents of New Orleans may have had *more* access, not less, to the things they need to survive—not because of the efforts of relief agencies, but because the breakdown of control made it possible to take food, water, and clothing that are otherwise guarded by high prices and men with guns.

Under these conditions, real disaster relief would mean looting not only stores, but also the means of production. It would entail seizing busses and food supplies—not just temporarily, to escape from a flooded city, but on a permanent basis, to escape a society flooded with injustice. It would mean building up networks of mutual aid to enable people to lead lives of their choosing rather than suffering the domination of bosses or poverty. Any progress we can accomplish towards those ends will mean, if nothing else, that next time a disaster like Hurricane Katrina hits, we’ll be better equipped to come to each other’s aid, however uniformed thugs try to stop us. If the calamities ahead are as dire as ecologists predict, nothing less will give us a fighting chance of survival.

² In what can only be described as a superhuman act of compassion, an inmate who escaped during evacuation recognized some of the officers who had guarded him wandering in distress through the ruined city and gave them a vehicle he had stolen so they could escape. The story of one of these officers appeared in *Newsday*, but the inmate’s gesture went unheralded.



**YOUR LEADERS WON'T SAVE YOU
THEY'LL SOONER LET YOU DIE**

The Water
is
Rising
Pleas

ANTI-SUMMIT MOBILIZATIONS AFTER THE END OF THE WORLD

At no time in the history of humanity has the world been so full of pain and anguish. Here and there, however, we encounter individuals who are untouched, unsullied by the common grief. They are not heartless—far from it! They are emancipated beings. For them the world is not what it seems to us. They see with other eyes. We say of them that they have died to the world. They live in the moment, fully, and the radiance which emanates from them is a perpetual song of joy.

Opposing the G8 in Scotland July 2005

[A more thorough report and analysis of the G8 protests in Scotland can be found in the book *Shut Them Down: The G8, Gleneagles 2005, and the Movement of Movements* by Alex Trocchi and Petrus Alamire, published by the sinister Dissent network in the UK (www.dissent.org.uk) and available from www.shutthemdown.org.]

Everyone knows that the heyday of anti-summit protesting is over, that the glorious victory over the W.T.O. in Seattle in 1999 and the heroic struggles against the I.M.F. in Prague, the F.T.A.A. in Quebec, and the G8 in Genoa in the following years will never be repeated.

The forces of capitalism have us outclassed; we can never again hope to beat them on their own turf. Right?

In fact, the mobilization against the G8 summit in Scotland showed that it is still possible to take on the rulers of the world where they are strongest. Anarchists directly confronted the forces of the world's eight most powerful men right outside their summit, shutting down highways, tearing down fences, and almost preventing their meeting altogether. The attacks of the fundamentalist bombers in London the same week look cowardly in comparison.

Unfortunately, in succeeding in this tall order without actually changing the course of history, the G8 protests also illuminated the challenges facing anarchists today. In the popular imagination, the terrorist attacks almost entirely overshadowed the much more courageous, ambitious, and life-affirming counter-summit demonstrations. As long as the powers that be can point to rival powers that pose an equal or greater threat to their citizens, simply winning confrontations with them is not enough—we have to show that our alternative can protect people from their rulers' enemies as well as their rulers themselves. Before considering this further, let's review the story of the G8 protests in Scotland, 2005.

Britain was the nation in which industrial capitalism first took root, and accordingly it has often been ahead of its time in the art of protest. The British anti-roads movement of the early 1990s was a harbinger of the “anti-globalisation” movement in Europe and the US, featuring a wild and eclectic focus on direct action and cultural resistance in contrast to the notoriously boring politics of the institutional Left. The model was moved with much success into the cities in the form of Reclaim the Streets, capitalizing on the fact that in Britain hordes of ravers would show up seemingly anywhere for a good party. Within a few years, cities from Brisbane to Bratislava were reclaiming their streets. Coinciding with the G8 Summit in Cologne, the Global Day of Action against Capitalism on June 18th, 1999 paralysed the financial centre of London, prefiguring the shutting down of the WTO in Seattle a few months later.

But every boom has a backlash, and as Britain's turn came to host the G8 in 2005, things looked grim. The last successful anti-capitalist mobilizations had taken place some years before, and though anarchists had participated in protests against the war in Iraq, many were convinced that mass mobilizations were no longer an effective means of resistance. Early meetings to discuss the G8 summit consisted of arguments about whether a truly anti-authoritarian mobilization was even theoretically possible.

Despite this malaise, the anti-capitalist network Dissent! came together nearly two years before the summit to mobilize resistance. Composed of collectives from throughout the UK, Dissent! was intended to be inclusive and accessible¹, though the lack of solid press relations sometimes enabled the mainstream media to portray them as secretive and sinister². Hashing out a plan also proved difficult: a centrally organized attack on the summit à la Quebec or Genoa seemed suicidal, and many in Dissent! feared the possible repercussions of organizing illegal activity, but decentralized protest models without central coordination had recently proved utterly ineffectual³. The large reformist coalitions were organizing their protests a great distance from the summit, several days before it even began, so they could not be counted on to offer any opportunities. Eventually, a strategy developed based on the model that had been applied at the G8 protests in Evian in 2003: autonomous groups would blockade the routes leading to Gleneagles, the rural hotel at which the summit was to take place, shutting out the delegates, staff, and media. To this end, a campsite—the “Eco-village,” designed to be a working model of a sustainable community⁴—was secured within hiking distance of these roads.

Organizers solicited international participation via meetings in Germany, Spain, and Greece, and little stickers appeared everywhere announcing the upcoming protests. Under this pressure, the Socialist Workers' Party, attempting to prevent the defection of more militant protesters to Dissent!, announced that their front group



G8 Alternatives would host a peaceful march to the fence surrounding the summit regardless of whether or not they were granted a permit. Two days before the G8 summit began, the streets of nearby Edinburgh were transformed by an anarchist carnival that ended, characteristically, in clashes between angry locals and police. Within the circles of the anarchists, the usual confusion and poor communication ran rampant, but the stage was set for something to happen.

THE SUICIDE MARCH

adapted from eyewitness accounts; the author of one of these can be reached at karantina@riseup.net. Compelling video footage from this action can be found at <http://video.indymedia.org/en/2005/09/156.shtml>; watch for the woman in the white bathrobe, and the rioter with bunny ears on his helmet

At the Eco-village, we assembled at the very last minute to determine how we were actually going to execute the blockades. As the deadline came closer and closer, it was decided that the initiative should be left to autonomous affinity groups, and these departed to find their own routes to the motorways. A major factor in this decision was the unfortunate location of the Eco-village: the campsite was surrounded by Forth River and had only one exit leading out, which could be easily sealed off by police. To avoid being trapped, groups began leaving twelve hours ahead of time to situate themselves in the forests and suburbs along the motorways so they could spring into action in the morning. While they streamed out of the campsite, hundreds of people met to determine whether or not a march could leave the camp, and, if so, how it would be organized.

This is how the “suicide march” came about. “Suicide” was not a word chosen hastily. How could such a group actually make it to the distant M9, the major highway connecting Glasgow and Edinburgh to Gleneagles, before being stopped and contained by the ten thousand police assigned to the protests? On the other hand, even if the march failed, it might distract the police long enough for the clandestine groups to launch their siege on the various junctions of the motorways. It was decided that the risk was worth it, and that the march would begin shortly, at three in the morning.

The march leaving from the Eco-village included participants from the UK, Spain, Germany, Ireland, France, Denmark, Italy, Switzerland, Turkey, and the United States, not to mention a significant number of locals eager to represent their own culture of resistance. One middle-aged Scottish fellow from Glasgow carried a bodhran, the traditional Celtic drum historically used in battles and parades; another Scottish youth carried a didgeridoo. As we swelled in numbers, a group bearing thick wooden sticks moved to the front. Another group, bearing shields made from trash can lids and dressed in foam padding, stretched a banner reading “Peace and Love” across a mobile shield wall of tires. As we prepared to leave, the heavens opened and a giant torrent of rain hammered down, soaking us as well as all the affinity groups already outside the Eco-village. Morale was high despite the steadily pouring rain; little did we know the thousand of us would have to battle through five police lines to reach our destination.

In an act of shocking incompetence, the police had not blocked the exit of the Eco-village. We proceeded uninterrupted for fifteen minutes until a line of cops finally moved to block our path at a

roundabout surrounded on all sides by car dealerships. After a quick assessment, it was decided that the line of police was too deep to take on, and we withdrew to find another path to the motorway.

We piled a stack of palettes from a nearby construction site in the street as we retreated. During the chaotic process of finding another road to the highway, we stumbled upon a suburban mall that included a branch of the Bank of Scotland as well as a Burger King, a Pizza Hut, and an Enterprise Car Rental. All their windows were promptly smashed. Some later conjectured that this property destruction forced the police to open an escape route to us before more damage was done, as they hoped to maintain the illusion that they were in control of the situation.

As we moved, we gathered shopping carts and filled them with fist-sized rocks from the sides of the road. A bicycle scout rode ahead to inform the rest of us of intersections and police movements. He told us of a police line forming in our path. A few people moved into the field on the left to outwit the police; the rest of us decided this was the moment to throw down.

Apart from their shields, the police line lacked riot gear. Those of us with sticks moved to the front lines, and the militants behind took stones from the shopping cart. Hooting and cheering, we charged directly at their lines and pummeled them with stones and sticks. The police were not prepared for this at all, and after thirty seconds they broke ranks and retreated. As they fled, someone near me with a thick German accent screamed “DEESS ISS HOW VE DO IT!”

The road was wide open as we marched the long distance from one roundabout to the next, following the road signs to the motorway. At one point, four activists wrapped in trash-bags to protect them from the pouring rain peeked their heads out from the side of the road in amazement at the march passing by; they were among the hundreds that had left early to hide among the trees.

Finally, after trekking five miles in the rain, we arrived at the onramp. The highway was only seventy feet away, but these things are never so easy. Scores of police vans appeared from around the corner and unloaded hundreds of riot police. It seemed to be too much to take on, and we moved back. This time the police seemed as determined as we were and brought out another line in riot gear to block our only exit.

There was only one option left: to battle our way out. The re-stocked trolleys rolled to the front and stones began raining down upon the police, thumping against their shields to the steady battle beat of the bodhran. In a creative use of local resources, even the shrubbery was put to use: a poisonous plant called Hogwart grows in certain parts of Scotland, and its flower causes huge welts and blisters when touched; at one point, the fellow from Glasgow grabbed one of these plants from the stalk and beat the police with its flower. After five minutes, the police lines were pushed back fifty feet and a small path leading into a suburban residential area was revealed to one side. As we walked down the path into suburbia, only a few hundred of us remained. Most of the initial crowd had separated at various police lines to disappear into the fields in search of other routes to the motorway.

A woman in a white bathrobe walked out of her house, baffled at the march going through her community at four in the morning. The police would later report that damage was done to private homes, cars, and satellite dishes; however, the only property damaged was corporate and police property, and the police eventually had to retract their statement⁵. In fact, the woman in the white bathrobe was friendly. She waved at us; we asked her for directions, and she provided them.

We had been thrown off our original route and now had to find a new way to the motorway. The police had mobilized a much larger force, and were moving in from many directions. As we passed through unfamiliar suburban streets, police would appear from one side, retreat before our vigorous self-defense, and appear again from a new direction. The sun, which only sets for about four hours in Scotland during the summer, was now peeking out from behind the horizon. We were feeling wet, cornered, and lost. Another resident of the area, passing in his pickup, stopped and pointed us toward the highway: “Go down that road and climb down the valley, across the fields, and through the trees.”

Standing on the edge of a hill next to a golf course, we could see the trucks traveling on the highway far away. We quickly referred to a topographical map, concerned that there might be a big drop at the side of the highway that couldn't be climbed. It looked doable. Those remaining of the international anti-capitalist black bloc, tired from hours of breaching police lines and soaked to the bone, began a Viet-cong-style journey to the motorway we knew

we had to blockade to prevent the G8 from meeting.

In a moment of bizarre humor, one of the Scottish blokes amongst us was understandably concerned about marching on the golf course, warning the rest of us, “Don't walk on the green!” I turned back to see how many of us were left and was confronted with the surreal scene of hundreds of comrades dressed in black hiking single file through the luscious green landscape of Scotland. I could imagine Scottish rebels fighting the English traversing those same fields, centuries ago.

We continued on this way, passing through scenes from another history, across a golf course, three different cattle pastures, and through knee-high grass. Under a pale blue sky, we finally reached the motorway. We were among the first of a great many groups to arrive at our destination. At that moment, the rain stopped.

Delirious from our long walk and drunk with success, we assembled anything and everything we could find on the side of the road—tree trunks, rocks, branches. It was six in the morning and both directions on the M9 were blockaded.

Walking back to the campsite, we passed the residents of Stirling trying to go to work on the backed up roads. The reactions we got were varied. Some in personal vehicles were upset about the delay and called us many things, most notably “Bastards!” Others in busses and vans, including some who could be identified by their bright yellow vests as construction or roadside workers, were fully supportive. We were greeted with raised fists, cheers, and shouts of “Power to the People!”

We returned to find the Eco-village buzzing with activity. The intricate communications network was functioning in full force. Bicycle scouts situated in the cities where delegates were staying, along the sides of the highways, and at major junctions provided up-to-date information on motorcade movements, informing affinity groups hiding along the highway of when and where to strike. A tent at the entrance offered a large-scale tactical map, providing information on the different blockades. As the day went on, one note after another appeared on the map: “7:00 AM - Spanish Bloc on M9, 7 arrested,” “8:00 AM - 4 Protesters with ropes dangling off a bridge on M9,” “12 PM - Group of 50 including CIRCA and the Kid Bloc having picnic on the Motorway with massive amounts of riot cops looking

confused.” As soon as a report would come in that a blockade was being threatened, the transportation team had vehicles ready to take people to the location to reinforce it. The BBC Scotland radio station reported that all roads north to Gleneagles were backed up, with no traffic passing through.

The Blockades

The “suicide march” was only one of the countless efforts that combined to paralyze the G8 summit for much of its first day. In Muthill, near Crieff, a small village that had never been discussed openly as a site for protest, five people locked themselves together, blocking traffic. Thinking themselves safe, the American delegates to the G8 had located in Crieff; they had to spend hours waiting for the police to disassemble the complex blockade. Another blockade composed of a car with lock-ons inside and underneath hit the small road southeast of Gleneagles at the village of Yetts o' Muckhart. Because the police had to spend so much time getting the Crieff blockade dismantled, this one was up most of the day. In case the delegates were re-routed around the A9, another large blockade hit the exit from Perth, and two smaller ones were set up southwest of it. The train tracks to Gleneagles were disabled by means of a compressor, with tires ablaze on both sides as a warning. The hotel was completely surrounded by blockades for most of the morning. The Canadian delegates never even made it to Gleneagles.

The police, presumably going on the primarily urban character of recent anti-summit activity⁶, incorrectly assumed that most of the trouble would take place in these cities and assembled most of their officers there. So while the Eco-village was left virtually unguarded on the day of action and rural blockaders found it easy to get into position, urban efforts bore the brunt of heavy police repression. All the same, a few urban protesters managed to carry out their plans. Regardless of their success, they provided a crucial distraction to the police that allowed the rural blockades to succeed.

After the initial wave of blockades, many activists remained near the routes to Gleneagles, establishing further blockades on an impromptu basis. Whenever police showed up, they dispersed into the surrounding fields, only to reassemble as soon as the coast was clear. This helped keep the roads impassable for much of the day.

The low-intensity, diffuse blockading model that shut down traffic to the G8 summit could be described as a rural version of the format that paralyzed San Francisco on the first day of the invasion of Iraq in 2003⁷. Such decentralized tactics have proven to be extremely effective when coordinated by a common infrastructure. Even when



[a post on the Scottish
Indymedia website:]

You've got to hand it to them

06.07.2005 15:02

Some good has been done.

Thanks to the anti-world
brigade, we have all been told
we can leave work early.

I back the protesters, more
protesting please . . .

Can you protest next Monday?

I would like the day off, I have
a dentist appointment.

Thanks.

Scotsman



they face a vastly more powerful opposing force, small groups can gain the upper hand so long as they are highly mobile and well coordinated and are able to muster numbers equivalent to those of their opponents at the critical points of engagement. The lack of a central directing body means that even if one group is immobilized, the others can carry on just as effectively, as the strategic framework for actions has already been established.

After blockading, many went to join the G8 Alternatives march to the fence surrounding Gleneagles. Using the disruption of traffic as an excuse, the police had announced that they would not permit the march to take place; but, to their credit, the organizers threatened to march on the US embassy in Edinburgh if the original march route was denied, and the police grudgingly let them go ahead. As soon as the march came within view of the Gleneagles hotel, a great many participants, not at all invested in the socialist organizers' call for a submissive, law-abiding march, surged across the fence and charged forward. The police lines were not sufficient to stave off this incursion, and hundreds more riot cops had to be flown in by means of Chinook helicopters before the field could be secured again. An eyewitness from the Infernal Noise Brigade reports:

The grass was tall and deep green and I was keeping myself between the band and these lines of mounted riot police. I was doing tactical and so not carrying an instrument; as the horses approached, they were so incredibly tall, their legs buried in the barley. I could smell them, and they smelled like normal horses, but they had these beasts on their backs driving them forward, threatening us by turning them so we were in range of their back hooves. The sky was gigantic and held low-flying military vehicles, stark against the blue, and the fields stretched on forever in every direction, the horizon cut by the outlines of all these people in their battle outfits, their flags of peace or war, their cameras and clown costumes. It was terrifying, beautiful, and epic.

Resistance in an Age of Terror

Under the cover of darkness early the following day, the police finally fulfilled everyone's fears by blockading the camp. The more insurrectionary anarchists argued that the police blockade around the Eco-village had to be broken so activists could continue the successes of the previous day. With the police so obviously weak and the

fence easily toppled, they believed one more coordinated action could shut down the summit. More pacifist elements felt that any attempt to fight through the police lines, especially now that the police would not be caught off guard as they had been the previous morning, would be a disaster; but they couldn't propose another way to deal with the blockade.

Before discussions about the next few days of action could really commence, however, news came of the terrorist attack in London. It hit everyone like a physical punch in the stomach, and the whole meeting came to an eerie standstill. The net effect was complete paralysis. The energy left the Eco-village, and people eventually began leaving in small groups, making their way meekly through the police checkpoint.

The bombings enabled the G8 leaders to cement their image as the defenders of Western civilisation from barbaric extremists. Never mind that it was these same leaders who had moved the entire police force of London north to repress protesters instead of guarding the civilians who were killed. Never mind, for that matter, that it was the policies of these leaders that provoked terrorists to target British civilians in the first place. Indeed, like the destruction of the World Trade Center in 2001, the London bombing was so effective in enabling the G8 leaders to consolidate their power that one can't help but wonder if such attacks might somehow figure in their strategy for world domination. Could it be that these heads of state are banking on the inevitable reprisals their activities provoke to keep their citizens in line?

The fact that the G8 protests were eclipsed by the attack in London shows that anarchists have some catching up to do to be able to act effectively in the current historical context. The successes of these protests utterly disprove the cowardly superstition that militant demonstrations are impossible under the conditions of today's terror war. The problem is not that resistance is impossible, it is that our resistance, however tactically effective, will not be able to attract mass participation until people see that their rulers pose as great a threat to them as the terrorists they claim to be keeping at bay. As long as people can only imagine politics as a choice between authoritarian rulers, they will always choose the more familiar ones; we have to show that it is not necessary to submit to rule of any kind, that in fact submission to authoritar-

ian power brings us into greater danger than opposition to it does. Every time we freeze up in the face of a terrorist attack, fearing we will appear insensitive or insane if we continue our resistance, we cede the political field to the mind-numbing spectacle of one authoritarian force versus another. We need to craft a strategy for resistance that takes into account the brutality of the terrorists as well as the tyranny of our rulers.

We could begin by focusing on holding powers such as the G8 responsible for the attacks they bring about. It is their imperialism and exploitation, their wars for power and control, that put the rest of us in harm's way, anyway, whether as soldiers in occupying armies or as civilian targets. Most of the protesters in Scotland focused on economic issues, such as third world debt and the erosion of social welfare programs and job security; perhaps if more anarchists had explicitly stated that they were there to stop the rulers of the world before those rulers get us all killed, their efforts would have retained their relevance and persuasiveness after the bombings, possibly even serving as a catalyst for a broader public outcry. The rage people feel about being targeted by terrorist attacks is one of the most powerful forces in the political climate today; if we could turn this against those who currently benefit from it, we anarchists would quickly gain the upper hand in our struggle against state power.

Postscript: Solidarity March in San Francisco

At least three solidarity actions took place in the United States in conjunction with the G8 protests in Scotland⁸. The most impressive of these occurred in San Francisco, organized by the forum Anarchist Action.

Anarchist Action cleverly built up momentum for this solidarity march by organizing two events in advance. The first of these, held in the wealthy town of Palo Alto, was a Reclaim the Streets that touched off a full night of traffic disruption, property destruction, and lawless revelry; by the end of it, five different police

departments had been called in to quell the chaos, and formerly apolitical local youth were proudly identifying themselves as anarchists. The second action attracted hundreds of participants, a massive mobilization of police anxious to prevent another disturbance of the peace, and a great deal of media coverage. In defiance of the usual stereotypes, several families were involved, and a local peace and justice group backed the event. Despite the heavy police presence, the participants still took the streets and marched, showing their indomitable strength and morale.

Thanks to these two teasers, a great deal of attention was focused on Anarchist Action, and expectations were raised for the upcoming G8 solidarity protest. These actions put an end to the dearth of public direct action in the San Francisco area, signaling the return of the great black-masked menace. People were ready to believe that militant street protest was not dead in this country, that even in the belly of the beast anarchists could inflict one hell of an ulcer.

The march was the closing event of a three day mobilization that included film showings, workshops, discussions, and presentations from a wide range of community groups and anarchist campaigns. The participants were diverse in age, gender, and ethnic background; likewise, in the spokescouncil before the march, it was agreed that the march should be a space in which a diversity of tactics could be applied. A convergence space served as a staging area, and multilingual pamphlets detailing the anarchist case against the G8 and capitalism were hastily assembled in the last minutes before the march departed.

About three hundred people showed up to join in the march, an impressive number considering that it was not associated with a larger mobilization and was expected to be rowdy. Elegant banners and flags flew in abundance. Pamphleteers made sure the motivations of the protesters were clear to everyone in the area, stopping to discuss the connections between the G8 and local issues and to explain why some protesters choose to wear masks; a sound system blasting Dead Prez and other music of revolt heightened the energy. Indymedia radio maintained live coverage throughout the event, offering an uncompromisingly militant perspective.



From the outset, police attempted to contain and then violently disperse the march, but the protesters managed to evade their control. At this juncture, newspaper boxes were pulled into the streets and quite a bit of corporate property was destroyed: three banks, a corporate shoe store, a Kentucky Fried Chicken outlet, a Chevron station, a realty agency involved in local gentrification, the offices of a controversial environmentally destructive power corporation, and several billboards were all singled out for beautification. When police began ramming their cars into the demonstrators, some protesters threw a banner made from a styrofoam block into their path; the styrofoam got caught beneath the tires of a police car, stopping it in its tracks and then bursting into flame. When officers exited the car and attacked the crowd, one of them was struck in the head in self-defence, and lay on the ground bleeding profusely until he was taken to the hospital⁹. Eventually, the march divided up into smaller groups and then dispersed, leaving the inhabitants of the Bay Area with a lot to discuss over the following weeks.

The actions organized by Dissent! in Scotland and the San Francisco G8 solidarity march are significant for being explicitly anarchist mobilizations. Like the FTAA protests in Quebec in April of 2001, these events show that anarchists can set our own game plan and organize our own infrastructures, finances, publicity, and action plans independently of bureaucratic, authoritarian groups. Massive mobilizations such as these give the anarchist movement a public face; they are an integral part of the feedback loop between high-visibility acts of resistance and ongoing community projects. Maybe they could be organized in a less reactive manner—can we come together around something besides a summit, for once?—but we can hardly do without them, at least not until we develop another effective, infectious model for participatory, confrontational action.

Footnotes

1 : By adopting the minimalistic points of unity put forward by People's Global Action, Dissent! hoped to appeal to as diverse a range of revolutionaries as possible, while retaining anticapitalism and anti-authoritarianism as their hallmarks. In doing so, they aimed to enable anarchists to be a force of their own in the mobilization, instead of playing second fiddle to reformist or authoritarian groups like Make Poverty History or G8 Alternatives. Dissent! also hoped to use the G8 mobilisation to create enough momentum to maintain a permanent UK anti-capitalist network to remain after the protests, and invested much of their energies in establishing long-term anarchist "social centers" in every major city in the UK. So far, half a year after the G8, this strategy appears to be working.

2 : The Dissent! media policy succeeded in preventing the rise of media spokespeople—but, in the words of one frustrated activist, "When no one speaks to the media, the police just end up speaking for us!" When one of our goals is to reach and involve a lot of people, we must either establish our own means of reaching them, or else find ways to use the media to our own ends. Mass mobilizations offer an opportunity for anarchist alternatives to seize the popular imagination; we can't afford to be outdone by reformists, or to underdo things ourselves.

3 : See last issue's feature article, "Demonstrating Resistance."

4 : From one resident's description of the Eco-village: "At the entrance, the red and black flag of social anarchism flew high beside the rebel skull and crossbones of piracy. Inside

was a vast network of camps, organized according to the origin of the inhabitants (e.g., the Irish "barrio") or the tactical focus of a cluster of affinity groups (e.g., the Clandestine Insurrectionary Rebel Clown Army). The central corridor was lined with various activist support tents including eight different kitchens, an independent media center, a trauma support station, spaces for action trainings, medical services, and a couple of huge tents hosting the periodic spokescouncil meetings. Beyond this central corridor was a colorful sea of hundreds of personal tents, many of these also flying red and black flags.

5 : In the evening, others in the camp went to a meeting with local activists. The people they met were community workers who all lived locally and would have been broadly against G8 activity. They expected hostility, but didn't find it. It was decided that the residents of Stirling would be invited to dinner in the camp on Friday, and that some from the camp would join the community organizers at their weekly stall downtown.

Those present from the camp wanted to find out if they could donate money to people who had had the windows of their homes broken. The residents said that besides newspaper reports, they hadn't met anybody who knew anyone to whom this had actually happened. Out of everyone involved in the black bloc action, it hasn't been possible to find anyone who saw damage done to private houses. One participant said that he saw an unmarked police car being trashed, and it is possible that this car is being presented within the press as one owned by local inhabitants.

6 : Not to mention their obsession with certain well-known UK anarchists—they went to such lengths to target one group from London, for example, that it seems they must assume that

the anarchist movement, like the police force itself, is directed from the nation's capital.

7 : This model can also be traced back to the protests that shut down the WTO meetings in Seattle; spread out over miles and miles of rural countryside, however, it takes on a different character, offering new advantages. There was talk of using this model for the G8 protests in Calgary in 2002, but this never materialized; it also might have worked at the G8 meetings in Georgia in 2004, if protesters hadn't been so cowed by the state's show of force that their imaginations failed them. Future applications of this tactic would benefit from a better decentralized communications structure than was used in Scotland; it might also be important for groups to be prepared to stay out in the woods for one or more days. The blockades in Scotland only failed to shut down the G8 meetings entirely because of shortcomings in the communications structure and the fact that most anarchists were only prepared to blockade for a few hours, instead of all day.

8 : The solidarity rally held in the Midwest is briefly described elsewhere in this issue (in "Report from the Shop-floor: How Unions Lost Their Teeth"), as is the rally held in Richmond, Virginia (in "Anarchy in the Coalfields: Resisting Mountaintop Removal").

9 : Research into this particular officer's time on the force revealed a checkered past including suspensions and shooting incidents; it could be argued that whoever hit him not only protected the protesters he was attacking, but also the others he might have assaulted that week.



Did you say Mountaintop Removal? That's Crazy!

Anarchy in the Coalfields: Resisting Mountaintop Removal

by The Redneck Anarchist Front

I'm from North Carolina. It's my home. When someone says North Carolina, my brain hears "Cakalaki!" My ears perk up, and I might just be caught screaming "Sweet Tea Jihaaaaad!" I love the mountains of Western North Carolina. So when I heard about "mountaintop removal," I freaked out. After getting involved with the Katúah Earth First! roadkill faction of Asheville, NC, I went up to a rally in Appalachia, VA, where an entire community was mourning the death of a toddler killed in a tragic mining accident. Jeremy Davidson, at age 3, was crushed by a boulder, which flew through his trailer wall after falling from a mountaintop removal mine owned by A&G mining company. The company called it an "Act of God." Furious locals were standing up to give impromptu speeches about the genocide and "forced depopulation" facing Appalachian people because of "profit-hungry outlaw coal companies." They clapped politely when the local Democrat spoke, but cheered when an Earth First!er spoke about an Appalachian uprising. I remember seventy-year-old grannies vowing to lie down in front of bulldozers to stop the mines that were destroying their drinking water, their forests, the foundations of their homes, and their local economies. A day later, as a parting gesture, Katúah Earth First! locked down the doors and gates to A&G's facilities, vowing to return with a vengeance.

For those who are unfamiliar with it, mountaintop removal (MTR) is exactly what it sounds like: coal companies literally use thousands of pounds of explosives to blow off mountaintops in order to reach the thin seams of valuable low-sulfur coal below. And where do the mountaintops—or "overburden," as the coal companies describe them—go afterward? Down into the valleys, of course, as "valleyfills." Over 1200 miles of streams have been permanently blocked in this way in West Virginia alone, and to contain the industrial byproducts of mountaintop removal, coal companies create billion-gallon slurry ponds full of black goopy, toxic waste. However, these ponds fail consistently, filling remaining streams with black heavy-metal-filled sludge for miles. Also, MTR replaces union jobs with dynamite and machines. So, despite the coal industry exponentially increasing its profits in the last twenty years, West Virginia now only has ten percent of the mining jobs it did a generation ago. The blasting of explosives also ruins the foundations of locals' homes, which, along with

air, water, and noise pollution, lowers their home values drastically. If they choose to leave the area then, they will leave it even poorer than they were before. Mountaintop removal combines unparalleled ecological devastation with a brutally blunt form of economic colonialism that results in "Third World" living conditions cleverly hidden in the Southern Appalachian United States.

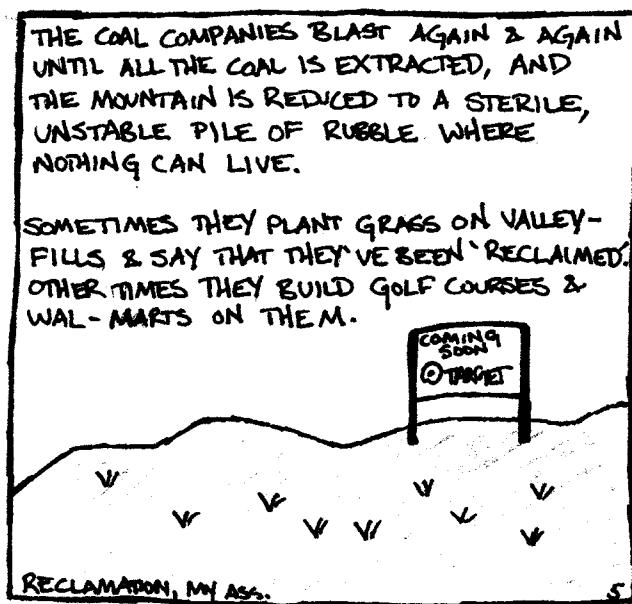
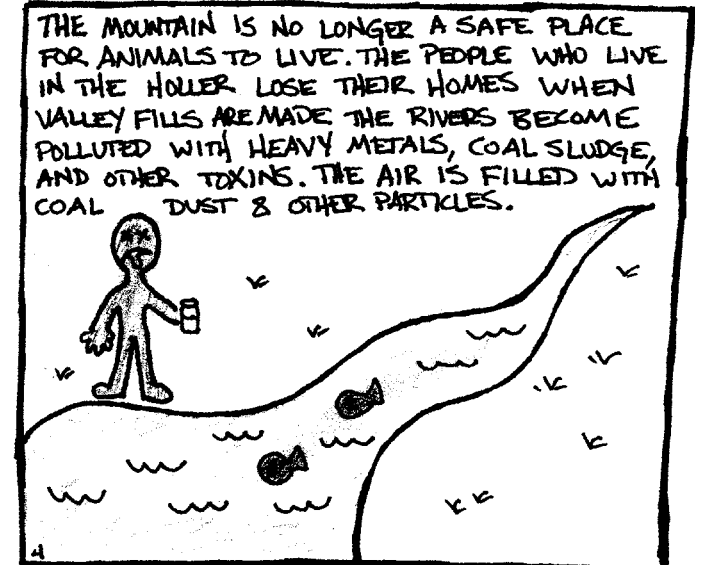
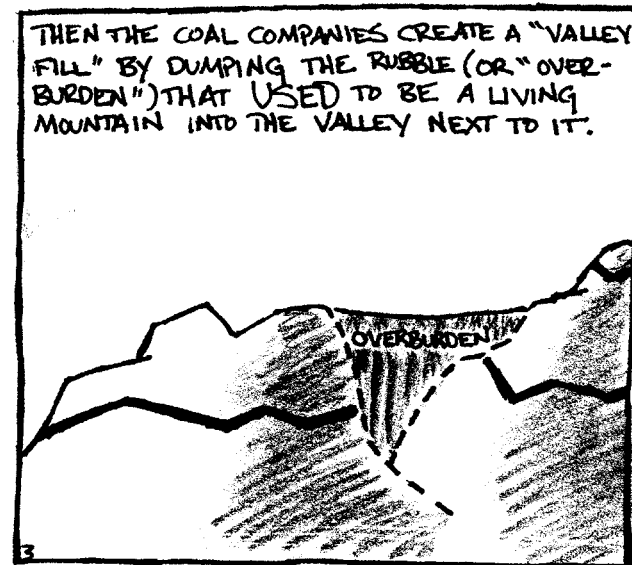
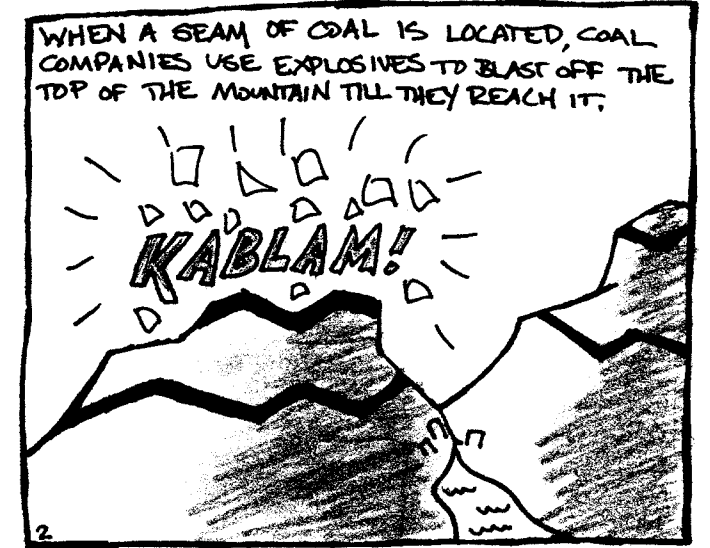
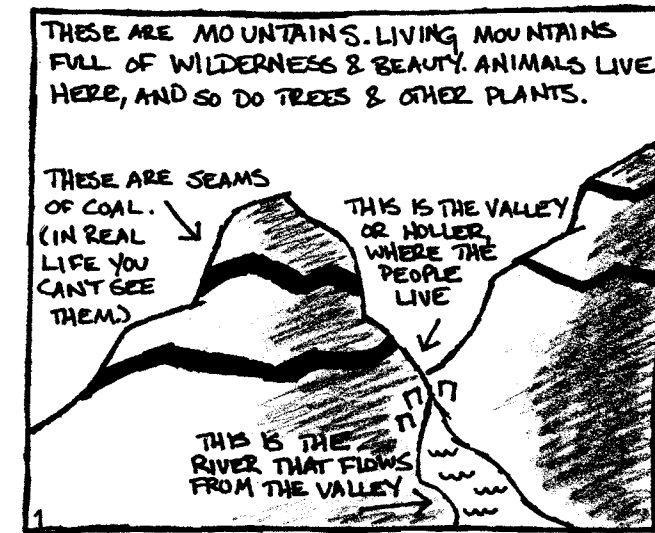
In the months after the rally, different groups discussed the possibility of a summer-long, region-wide campaign that would bring activists together from all over the country to draw attention to and stop this destruction. Miraculously, a diverse coalition of grassroots liberal groups, West Virginian radicals, and Earth First! groups managed to consensually develop and organize this campaign, eventually called Mountain Justice Summer, which used media, protests, community organizing, and direct action to call national attention to the issue of mountaintop removal, an issue which few if any Americans were even aware of. By summer, we had issued calls to action all over the country, done teach-ins across the East Coast, spoken on over a dozen radio shows, and gotten word from hundreds of activists that would be coming for the summer to Appalachia to help defend our mountains. We were ready.

The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly

Through occasional civil disobedience, constant protests at regulatory agencies, weekly news stories, and activist networking throughout the country, we made mountaintop removal more of a national issue.¹ While more of this activity took place in cramped office spaces than street riots and blockades, its importance shouldn't be underestimated. To a certain extent, for much direct action to be successful, a degree of awareness is necessary so that the general public will know why you are disrupting traffic, walking off the job, blocking a logging road, or smashing a corporate store. The broader public has known some of the context for most of the actions in which anarchists have participated over the past decade: they know that we are at war, they know about deforestation, they understand that we live in a capitalist society. But most people *don't* know about

¹ That is to say, we achieved national media coverage.

THIS IS HOW MOUNTAIN TOP REMOVAL MINING WORKS



mountaintop removal, so a crucial although not so glamorous job for our campaign was to create a social context in which more militant direct action could later occur.

In order to act effectively in a context so far from many of our homes, it was also necessary to make connections with the locals. To gauge people's attitudes towards mountaintop removal, direct action, and our campaign, we performed dozens of listening projects. In mining communities throughout West Virginia, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Virginia, we went door to door asking residents how they felt about MTR. These projects were minimally effective in reducing the "outsider" status of out-of-town activist kids, but they were more helpful in establishing a basis from which we could get started. Many local folks told us about places to scout, and some greeted us with open arms, allowing us to camp on their land. Retired union militants were especially helpful, despite United Mine Workers' endorsement of MTR.²

Unfortunately, the community organizing so far has failed to spark a more locally rooted uprising against mountaintop removal; it hasn't even enabled activists to find many new allies within the coalfields. Developing deep relationships of trust and mutual struggle takes years, not months. In fact, in some places, especially in a couple of areas of West Virginia, we encountered a lot of resistance because people were afraid that our campaign could cost them their jobs. Paradoxically, many locals hate the mining companies but also are intensely afraid of their disappearance. Until local workers and families establish other means of survival, we can expect mountaintop removal to continue in the areas of West Virginia where King Coal has the strongest monopoly on local economies.

The most successful part of the campaign was probably the connections that were built between Appalachian locals who were already active and radicals from other communities. Our solidarity protest against the G8, in Richmond, Virginia, is a perfect example. This protest used lockdowns, reinforced banners, a raucous march, and general harassment to shut down the offices of Massey Coal; it was organized almost entirely by anarchists from Mountain Justice Summer. Hundreds of people from West Virginia, Virginia, and Kentucky attended, as well as a small black bloc from D.C. After Massey's workday had been cancelled, locals from mining communities in West Virginia led the celebratory march home behind a gigantic banner that read, "Industrial Capitalism is killing our land and people." I still remember Judy Bonds of Coal River Mountain Watch smiling at several young anarchist crust punks and remarking, "You kids are the future of our struggle."

Not only do members of Coal River Mountain Watch want to start the very first Earth First! group in West Virginia, this same group is now enthusiastically beginning to organize, with the help of anarchists from across the East Coast, a massive anti-mountaintop removal, anti-capitalist demonstration in Washington D.C. on May Day 2006. Keep your ears to the ground.

On the flip side of the same coin, anarchists and other radicals have fallen so deeply in love with the mountaintains and culture of Appalachia that many from as far away as California and Arizona are remaining in Tennessee and West Virginia to continue fomenting resistance in the coalfields. Many of these people will be organizing for both the May Day D.C. demo and autonomous actions against companies who are invested in mountaintop removal.³

2 UMW supports MTR when it is done by union workers (see "How Unions Lost Their Teeth," in the *Testimonials* section of this magazine).

3 A campaign against American Express, which was a big investor in coal, had been proposed. However, the company has since pulled out their investments.

Where Do We Go From Here?

In organizing a massive region-wide campaign with liberals, pacifists, and rural folks who had never before engaged in any kind of activist endeavor, the anarchists involved were doing something with little contemporary precedent in this part of the United States. The fact that this was so new for many of us makes it all the more important to evaluate our experiences critically.

In attempting to use national media to draw attention to this issue, Mountain Justice Summer was unconsciously using a civil rights model with roots in the South of the 1950's, when dramatic civil disobedience and accompanying violent repression inspired national outrage thanks to extremely sympathetic media attention. Mountaintop removal, not to mention the abuses inflicted by poverty-inducing, profit hungry coal companies, can be framed as an egregious civil rights violation, but the media attention we received was hardly capable of creating national outrage. In retrospect, Mountain Justice Summer's dependence on this model of struggle was hopelessly ineffective, in part because the connections between the corporate media and other powerful corporations have increased so much over the past four decades.

More militant direct actions, in place of the weak-kneed media pandering that occurred throughout the campaign, would have been more effective at drawing national attention to the crisis of mountaintop removal. While these would undoubtedly have received negative media attention, a quick look at earlier militant labor resistance in the very coalfields in question, as well as the increased energy and involvement in the anti-globalization movement after the street riots and property destruction of Seattle, shows that there is still no such thing as bad publicity. Additionally, more direct action would have had the effect of directly hurting the profits of companies like Massey and National Coal—which is the only thing they really care about anyway, right?

This sentiment was brewing towards the end of the summer, when a large crew of Mountain Justice Summer participants attempted to blockade and occupy an entire mountaintop removal mine site owned by National Coal Company. This was the largest attempted direct action in recent Tennessee history; it involved treesits, lockdowns to equipment, a huge communications network operating over a three mile radius, a massive blockade with logs, a locked gate, a junker car with people locked to it, and a thirty-foot tripod with someone suspended at the top, all taking place in the woods on a piece of land where explosives were being used on a daily basis. Unfortunately, the treesits were unsuccessful, and workers and police employing considerable violence were eventually able to break the blockade. Still, the action received a fair amount of media attention and cost National Coal Company thousands upon thousands of dollars, and those involved acquired priceless skills and scouting expertise to continue taking action in that area.

This was not the only such action in the campaign. A National Coal shareholder meeting was disrupted in early June by forty-five angry protesters, their CEO had to endure demonstrations at his house, and a week of electronic harassment nearly shut down their offices. This kind of direct action applies psychological pressure as well as inflicting economic damage. A strategy incorporating these will prove far more effective than the well-behaved civil rights protester model in the future, as we continue to organize in our home communities. Mountaintop removal is first and foremost an *economic* matter. It needs neither public support nor the moral high ground to continue—it simply has to remain profitable. Fortunately, there are opportunities to take action outside of the coalfields in every major urban area in the country: there are National Coal investors in Chicago, New York State, Colorado, and California, the aforementioned Massey Coal offices in Richmond, and National Coal Offices in Knoxville, Tennessee—not

to mention every power plant *in the country* that burns mountaintop-removed coal⁴.

One important question remains for Mountain Justice Summer participants and non-participants alike: how did a campaign largely organized by radicals and militant anarchists so often get sucked into such a cautious mode of activity? To be sure, a lot of direct action has begun to happen around this issue, but there were so many times when people's ideas for militant banners, actions, and protests were suppressed by a vague concern regarding "what the locals might think." This is bizarre, considering that the rural coalfields and mining towns of Appalachia have such a rich history of independent-minded militant resistance. Liberals would talk about how "the locals" don't like the violent connotations of such and such, and hours later my friends and I would be out shooting rifles and 9 mms with locals, aiming at targets imprinted with Massey Coal's insignia.

To be fair, we were all guilty of this overly cautious attitude, liberals and radicals alike. Part of the reason for this is the violent repression organizers have faced in this area. One local we were working with has had his cabin burned down, one of his dogs shot and another hanged, his house shot up and robbed repeatedly, and his car flipped over—while he was inside—by angry miners. The local police are complicit, of course.

So, considering we still had very little local support in some regions, we had to gauge very cautiously what could and could not be done. This makes it all the more necessary for people outside the coalfields to take creative direct action to draw attention to this issue. The media has been quick to use the stereotype of the dumb hillbilly redneck to numb the public into acceptance of mountaintop removal, just as they have used the racism and sexism of the region to make progressives and radicals distance themselves from the coalfields. To take action against King Coal is thus also to take a stand against this bashing of Southern Appalachian culture, to break down the isolation this colony has been forced

into, and to fight against all forms of racist, sexist, and economic oppression in the area.

Major environmental organizations like the Sierra Club are still deeply distrusted by locals on account of having sold out the 1970s anti-strip mine movement, and there is a general frustration and hatred of politicians in most Appalachian communities. For these and other reasons, as this struggle continues, anarchists will play a key role. We need militants to be upping the ante of the struggle. Railroad lines carrying mountaintop-removed coal can be blocked or torn up, power plants can be blockaded, shareholders can be harassed, coal investors' offices can be made inoperable—the opportunities are endless. The SHAC campaign, which is now about to succeed in shutting down a major vivisection corporation, provides an instructive example of how the support systems of a despicable company can be eroded by means of direct action, thus destabilizing an entire industry. Eco-devastating energy production is a pressure point in the body of industrial capitalism; ending mountaintop removal coal mining will be a strategic stab in the heart.

So give 'em hell! Research their investors and shareholders, who buys their coal, where their offices are, where their executives live. Get creative!

Massey Coal
 Katherine.kenny@masseyenergyco.com
 804-788-1800
 www.masseyenergyco.com

National Coal Corporation 865/690-6900 (main office) 865/691-9982 (main fax) www.nationalcoal.com	Peabody Coal 314-342-3400 pr@peabodyenergy.com
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4 Where does your electricity come from? Find out!



“So concerned were the French about abortion and infanticide that in 1556 the Parliament passed an extraordinary verdict: every expectant mother must register her pregnancy and have a witness to the birth. If she did not, and the infant died, she was liable for the death sentence on a murder charge. This unprecedented intrusion by the state into the act of childbirth made infanticide into a crimen exceptum, “the crime so dangerous to the civil community that the very accusation acted to suspend traditional procedural protection to the defendant, and opened the way for the most ruthless and thorough kind of prosecution, undertaken to protect the State from its most dangerous enemies.”

*-from Witchcraze: A New History of the European Witch Hunts,
by Anne Llewellyn Barstow*

Jane

An underground abortion service in the days before abortion rights

The underground abortion service known as Jane operated in Chicago from 1968 until 1973, when abortion was legalized by the *Roe vs. Wade* decision. Though this group of women began with no technical medical knowledge of abortion procedures, they taught each other the skills no one else would teach them—and despite a police bust, they performed approximately 11,000 abortions in their five years.

The lessons we can draw from the Jane story are especially relevant now that abortion rights are again under attack. As the political climate continues to shift towards repression and the government pushes for more control over women’s bodies, we must rediscover how to take care of ourselves and create the choices that would otherwise be denied us. The battle over our bodies has not ceased since the 1970s; the women of Jane demonstrated how we can resist domination by relying on ourselves.

Thus the story of Jane is inspiring not only as a victory in the war over women’s bodies, but also as an example of people collectively taking resources in their own hands and taking control over their lives. The women of Jane were not just pushing for reforms, hoping that what they did would make a difference in the future. They were creating concrete ways to achieve what they needed in the present, on their own terms and for their own communities.

From accounts reprinted in the zine *Jane: Documents from Chicago’s Clandestine Abortion Service, 1968-1973*

Jane began as a referral service, but dealing with male abortionists was a very frustrating experience. There were blindfolds, high prices, secret motel rooms, and the nagging feeling that women

needed to be in control over the process. Finally, the service settled on one abortionist who seemed more flexible than the rest. Known as “Mike,” he claimed to be a physician. Although no one questioned his technical experience as an abortionist, it was eventually learned that Mike really wasn’t a doctor.

While working for Jane, Mike taught people his abortion techniques. As people learned what he knew, the blindfolds began coming off and the prices dropped. The people he trained trained others, so that after his departure Jane became an all-women service.

Jane’s medical techniques were very good, but Jane volunteers always felt that technical knowledge wasn’t enough. The women seeking the abortions ought to feel that they were part of the process. Although the modern term “empowerment” has become something of a threadbare politician’s cliché, Jane volunteers took the idea seriously.

Counselors and intake personnel learned to listen to Jane’s clients carefully, as what was not said was often as important as what was said. Women were encouraged to talk about themselves and their lives. People talked about women’s liberation, about how women were expected to be sexy and desirable but then were punished for becoming pregnant. Women were encouraged to talk about their personal experiences with children, pregnancy, and abortion. Jane volunteers wanted to demystify the abortion experience so people could make informed decisions about what to do.

Decision-making within Jane could be difficult. Conditions were stressful because of the life-and-death nature of the work they were doing, the necessity of secrecy, and the knowledge that so many desperate women depended on them. People had a tendency to suppress open disagreement to keep the group united

On the phone she said, I have a friend who’s got a problem, but she couldn’t get to a phone so I’m calling for her. Do you know what I mean? Is this the right place?

When she lay down, she said, Are you a doctor?

Then she said, Aren’t you afraid you’ll get caught?

When we were putting in the speculum, she said, Oh, I had breakfast before I came. I know I wasn’t supposed to but I was so hungry I just ate everything in sight, is that OK?

Later she said, I think I have to throw up.

Or, I have to go to the bathroom right now. Stop, I just have to go to the bathroom, and then I’ll come right back.

Or, on a different day, I don’t feel so good, should I do it anyway?

When we told her she should pay whatever she could afford, she was quiet a minute and then said, I think I can get nine dollars.

She looked at the clear plastic sheet on the mattress, the speculum and the syringe. Then she laughed and said, You ladies somethin, doin this up in here; you somethin, all right.

Why do you do this? She looked around the small bedroom and said, You’re not rich. With what you charge, you can’t be doing this for the money. What’s it all about? Are you a bunch of women’s libbers? Is that it?

Sometimes she said, Can I see it before you throw it away?

But another time she said, I don’t want to look at it, OK? When it comes out, I’ll just close my eyes, and you take it away, OK?

Once she said, What do you do with it all at the end of the day? Boy, you people are gonna get in trouble sometime, this’s against the law.

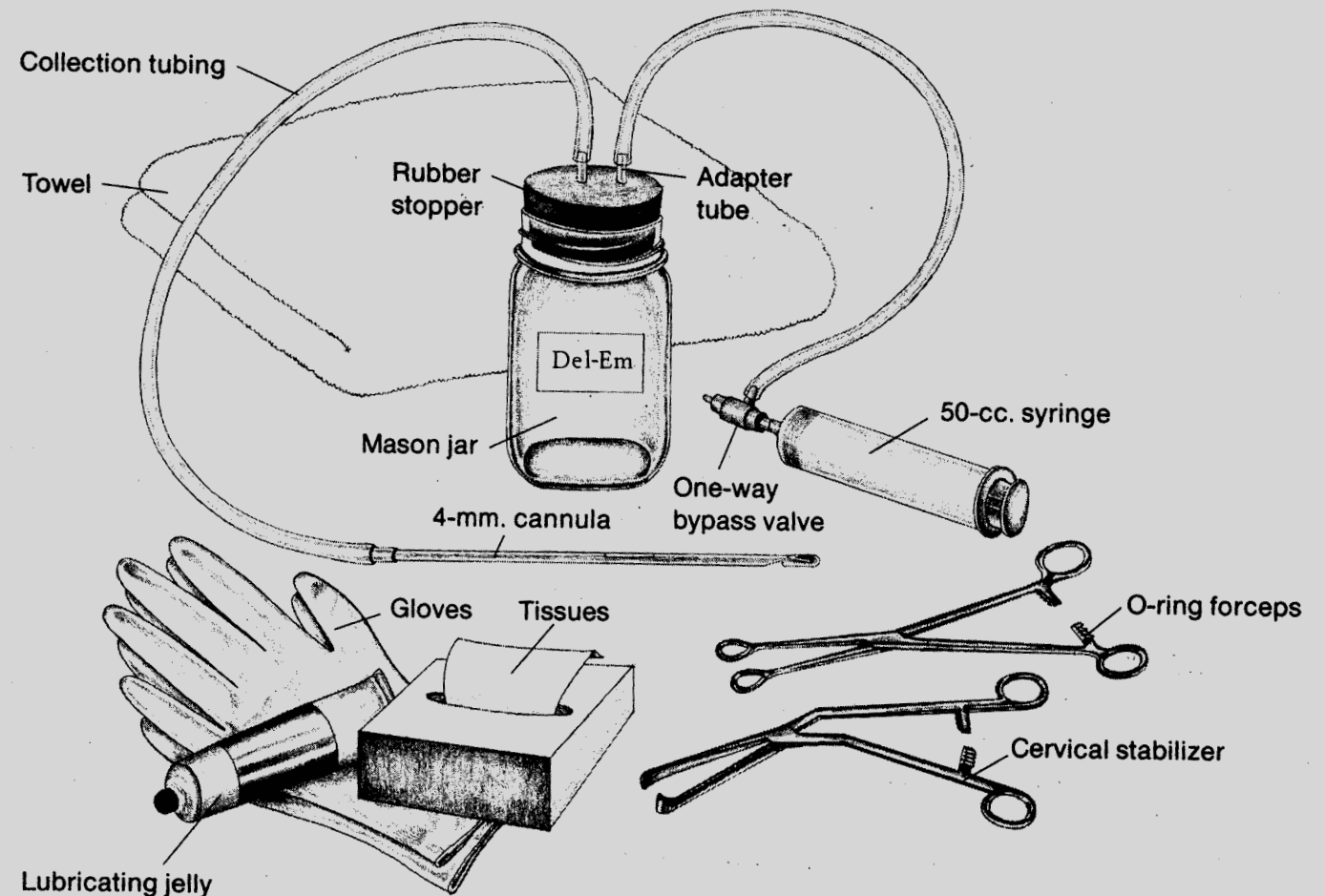
She stood on the back steps outside the counselor’s apartment and said, This is mi prima, my cousin, from Mexico. Can you talk Spanish to her? Habla un poco? Un poquito? Si, gringa! We’ll do this.

Every now and then, she said, How come you let us bring our boyfriends over to your house to wait? Aren’t you afraid they’ll tell? And jeez, who are all these little kids? What’re you guys doing, running a kindergarten on the side? Are those doughnuts for us?

My father brought me here today. He’s paying for this but he’s really mad at me for it. She took a hundred dollar bill out of her pocket and said, He thinks if everybody got liberated, like with civil rights, that there’d be a lot of trouble, and he says I prove his point, because look what happens when you just do what you want.

When the sister-in-law was asked why she called the police, she said, It’s a sin, she can’t do this. She has to have it, we all have to. Jesus doesn’t want her to get rid of this baby, that’s why I did it.

He doesn’t like me to talk to my mother. Him and his mother, they don’t let me go home to visit. She put the tiny baby in her mother’s arms and said, We sneaked to come for this appointment. He doesn’t know I’m pregnant again. My baby is so new, I can’t have another one right away. He wouldn’t even want it really, he thinks this one makes too much noise. He doesn’t like me to do anything without his permission.



and task oriented. Naturally, this created its own problems; but when seven Jane members were unexpectedly arrested and the existence of the group was threatened, people continued performing abortions, even as disagreements about strategy intensified.

The Abortion 7 Bust—as Jeanne remembers it

I was at the Front, which was an apartment in Hyde Park [that served as a reception area where clients were picked up and taken to one of the apartments being used to perform the abortions]. Ruth had been over, dropping off food or something, and there were a bunch of people there, and I had been talking to them. It turns out that I had had a long, very sincere talk with the woman who had turned us in, which really pissed me off later. I didn't know, I mean of course I didn't know. But she was having ambivalent feelings about it, so I was really very helpful. Later I wanted to kill her, I was so pissed off.

I opened the door and there were the tallest men I had ever seen in my life, in these suits, and you knew immediately what this was. I don't know if I said anything or if they said anything. I think they announced they were the police, and I turned around and walked in front of them and said, "These are the police. You don't have to tell them anything." And they were really irritated. That was how they decided to arrest me, because I'd opened the door, and you know, it was perfectly obvious to me—I'm a control freak, you know, and I think I took charge the way people do.

They were really tall! My theory is that you had to be really tall to be a homicide cop. These were homicide cops, because abortion was a homicide. And they were homicide cops who hated being there. By and large what they do is track down people who kill other people. And they think of themselves as good guys and they hated being there. This was not their kind of crime. So they were very ambivalent about it. They were very funny. So we were taken, I was taken, the whole group of us were taken down to the station. I wasn't handcuffed, I don't think. I was treated very nicely, except that I was in a state of perfect terror.

They took everybody. We were dealing with a very poor population, so if a woman was on her second pregnancy and she had a two-year-old, she had nobody to leave that two-year-old with. We would beg people, if you're gonna bring your two-year-old, bring your sister to watch the two-year-old. But we had children running around, aunts, cousins, uncles, friends, a random bunch of people.

There were men at the Front, and they took them too. I don't think there were a lot of men, but there were a couple. You know, I think they were teenagers, very young men. And they tried to sort us all out, and then they interviewed each of us. They asked us questions, and we said—you know we were really middle class savvy people—and we all said, "I don't have to answer that." And basically, at the end of the day I think that they picked who they arrested on the basis of the ones who said, "I don't have to answer that." You know, because everybody else was talking.

When we hired Joanne, the attorney who defended us, and she got the paperwork, she said, "You're the best clients I ever had, people talk to the police all the time and you guys didn't, I love you." We knew we didn't have to talk to the police and we didn't.

They asked us, "How much do you charge?" We said, "Well how much do they say we charged?" And they would go crazy because they'd ask the women, "Well what did you pay?" And somebody'd say twenty bucks and somebody'd say one hundred

bucks, and it didn't make any sense at all. There was usually this huge wad of cash in illegal abortion busts. When we got busted, there was a wad of cash, but it was all singles, and these women were saying, "Oh, I paid ten dollars."

We were very self-aware I think, and there were all kinds of class and race things going on with the police. They felt more like us than like the women they were supposedly protecting from us, and they kinda wanted that relationship. So that was bizarre, just bizarre.

Martha was in the middle of her period, and she needed a tampon, she'd been asking everybody and was getting nowhere, and a woman policeman walked by and Martha just spontaneously jumped out and called to her. Perps can't act like that. It was really scary because it made us realize, you know, who were the arrested. What was a really natural act for her, was really inappropriate in that situation. It was very scary.

We were questioned at whatever the hell it is, the local. And then we were put in paddy wagons. It was all women and of course everybody else who was arrested was a hooker, because that's all they arrested women for then. And one woman was just giving hilarious stories, regaling us with stories of the street. It was really quite funny. And then we were in the women's lockup.

Once we were together as a group I wasn't scared again. But it was very unpleasant, a very unpleasant experience. You just don't have choices. It's very strange; it's just not the way life is. Very unpleasant. In the morning, they gave us bologna sandwiches, which I couldn't eat, and coffee. It was awful, but that was breakfast at Cook County Jail. Then we were called in front of the judge, who was very nasty, but who let us out on bail to the arms of our waiting whatevers.

Members of Jane soon figured out the arrests were not part of an overall plan to shut down the Abortion Counseling Service, but rather the actions of an individual police commander. Ironically, some of Jane's clients came from police families, and the overall attitude of the usually repressive and controlling Mayor Richard J. Daley city administration was to ignore Jane's activities.

Not long after the *Roe vs. Wade* decision legalized abortion in January of 1973, the case against the "Abortion 7" was quietly dropped. Some Jane members wanted to go on, believing that legalization did not address the issues of cost and the quality of care. Others were burned out, or feared that because abortion was now legally profitable, the medical establishment would have them prosecuted for practicing medicine without a license. Jane finally closed its doors in spring of 1973.

For copies of the zine *Jane*, contact Firestarter Press, P.O. Box 50217, Baltimore MD 21211, USA (firestarterpress@ziplip.com), or for further background, consult Laura Kaplan's *The Story of Jane: The Legendary Underground Feminist Abortion Service*. To find more general information about understanding women's bodies and taking control of your own reproductive health, check out books like *Witches, Midwives and Nurses* by Barbara Ehrenreich and *Taking Charge of Your Fertility* by Toni Weschler. Also highly recommended are: *A New View of a Woman's Body* by Federation of Feminist Women's Health Center and *A Woman's Book of Choices* by Rebecca Chalker and Carol Downer—both of which have sections that focus on learning to perform menstrual extractions, the procedure used at some Planned Parenthood branches for abortion in the first trimester.



Phoolan Devi Bandit Queen

This is the badass story of an incredible woman who defied all customs and conventions to do what no one else would: stand up for herself. In doing so, Phoolan Devi found justice for herself and fought for the dignity of countless others. Her story is one of intense hardship, shattering heartbreak, imprisonment, and guerilla-style caste war.

Phoolan was born into the poor mallah caste in India at a time when the caste system was rigidly enforced; the caste a person was born into dictated whom she could marry, what kind of work she could do, and almost every other aspect of her life according to a whole host of laws and customs. According to Phoolan's father, mallahs were born to be poor, to work, and to be obedient to

those of higher castes. Phoolan and her sisters did work—to sustain the house, to make money with their father, and to perform chores for those of the thakur caste¹ in the village. Even as a child, Phoolan constantly questioned why they had to work for the rich; but if they were not obedient—and often even when they were—they were insulted and beaten by those they worked for.

Phoolan was beaten in the streets in front of her friends and neighbors by men from her village, but no one would intervene. It was custom, commonly acceptable, for someone with wealth or status to beat another with less. Wives and children, and women

¹ The thakur caste was a higher caste with more wealth and power. They owned land, employed those of lower castes, and controlled the local government.

generally, were seen as the property of men, and poor people as slaves of the rich. Husbands beat their wives, men with power and money beat women and men with less, and the police did nothing to intercede. It was the way things were, and nothing could be done; if Phoolan's neighbors had tried to stop a beating, they might have been beaten, too, being poor or female themselves.

From the beginning, however, Phoolan refused to be silent and accept her lot in life. At no more than nine years old, for example, when she saw her cousin leaving in the night with her family's neem tree, their one valuable possession which was to be sold for her dowry, she leapt at his moving cart and grabbed the rope harness that ran through the nose of one of the bulls, refusing to let go no matter how aggressively he whipped her from his seat.

Because it was culturally condoned (as it still is in some communities²) for men to beat and rape women, the only protection a poor woman could find was from those with more power from class or gender. Phoolan's mother was fierce—but she was only a woman, and her father was humble and weak. Neither of them could protect her from the terror of living as a poor woman. Consequently, at age eleven, Phoolan was married to a wealthier, much older man who lived in a distant village and was already married, in the hope that he would someday provide a less difficult life for her. However, as soon as they were married, instead of waiting until Phoolan had grown up as he had promised, her

new husband took the young girl away from her home to become his slave and concubine. Instead of protecting her, he was the first man to rape her. He consistently raped her, tortured her, and kept her tied up in a dark barn so that she could not run away or cry to the neighbors.

None of this was unusual in India. What was unusual was how fiercely Phoolan refused to submit. She resisted, fighting and screaming at every advance her husband made. She fought him relentlessly—and eventually, tired of her resistance, he sent her home. When she returned home, she was scorned by her village and seen as an unpure woman. Being once again without a man's protection, she suffered further insults and attacks. But Phoolan did the only thing she could. Living with her family, she worked to earn them money, and she continued to stand up for herself. She began to learn that the power of money and status was really just a mask of fear. For instance, thakurs would often not pay mallahs for the work they did, but Phoolan would not leave a house without being paid for her work. Brandishing her sickle, she would threaten them, saying, "I'll burn down your house if you don't pay us fairly." And she would always get paid. The other girls, who had held her in contempt, began to like working with her; they knew that if they worked with Phoolan, they too would always get paid.

"As my strength returned, my confidence grew. I was no longer the submissive young girl who accepted whatever others decided... I had been through so much that I had nothing to fear from them. I couldn't be belted or whipped or hurt any more than I already had been."

The more confrontations with the ruling class she won, the more Phoolan was terrorized. Thakurs in Phoolan's village organized a campaign to silence her. One night, men broke into her home and raped her while forcing her family to watch. But Phoolan could not be stopped. She was not broken; on the contrary, she fought harder. Then she was falsely accused of stealing from her cousin³ and convicted, without a lawyer, in a court conducted in a language she did not understand, a language not spoken in her village. She spent a month in jail, every day a succession of savage beatings and rapes—the norm for imprisoned women in India—until her family could find the money to hire a lawyer and bail her out of jail. In this first experience with the Indian legal system, she learned that all of the traditions and laws supposedly in place to deliver justice were not intended to help women or poor people; if she wanted justice, she would have to obtain it herself.

She came back to her home a marked woman. She and her whole family were pariahs. They could not get work, and were forbidden to take water from the community well. Phoolan became so enraged at this that she marched to the Sarpanch's⁴ house, screaming that she had a rifle and she was going to kill him and everyone in his house.

"From that moment on, I began to breathe again. I walked through the village without shame. I went to the river to bathe whenever I wanted. I had no more fear. I told my parents their daughter was dead. The poor mallah girl destined to be everyone's slave and thank them for it, was dead."

The next time a thakur came to her house to rape her, she whipped him with a tree branch. *"I had changed. My whole being had been fired with rage and rebellion by the nerve of the thakurs, by*

3 Her cousin was wealthier, having stolen money from Phoolan's father's inheritance; because of his wealth, he acted as a part of the thakur class.

4 The wealthiest man in the village—and, incidentally, the local governmental authority.

their contempt for us." Her power had become obvious, simply because she had learned how to claim it. As a last resort, the leaders of her village had Phoolan kidnapped by a band of dacoits⁵—presumably to be killed. However, the gang leader immediately came to respect Phoolan, admiring her courage; they were married, and Phoolan became a part of the gang. Phoolan marveled at the fact that without laws and restrictions, these bandits behaved respectfully, whereas in the villages, with all their customs and duties, men so often acted like dogs. In this environment of camaraderie and common struggle, she thrived. In one of her first actions with the gang, she took revenge on her first husband, beating and publicly humiliating him in his village.

But Phoolan was not just an avenging rape victim; she acted consciously against a system that divided people by wealth and caste.

"Like the goddess⁶, I was driven by my hunger for justice, for revenge over demons. That was what gave me my strength. When the rich did bad things, our duty as dacoits was to make them pay."

Dacoits were the dropouts of society. They were seen as bandits because they kidnapped and robbed the wealthy; they looted and burned the homes of the rich for retribution and for power. They lived without homes of their own, constantly on the move, escaping the police who would imprison them. They often took from the wealthy and gave to those of the lower caste.

In Uttar Pradesh, the state in which Phoolan lived, there were many different dacoit gangs that sometimes worked together, but usually lived separately. All the gangs had their own ethical models, but Phoolan's gang specifically targeted wealthy and powerful thakurs who were stealing money from the poor or mistreating them. People came to the gang with their complaints because there was nowhere else to go for help, and there was never a shortage of reprehensible thakurs to attack.

As a dacoit, Phoolan learned to live in the jungle, eating wild foods and sleeping under the stars; she learned to use weapons and survive on her own. The gang obtained supplies in towns where they had family or friends, but otherwise they only went into a village to rob it.

Despite the freedom she found in refusing submission, in many ways Phoolan's life as a bandit was as vicious and heartbreaking as her young life before. Although she found affinity with the men with whom she worked and lived, there were vicious battles with other gangs of dacoits for power and money. Even within that outlaw world, she was constantly fighting for survival. In her autobiography, Phoolan captures better than anyone else could the intensity of the war she fought all her life, a war she was born into simply because she was poor and female. She explains how, by struggling all her life, she was a dacoit before she even became one.

As a well-known dacoit who fought ferociously on behalf of the poor—and as a woman, no less—Phoolan became infamous among

5 bandits

6 Phoolan was compared to goddess Durga, whom she took on as an emblem. Durga manifested to destroy the demon who could be killed by no god—who could be killed only by a woman. All of the gods offered their most powerful weapons, and of their energy, she was born. Durga is worshipped in Hinduism as a strong, giving warrior goddess.



thakurs and wanted by the authorities. She was hunted by the government starting early in her activity as a dacoit. After being the subject of a long police pursuit and an intensely negative media campaign, she finally surrendered along with her gang in 1983 in a public ceremony in which she set down her guns—her farewell to arms. After eleven years in prison, she was released on bail by the newly elected low-caste government. Although she was illiterate and had fifty-seven court cases of murder, robbery, and kidnapping still pending against her, Phoolan was elected to and held a seat in the Indian Parliament in 1996, before her assassination at the age of thirty-eight.

Quotes excerpted from Phoolan Devi's autobiography, Bandit Queen.



“It’s not enough to talk. Love is a battle.”

Squatting, Sabotage, and Counterculture in two European nations during the late 20th Century

From the 1960s into the 1990s, resistance movements in Holland and Denmark exchanged creative energy, tactics, and strategies. Not burdened with the task of responding to national militarism, activists in these two countries were able to develop a political culture that was more inventive than reactive and more focused on their daily lives than on events overseas; and as they were working in small, concentrated nations, their actions often had immediate nationwide effects.

Holland

“One of the interesting particularities of the Dutch squatting movement has always been that it is very practical, as opposed to overly theoretical and ideological.”

As corporate globalization homogenized Holland, its counter-culture likewise underwent a transition from a purely Dutch phenomenon featuring *provos*, *kabouters*, and *kraakers*¹ to a wing of the international movement often described as the Autonomes. Centered in northern Europe, this movement was characterized by a refusal to participate in the culture, economy, or politics of bourgeois democracy, the development of an alternative infrastructure rooted in a network of squatted social centers, and the use of direct action to secure resources and achieve goals. Social movements bearing these hallmarks still persist in Europe to this day, and in that sense, this is not history so much as background for an ongoing anarchist culture of resistance, which has exerted an important influence in North America as well.

1 Initially, there were two basic forms of squatting going on in Amsterdam. The first was the occupation of individual apartments, which were mostly owned by small homeowners in the so-called 19th century neighborhoods. These were mostly part of the “social housing distribution scheme” which didn’t function, so people squatted them and then often offered to pay rent to legalize their presence. The second kind of squatting, the one that offered the spectacle associated with the early ’80s, was the occupation of entire buildings by large groups of squatters, often for the purpose of living collectively. Especially in the centers of Amsterdam and other cities, those buildings had been bought up by investors and real estate corporations, often with foreign money, just for the sake of “speculation,” because the value of these properties increased with time. Often owners would leave the buildings to decay so that when they collapsed offices or high-income housing could be built in their place. There were hundreds of empty buildings in



In the early 1980s, the *kraakers* of Amsterdam fired the imaginations of young people all over Europe. Between 1968 and 1981, more than 10,000 houses and apartments were squatted in Amsterdam, and an additional 15,000 were taken over in the rest of Holland. Many of these squatters considered themselves part of a network of resistance. In squatted “People’s Kitchens,” bars, and cafés, *kraakers* and fellow travelers socialized over affordably priced food and drink. In occupied office buildings, neighborhood block committees set up information centers for new squatters, and catalogued complaints of police and landlord brutality. A *kraaker* council plotted the movement’s course, and *kraaker* radio kept people informed of new developments.

Amsterdam, and at the same time there were at least 50,000 people without proper housing in the city, and 400,000 nationally. This also explains the huge initial support for the squatting movement: almost everybody understood that people who didn’t have a proper place to stay had the right to occupy those buildings, since the only reason they were standing empty was some corporation trying to make an easy profit. Squatters did a good job of explaining this to the public, as well.

The squatting movement succeeded in stopping this kind of speculation by scaring away rich investors. They saw the risk of their buildings being occupied—and the loss of value of a building once it was squatted was huge! All this happened in about two years time. Also, the government hesitated in protecting this kind of speculation; the Dutch law was such that if a building owner couldn’t prove he was making use of a building, and people moved in, they had a right to stay there. They tried to change that law,



“The height of the squatting movement was the short period from 1979 to 1982. After that, a rapid shrinking started setting in, for many reasons. One being too much militancy (!): the emergence of a generation of street fighters who weren’t interested in building solid neighborhood relations. Another reason: new laws making squatting illegal. And another reason for the winding down of the movement: its success. After the big wave of squatting in the early 1980s, capitalist speculation¹ with empty buildings was more or less made impossible. This also meant that fewer and fewer empty buildings were available.

“Since that time, you can still see periodic waves of squatting activities in different parts of Holland. Every once in a while there is some new eruption, usually around evictions: for instance, the eviction of the *Kalenderpenden*² in Amsterdam in 2000 resulted in quite a street battle.”

Perhaps the most internationally publicized episode in *kraaker* history occurred on April 30, 1980 when riots marred Queen Beatrix’s coronation—a ceremony so lavish it cost 56 million Guilder (about \$25 million). “*Geen Woning, Geen Kroning*”—“No place to live, no coronation”—was the slogan for the demonstrations, but it was meant more as a mobilizing call than a physical threat to the ceremony. The majority of the *kraakers* had planned for a peaceful day of partying, although as on any other day they had planned to occupy a few more empty dwellings before beginning to party. When mounted police attacked some of the street parties, people fought back, unleashing a storm the police were unable to control. The police were so badly beaten that day that the following week the police commissioner complained that many of his men could not continue to fulfill their duties for psychological reasons.

In Amsterdam, a city with fewer than 800,000 inhabitants, more than 50,000 dwelling places were needed. When polled, a majority of the Dutch people repeatedly expressed sympathy for the squatters because of the dearth of reasonably priced places to live. Given the widespread sympathy enjoyed by squatters, local authorities attempted to divide the movement by proclaiming a few to be dangerous radicals who led astray thousands of “honest” squatters. Intense police attacks were mounted on the houses perceived as central leadership, but hastily assembled throngs of squatters barricaded the way to besieged houses in the Vondelstraat on March 3, 1980 and the Groote Keyser after the Queen’s coronation, protecting them from the police. In both cases, about one thousand people responded to their defense within the first half hour of the alarm being raised.

The *kraakers* were able to control the streets in the early 1980s, but their victories exacted a high cost: Dutch tolerance was replaced with a new edge of legal repression and violence. In response to *kraaker* self-defense, the Dutch Parliament reconsidered laws governing the vacant buildings. As previously liberal social security payments to students and young people were curtailed, the police were granted more money and more power, and new laws were passed to make it easier for landlords to evict squatters. Property owners had formerly needed the names of specific individuals in order to obtain authorization to call in the police, and because no self-respecting *kraaker* used her full name, it was all but impossible to evict them. The new laws waived the name requirement to obtain eviction papers and shortened the time for evictions to be sanctioned by the courts to less than a month⁴. Temporary rental contracts were also introduced, according to which landlords did not have to show grounds for annulling contracts. Although there continued to be new squats—in Amsterdam, a new squat was recorded every week⁵—public opinion eventually turned against the squatters.

The legal owners of squatted buildings organized groups of goons—“knokploegen,” in Dutch—to kick squatters out. These were often mercenaries from martial arts clubs or bouncers from bars and discos; organized crime was deeply involved in these do-it-yourself evictions. In 1982, the squat Lucky Luik was evicted by one such group of heavily armed hired goons. This eviction was applauded by the right wing press, especially the country’s biggest newspaper, *De Telegraaf*; immediately thereafter, a wave of similar

but did not really succeed, partly because of a strong lobbying campaign by church groups (!). Even now, with the laws drastically changed, it’s still practically legal to squat a building if the squatters can prove that the building has been empty for over a year. This is to say: the action of squatting is illegal, but once you are inside and you can prove the building has not been used in over a year, eviction is difficult to achieve in court. Of course, owners have invented all kinds of tricks to protect their properties, such as fake rent contracts, fake plans to remodel, and renting a huge building to one tenant. The effect nowadays is that most landlords are smart enough to not exceed the one year period without doing something with a building: they’ll send in a building crew to tear down a few walls, or draft a vague plan to remodel it, or at least be prepared to argue in court that they were busy trying to sell or rent the place.

2 <http://www.kalenderpenden.nl/ontruim.htm>

3 The *provos* were the famed countercultural pranksters of 1960s Holland, best known for their free bicycle program and for disrupting a royal wedding with smoke bombs and rioting, and somewhat less known for one participant’s extensive graffiti campaign against cigarettes. The *kabouters* were the political party that, tiresome to tell, followed in their footsteps. *Kraaker*, of course, is the Dutch word for squatter—so don’t get confused, dear reader, if you are traveling in Holland and someone offers you a place to stay at what sounds to you like a “crack house.” They’re simply proposing to take you back to their squat.

4 Compared to the United States and other European countries, of course, Dutch laws were still quite liberal in terms of squatters’ rights—as they remain, today.

5 In fact, as this magazine goes to press, there are still weekly squatting actions in Amsterdam.

Much of this article was adapted from George Katsiaticas's *The Subversion of Politics: European Autonomous Social Movements and the Decolonization of Everyday Life*, published in 1997 by Humanities Press International—a text we heartily recommend to anyone interested in the unsung history of recent European anarchist culture and resistance. The remainder of it, including many corrections to Katsiaticas's material, was provided by veterans of the Dutch and Danish squatting movements who were active during the era covered here and are still involved today.

evictions took place across Holland. In order to put an end to this, squatters resorted to extremely militant tactics: hundreds of helmeted, black-clad squatters, including crack slingshot teams, attacked and recaptured the Lucky Luik building. Although this caused dissonance in the squatting community—some feminists charged that the movement was being “militarized,” and indeed the group that carried out the action was disproportionately male—this action was successful in discouraging do-it-yourself evictions, which did not take place again for some years thereafter.

Half a year after the re-squatting, the city council decided to take the property rights to the Lucky Luik building away from the initial owner and allocate the space for social housing; but those squatting it were told to leave, since there was a system of waiting lists for this kind of housing. The squatters refused to do so, and were eventually evicted, though not without setting a streetcar on fire in the struggle. By this point, most of the public in Amsterdam no longer understood what they were fighting for. At the same time, schisms began to appear in the movement as some people questioned this form of militant self-defense.

There were some *kraakers* who were not interested in the radical transformation of society as much as individual solutions to their

housing needs. To them, fighting the police was unnecessary, especially when it was possible to negotiate with the government. From their point of view, the simultaneous existence of thousands of empty apartments and tens of thousands of people in need of housing was a technical problem which could gradually be solved by the existing system. Other *kraakers*—the radicals—saw the housing crisis as another example of the fundamental irrationality of the capitalist system, an irrationality also evident in starvation in the Third World, the production of nuclear waste, and the transformation of cities into concrete jungles. From their point of view, using crowbars to occupy vacant buildings and barricades to defend them was part of the same struggle being waged with stones and slingshots in occupied Palestine and AK-47s in Nicaragua.

They felt that, as privileged members of an affluent society in a corrupt world system, it was their responsibility to participate in a militant struggle to undermine it. These *kraakers* saw the atomization, displacement, and standardization in their own lives as inextricably linked to the more obvious injustices others suffered abroad, and refused to stop at selfish individual solutions.

By 1983, the division among the *kraakers* was no longer an internal matter. After doing all they could to distance these two wings of the movement from each other, Dutch authorities moved resolutely to eradicate the radicals. At the battle for the Grote Wetering, the police used armored vehicles and construction cranes to evict the squatters. The cranes were used to hoist metal containers, each filled with half a dozen police officers, onto the roofs of the building from which they could penetrate its elaborate defenses. At first, the *kraakers* were able to repulse these rooftop attacks, but the police brought in a special team—“Bratra”—to cut through the protective barricades. It proved to be impossible to barricade a roof against them—though, in the words of one squatter, “Sometimes we could keep them out for almost a whole day by smashing their chainsaws and cutters every time they cut through the wall or roof.”

All through the night people gathered all over the city. Well-known bars bulged with people. After closing time many squats were mobbed. Wim was in the Mariënburcht: “A group of nine of us was going to stay inside and try to do something there. A journalist was going to stay in the house too. The idea was for everyone else to be out of the building around midnight. But it was a bit later. By 2:00 a.m. only the inside group was left. We made the last barricades, tore out the kitchen block, ate and drank and then it was just waiting.”

By around 4:00 a.m. at least 400 people were assembled in buildings in the city. Various vans from other cities were searched by the police, but their presence brought the latter to no conclusion regarding the local mobilization. “The vans that did shuttle service with Amsterdam took the shit,” Henk says. “The plan was that everyone would come to the Mariënburcht all at once. We had agreed to start the barricades at 4.15. There was a tool room in the Grote Broek. Crammed full of stuff, garbage dumpsters for the barricades and pickaxes, shovels, crowbars in neat rows. Anyone could take something. On the way to the Mariënburcht a big window at the Postbank blew apart.”

The next police target was a building on Weyers, a huge stronghold with art galleries, coffee shops, and a concert hall. Despite fifteen hundred defenders in the building and thousands of people in the streets, the massive police mobilization and their use of overwhelming quantities of tear gas, armor, and cranes eventually won the day. Today the Holiday Inn at Weyers is a painful reminder of the police success, and February 1984 is remembered as a time when the movement was split beyond repair.

Despite these setbacks, the *kraakers* continued to resist. When the Pope visited Utrecht in May of 1985, millions of Guilders were spent on his defense, and severe damage was inflicted on the city in the riots that ensued. The government reacted quickly. Using one of their specially trained units, the police illegally evicted a woman and her child from a squatted house in a working class neighborhood known as a *kraaker* stronghold. When hundreds of people attempted to resquat the house, the police panicked, shooting one person in the arm. All the same, the house was retaken by squatters. As riot police arrived to bolster the forces of order, hundreds more *kraakers* reinforced the ranks of their opponents. After the police took the house for the second time, they beat up all thirty-two people inside and put them in jail without bedding, food, or medical care. The next day, Hans Koch, one of those who had been beaten, was found dead in his jail cell. For the next three nights, angry groups of *kraakers* attacked police stations, torched police cars—some in front of police headquarters—and smashed city offices. City authorities stonewalled any response to the death of Hans Koch; a full year later, the government still had not completed its inquiry into the tragedy. In December 1986, when the report was finally released, it blamed the victim, claiming that drug addiction had caused his death. The government had chosen a violent solution in the struggle for Amsterdam; the *kraakers* swiftly responded by firebombing more police stations.

The practice of clandestine affinity groups carrying out sabotage and similar actions had been part of the activist scene for many years in Holland, especially in the squatting, antimilitarist, and antinuclear movements. After Soweto exploded for the second time in 1986, many people started getting involved in soli-



arity actions supporting the liberation struggle in South Africa. The United Nations had declared an economic embargo on that nation, and many groups targeted multinationals breaking that embargo. By the late 1980s, a militant anti-imperialism was becoming common in European activist circles, and an impressive wave of direct actions swept the nation.

⁶Editor's note: Please, please see the piece on tactical communications in the recipes section of this issue to avoid this at your own actions!

The eviction of the Mariënburcht, the first time around:

“The shit’s hitting the fan.” The voice over the police scanner sounded almost relieved. The night of observation in the cold had paid off. On Saturday evening information had come through to the police that “the squat movement is planning actions on the night of Sunday, January 18, possibly with the intention of forcing an eviction.” Contacts with informants, kept up for years, were finally paying off. Important pieces of information, however, seemed to be missing.

Henk: “The nationwide mobilization had escaped them! The police report afterwards shows that they had prepared for the same kind of eviction as at the squat Nuts. That one had happened a couple of years before. After all this talk about hard resistance and all that, the riot police took care of it fast in peacetime dress. The resistance there was only symbolic.”

Wim had already been sitting on the roof for half an hour. “At 3:45 we went upstairs. On every corner were barrels we’d made out of an air conditioning system, filled with tires, gasoline, and oil so they’d burn for a long time. It was dead quiet at that point; you couldn’t hear a thing. When we saw the different groups arriving, we lit the fires and stuck scaffolding pipes over the edge against tower wagons. From that moment on there was a fucking racket, enormous. Windows smashing, lots of fireworks left over from New Year’s going into the air. Because of the height that was about all you could see. From above it looked like they were having a lot of fun. A swarm.”

An avalanche of stuff came out of the squat for building barricades. Grocery carts, tires, scaffolding pipes, wood, washing machines, the kitchen block, bikes, filing cabinets all disappeared into a great heap. “I don’t know how the barricade went at the beginning. I ran with a group up to the fifth floor of the parking garage to keep the cops at a distance with catapults.” The first barricade progressed slowly, says Henk, because the ground was frozen. “Soon a riot van drove up. They thought they could manage with ten men. It was easy to keep the first small charge at bay with rocks. This was at about 4:30. The water in the squat was

shut off during the night, only they forgot that in a garage like that there are more connections. And since there had been a good freeze, soon the street in front of the first barricade was a beautiful slide.”

The barricade was on the driveway between the bank and the Arsenal, so that all access to the Mariënburcht was closed off. “We had left an escape route open for ourselves at the side of the barricades, towards downtown, away from the police station. A little side street along the Postbank had been left open; there they could come closer. But they could forget it, with those slingshots. The windows of the bank were in smithereens in no time and I saw a couple of people working on a door.”

From the roof, Wim saw a long column of riot vans heading towards the city center with searchlights. “Their movements were easy to follow from the roof, but when they came closer they disappeared behind the houses. We yelled down till we were hoarse. Something was wrong with the walkie-talkies⁶.” But it was on the side of the defenders of order that many things were going amiss that morning. The riot police had to change into battle dress outside in the cold. The antenna at Headquarters was iced up and useless. Queries of who was in charge sounded over the police



Most of these were carried out by loose affinity groups functioning on the “guerrilla diffusa” model; one of the less ephemeral groups was RA RA, “Anti-Racist Action Group.” RA RA’s most successful campaign was to force MAKRO supermarkets, a chain owned by one of the largest corporations in Holland, to cancel its investments in South Africa. After a series of firebombings caused over 100 million Guilders in damages to these supermarkets, the corporation withdrew its money from South Africa. Shell Oil—Holland’s largest corporation, one of the world’s largest multinationals, and the Dutch Queen’s main source of income—was also targeted. In one night, thirty-seven Shell stations were disabled

scanner with regularity in the first few hours. Many riot police were angry because they were allowed to do nothing but stand and be hit by rocks. At 5:10, an hour after the actions had begun, the first big charge was launched. The riot police came running up from the right-hand side, curved to storm the barricades, and landed on the icy slope.

“That charge was an unforgettable sight. They looked like penguins as they slid down. And the fleeing line was a pretty sight. We did a countercharge after them,” recalls Henk. “Someone was picked up during that by a complete arrest squad. We’d seen them driving around, but till then they’d stayed at a distance, not too sure of their job. A little later a line of riot police tried to close off our escape route on the left side. A big group ran over and drove them back. The windows at Social Services perished in battle. After that it was quiet for a while. I sat down to rest on a tire, smoked a cig.”

Among the riot police, doubt prevailed. The commander of a newly arrived unit refused to deploy his troops. “We have been attacked from behind. The situation here is deadly.” Radio connections were not functioning. A bulldozer called in to help popped its tires on the crow’s feet in front of the barricade. Tear gas, the oft-used panacea, could not be put into use because the gas masks had been forgotten. The chaos lasted for hours.

Theo: “Meanwhile a big group of us went into the bank. There was great barricade material in there. Office furniture, an aquarium, everything went into the second barricade. The first was already burning by then. Outside the chairs were being tried out,

seizing address books, diaries, and computers and arresting eight people on suspicion of belonging to RA RA. Although the press immediately declared that the hard core of RA RA had been apprehended, five of the eight were quickly released for lack of evidence, and the cases against the remaining three were undeniably weak. Moreover, in response to the arrests, Shell stations were sabotaged in Utrecht, Apeldoorn, Tilburg, Baarn, Almere, and Haaksbergen, a clear sign that the infrastructure of RA RA remained intact.

and people were sitting reading the bank papers. A couple went upstairs to stone the cops. They broke the windows and someone threw a mollie at the art work in front of the bank. On the way out we turned on all the faucets. Other people were working on the door of a bank nearby. No one really had any influence on what was happening anymore. I stood yelling for a while about where the second barricade should go, but everyone was much too busy to listen. We had organized a lot of things beforehand, but at the moment it was all such a terrific chaos.”

By 7:00 a.m. the various platoon commanders and the crisis management seemed more or less to agree. By now the mayor had arrived at the office, three hours after the start of it all. As a first act, he approved the use of tear gas. The preparations for this were visible from the roof. “We put gas masks on and withdrew to the fourth floor. The barricade to the roof was sealed. We’d made a space to withdraw into in one of the two stairwells. A few people were going at it with smoke bombs, fireworks, and oil that we were going to use when they were inside.” Outside, the second barricade was burning toonow, full of typewriters and monitor screens. Big, black clouds of smoke hung over the city.

Henk: “We had understood that they wanted to use tear gas and to us that seemed like a good moment to disappear. We left along the barricades, past the Arsenal. On the Koningsplein where we came out there was a line of cops with an arrest squad. We chased them away. Unfortunately the windows went in at a few shops. First everyone walked to the Grote Broek. Some

across Holland—some were set on fire, while at others the hoses were cut, a tactic which became a common practice. Despite more than a hundred such attacks on gas stations, Shell increased its investments in South Africa and simultaneously launched an extensive public relations campaign against “domestic terrorists.”

As the Dutch royal family is one of Shell’s largest stockholders, the police were eager to show their loyalty by finding people on whom to blame the attacks. On April 11, 1988, Dutch police raided ten houses,

At the same time, the popular movement appeared to decline. Some interpret the increase in covert action that coincided with the losses suffered by the squatting movement as a phase common in the cycle of repression and resistance. Widespread popular action, once crippled by repression or exhaustion, is replaced by secretive conspiratorial resistance, and the latter helps minimize the possibility and impact of popular and open forms of activity. Guerrilla actions replace mass mobilizations, and momentum toward widespread social change is lost as the bitterness of confrontation becomes primary. In such contexts, the forces of order are often able to consolidate their power while revolutionary movements become isolated, short on resources, and incapable of expansion.

One of the cities in which squatters suffered a defeat was Nijmegen, a college town in the east of Holland. A large vacant building owned by Shell—the Mariënburcht—had been resquatted on April 24, 1987 by over one hundred people armed with clubs and wearing masks, helmets, and gloves. They quickly scared away the few policemen at the scene and barricaded themselves inside the building. At five a.m. the next morning, hundreds of riot police retook the building, arresting one hundred twenty-three people. Three weeks later, another building, originally squatted by a women’s group in 1980, was also attacked by police enforcing the city council’s declaration of the city as a “*kraaker*-free zone.”

Their success in Nijmegen encouraged the police to take further action in Amsterdam, where the squatting movement was strongest. On July 18, hundreds of riot police launched a combined assault from the canals and the streets on the last big *kraaker* bastion in Amsterdam on the Konradstraat. Hundreds of people defended the building, an old textile mill used for years as an alternative workplace for artisans and a home for one hundred forty people. At one point in the battle, the building caught on fire, causing a giant cloud of smoke to rise ominously over the city. At the time, homelessness and unemployment were severe problems in

Holland and the Dutch state was throwing money at them. Few people expected the huge attack on the Konradstraat, particularly since its occupants had put forth a proposal to renovate the building at a low cost. The squatters’ plan would have provided double the number of apartments and jobs that were eventually created; the fate of that building revealed that destroying the *kraakers* was a higher priority for the Social Democrats governing Amsterdam.

By 1990, massive police attacks and modification of the laws covering squatters had succeeded in displacing thousands of them from the center city in areas which were reclaimed by yuppies and sanitized for tourists. In 1993, fewer than a thousand apartments and houses remained occupied in the entire country. What had been a feeling of empowerment in 1980 had been transformed into marginalization and paranoia. While conflicts with the system had once been paramount, as with all movements in decline, the most pressing problems became internal ones. Such severe splits took place that a “traitors’ list” was published; the booklet was entitled “Pearls Before Swine” and contained the names of about two hundred people accused of informing to the police, negotiating with the government for their own personal gain, or “becoming yuppies.” The movement had reached a low point of isolation and internal division. One of the participants explained: “Once paranoia sets in, every new person is suspect, and you’re left with two hundred militants in your circle of friends. Then the rest of society has been insulated from the movement, and the two hundred gradually become one hundred fifty, then fifty.”

To this day, however, squatting continues in Holland, with new victories from time to time and, of course, riots during evictions—but that’s another story, for another issue. For those interested in learning more about the Dutch squatting movement throughout the 1980’s, ADILKNO’s *Cracking the Movement: Squatting Beyond the Media*, published in 1994 by New York Autonomedia, is an exciting resource, providing a heady mix of first-hand testimony and philosophical analysis.



went inside. The rest went on into the city. I was needing some coffee myself, so I went into the Broek too.”

The riot police did not notice that everyone on the street had disappeared. The bulldozer carefully tried to drive through the barricades. Then the parking garage was searched, meter by meter, for anyone left. “I think they came upstairs at about 7:30. At least on the first floor. We kept them busy a few more hours with all that barricade material and the oil, before we withdrew into the

last room. Unfortunately a can of insulation foam had frozen, so we couldn’t close the last chinks, and the smoke we’d filled the whole building with came in where we were too.”

A reporter: “The police break-in crew had to break through thick concrete several times, with crowbar and circular saw. There were whole steel constructions made of scaffolding poles and central heating radiators, anchored to the walls with rawls, so that the police had to break away a piece of wall to get any further.”

“It was 11:00 a.m. before they got to us. I still know exactly because that was when the news came over the radio that the RSV Corporation had withdrawn from South Africa. A strange moment. Then we were taken away one by one. In the stairwell I had trouble staying standing up with all that oil. The riot surpassed everything we’d expected. You do plan some things, but you never know exactly how it’s going to go.

When I came out of the Mariënburcht and saw that street, I had to look twice. We were all arrested on grounds of public violence. A few days later everyone was out again.”

Theo walked through the city with a group. “More bank windows were still getting broken in different places. And barricades were set up later in a few spots in the city. But from then on the riot was out of our hands. Riot cops and arrest squads were tearing all over the place. Then I went inside somewhere for breakfast too.”

Denmark

In September 1971, a former army base on Christiania Island in Copenhagen was occupied by fifty activists, and during the following years, a diverse group of nearly one thousand inhabitants made the one hundred fifty-six abandoned army buildings into homes. Christiania has long been a focal point for a cultural opposition in Denmark, and its residents have repelled several attacks from police and an invasion of bikers in 1976. They have created more than two hundred jobs in self-managed institutions, and provided foreigners and Danes alike with a countercultural haven.

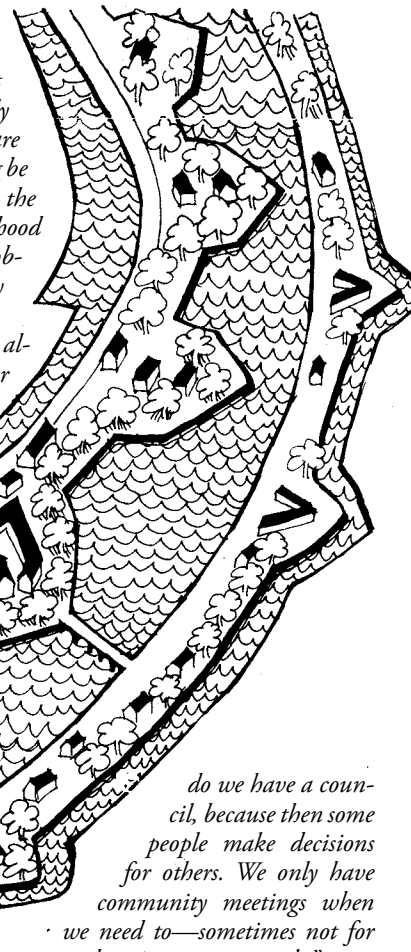
The Christiania squat grew out of the same 1960s impetus that produced the "children's power" movement in Copenhagen. While

Danish society supposedly took care of every Dane's needs, there was no consideration of the desire of young people to determine their own lives. To create alternatives for themselves, teenagers squatted several empty houses in the late 1960s under the watchwords "Free us from our parents!" In March 1972, the "Children's Liberation Front" declared its existence as a decentralized organization which included groups living in several parts of the city and was dedicated to providing sanctuary for battered, abused, and bored young people. In response to complaints from parents, the police raided some of the houses in the summer of 1973. In order to maintain a safe refuge, the group squatted one of the buildings in Christiania.

In the Free Republic of Christiania, which still exists today, hundreds of people live in an alternative community under no authority except that of the Ting, an ancient Danish form of consensual decision-making¹. One of the central buildings is known as the "Tinghus" (Ting house). Each resident may go to the center of the circle and speak at meetings of the Communal Council, and decisions are made to the eventual satisfaction of all. In other free areas besides Christiania, the Ting has been a way of life for over a thousand people since 1971.

Social atomization in the United States has advanced far beyond anything in Europe, and our cultural heritage is young and diffuse. Consensus often means that dissenting individuals exercise veto power over a group, making it impossible to formulate a common will and fomenting internal strife. In contrast, the bonds between those who live in Christiania are reinforced by the Ting. As one communitarian explained Christiania's structure:

"If a problem comes up, it is first discussed in the house where it originates, where it hopefully will be resolved. Only if the issue is still not taken care of will a neighborhood meeting be called to discuss it. This way, the house and then the neighborhood must fail to deal with the problems before it becomes necessary to have a community meeting, and by then, most people have already heard about the matter and considered the various options. We never vote at community meetings nor



do we have a council, because then some people make decisions for others. We only have community meetings when we need to—sometimes not for years, other times once a week."

Although Christiania is squatted, rent is collected for community projects and utilities. Every neighborhood has a person who collects a minimal payment (about \$100 per resident per month) and each of the bars, restaurants, and shops pays something to the "big box," as the community fund is known. "Little boxes" for each neighborhood spend about half of the collected money, a structure which keeps decision-making at the base and also guarantees the availability of funding for grassroots ideas and initiatives. Residents have created a variety of shops: blacksmiths and metalworkers produce ecological ovens and a unique Christiania-designed bicycle; jewelers, potters, candle-makers, and shoemakers labor side by side in other workshops; and there are numerous alternative healers and restaurants. The hundreds of people who work in Christiania's shops have a workers' council with regular meetings open to all who labor in the alternative institutions. The council also funds a child-care center.

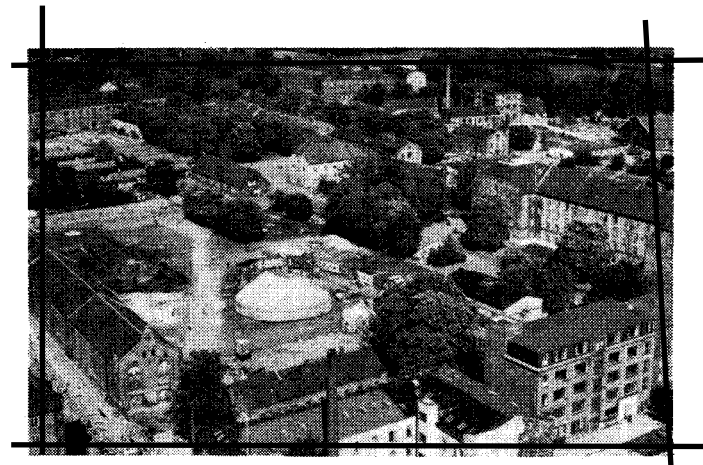
While many people lived in Christiania for short periods during its early years, some stayed together for the long haul. At a particularly tense moment in their relations with the authorities, the long-term residents formed a "Rainbow Army," committed to nonviolence, designed to deal with repeated threats by the authorities to evict them, to keep the collective buildings in good repair, and to meet other communal needs. The call in the Christiania newspaper, *Ugespejlet* (Daily Mirror), read:

"By creating a Rainbow Army of nonviolent, hardworking people who all collaborate with each other, every individual in his or her own way, we can stand united, one for all and all for one, and overcome the threatening situation we are facing. Because we love each other, we can organize ourselves practically, in spite of our differences."

Danish authorities had promised to clear out the communards on April 1, 1976, but the imaginative campaign mounted by the Rainbow Army brought 25,000 supporters to Christiania on the appointed day. Some well-known Danish bands had produced a Christiania record, and Christiania Action Theater had toured the country with a production of *April Fool's Day*. The Rainbow Army won a decisive victory: the planned eviction was first postponed, and finally cancelled altogether in favor of legalization. Christiania thereby was transformed from a free space in which laws did not exist into a throwback to feudal Europe, in which autonomous principalities existed only with the consent of the lord. Christiania pays the Ministry of Defense over \$500,000 annually for water, electricity, and other services, and has been recognized officially as a "social experiment."

Like any community in formation, Christiania has had problems, particularly with drugs and police incursions. Over the years, the most severe internal challenges Christiania has faced have been from profit-hungry heroin dealers who move into the "liberated" zone and refused to leave, despite the signs posted at every entrance that read: "Speed, coke, heroin, etc. are forbidden to be sold, used, or possessed in Christiania." While police incursions to arrest people possessing marijuana come in waves, the Christiania communards are left to fend for themselves in the face of harder drugs. The Ting has repeatedly had to convince motorcycle gangs dealing heroin to leave Christiania, although several people have suffered injuries in the process.

Beyond Christiania, the Danish squatting movement has also included more confrontational elements. RA RA's direct action campaign against Shell, for example, spread throughout Europe, and on November 23, 1986, twenty-eight Shell stations were simultaneously attacked across Denmark, causing damages of about \$200,000. This action indicated that targets and tactics—including small-group property destruction—were increasingly being



shared and coordinated across national borders.

One of the most impressive engagements of Europe's militant squatting movement took place in September 1986, when hundreds of people took over part of the Osterbro neighborhood in Copenhagen and held it for nine days despite repeated attacks by police and fascists. The fight for the Ryesgade, as this action became known, grew out of the housing crisis, but was also an extension of the politics of anti-imperialism. Inside the "cop-free zone," one of the first acts was the torching of a building owned by Sperry Corporation, a U.S. multinational involved in the production of Cruise and Pershing missiles. As one activist explained, "It's not enough to talk. Love is a battle. We are fighting homelessness and gentrification, but also the USA, South Africa, and capitalism to show our solidarity. Many of us have been to work in Nicaragua. Now the battle comes home."

The Ryesgade action was not exactly a battle, strictly speaking; rather, it was a series of street fights, all of which were won by the squatters. It began on Sunday, September 14, when a thousand



PLEASE TRY THIS AT HOME

¹ Some of the details in this report on Christiania may not be up to date, as it dates from several years ago. Some contributors to this magazine have been there more recently, but it hasn't been possible yet to complete a comprehensive update. If we were to write about squatting in Denmark today, rather than a generation ago, we would focus on Ungdomshuset, which has been a center of militant squatting and countercultural activism over the past two decades.

people gathered in the center of the city for what was expected to be a march to a park. The demonstration suddenly broke away from the announced route—and, following prearranged plans, hundreds of people ran to the Ryesgade area, completely fooling the police. In the words of one of the participants, when the police finally amassed and marched on the barricades: “It was a vicious fight. As hundreds of riot police attacked, we threw mo-

lotovs, fireworks, and bricks, and slung catapults, driving them back.” When the police counterattacked from the other side of Ryesgade, hundreds of masked activists repulsed them. When the police retreated for the final time that day, the barricades were reinforced and a huge street party began. Hundreds of people slept at the barricades in preparation for the next attack. In the morning, the police were again greeted with “concrete rain” when

they charged, but this time they attacked on two sides simultaneously and broke through on one. As one participant described the scene: “All seems lost, then at the last moment, over a hundred supporters from the city come charging in from the rear, attacking the police from behind and forcing them to flee! The riot cops run away and don’t try to break through again. We reinforce the barricades.”

Even though the situation in the neighborhood resembled martial law, the local residents remained supportive of the squatters. During the nine days of fighting, activists went shopping for food for elderly residents of the neighborhood who were afraid to venture out beyond the barricades because of possible police reprisals. As the city government met in emergency sessions, the Danish autonomists discussed their options. They easily reached a consensus that reformist solutions—such as the offer of a Danish rock star to buy the buildings and give them to the squatting movement—were out of the question. The squatters did not recognize the legitimacy of the government, and they resolved to prove themselves beyond its powers.

In Amsterdam, a solidarity demonstration attacked the Danish consulate, and there were marches in Aarhus as well as in Germany and Sweden. The network of free radio stations in Denmark provided support for the four hundred people in the Ryesgade by sponsoring open debates and calling for food, blankets, and supplies to be delivered to the liberated area. After nine days, the city finally called on the army for help, and a bloody finale seemed imminent. The squatters called a press conference for nine a.m. on Monday, September 23, but when the media arrived, they found the houses deserted, prompting the two negotiators working for the city to ask: “Where did the squatters go when they left? What did the town hall learn? It seems the act can start all over again, anywhere, at any time. Even bigger. With the same participants.”

ON BREAD ALONE

(A MINOR)

A FOLK SONG ATTRIBUTED TO BLIND LEMON GEMMONS & CRIPPLED MELON McCLELLAN†

INTRO/OUTRO

Musical notation for the Intro/Outro of 'On Bread Alone'. The key signature is one flat (A minor) and the time signature is 4/4. The melody is written on a single staff. The lyrics are: "I DON'T KNOW WHERE MY NEXT BREAD'S GONNA COME FROM BUT I KNOW IT WILL BE FREE WHEN I FIRST TOOK THE PLEDGE, I DIDN'T KNOW THAT FREEDOM WOULD BE THE DEATH OF ME!". Chords are indicated above the notes: Am, Em, and G.

VERSE (SLOW BLUES)

Musical notation for the Verse of 'On Bread Alone'. The key signature is one flat (A minor) and the time signature is 3/4. The melody is written on a single staff. The lyrics are: "WHEN I QUIT MY JOB THAT MORNING BACK IN NINE-TEEN NINETY FOUR I SWORE TO MYSELF A SOLEMN OATH: WOULDN'T PAY FOR FOOD NO MORE SO MUCH FOOD GOES TO WASTE THAT I CAN'T STAND THE TASTE OF FOOD I'VE TRADED MY LIFE FOR BUT THERE'S JUST ONE PROBLEM,". Chords are indicated above the notes: Am, Em, and G. A 3x repeat sign is present at the beginning of the verse.

† To concoct a blues musician stage name of your own, use this formula: string together a disability, a fruit or vegetable, and the last name of a failed 19th Century candidate for Vice President.

* SPEAK RHYTHMICALLY ON PITCH, NOTATED RHYTHM IS APPROXIMATE



A Summary Of Events In Denmark

December 25. A group attempts to topple a military radio mast near Roskilde by cutting the steel wires; the mast - part of NATO's communication network - unfortunately remained standing.

January 17. Shell filling station set alight. The fire went out but the smoke caused a lot of damage. Walls painted with BURN SHELL TO HELL and SHELL OUT OF SOUTH AFRICA.

January 22. Eight activists from the South Africa Committee are fired for squatting the South African consulate twice.

January 30. House in Hellerup squatted. Police clear house with tear gas, arrest all and later raid their addresses.

February 15. Same house squatted again. Again cleared by tear gas.

February 16. Tear gas returned to the pigs. A local cop shop is attacked in the mid-morning with tear gas and stink bombs. Shut for five weeks because of the smell.

March 5. Protest outside the Courts against the criminalisation of anti-apartheid activists. The occasion was the Court case against one of the five arrested during the attack on Shell last autumn.

March 10 - 11. During the night at least eight groups attack various targets in Copenhagen. Subjects for attack include diplomats cars, fur shops, banks, IBM, Sperry and DAC, whose administrative office was burnt down.

March 13. A group of Kurds smash a Turkish airline office in Copenhagen in retaliation for the bombing of Kurdish villages in Iraq by Turkey. Another group of Kurds go on hunger strike for 13 days against the bombing and demand that Denmark recognise the Kurds as a distinct nationality.

March 14 - 15. Shell personnel training centre in Brøndby is attacked. Office equipment and computers destroyed; butyric acid and stink bombs released.

March 18. During a demo militant anti-fascists smash windows and throw smoke bombs into a hall where right-wing racists attempt to start a new party.

March 20. A Shell filling station is turned into a rubbish tip as about 50 squatters carry building waste and other rubbish on carts from a nearby squat and dump it on the forecourt of the garage; windows and pumps were smashed whilst police were held at bay with catapults and other missiles. No arrests.

March 21. The South Africa Committee hold a demonstration on Sharpeville Day outside Shell House and the South African consulate. The SA Committee use the demo to condemn militant activists. On the

way back from the demo militant activists smash bank windows and a porno shop.

Later that evening, during a 'mini street fight', a pig transit has a head-on collision with a car outside the 'Black Horse' squat.

March 23. Police chief calls for the criminalisation of the wearing of masks during demo's.

April 5. Street fight outside Saltlageret closing party. Hotel Sheraton trashed; police car burnt out. 3 arrests. 50 people squat Saltlageret, are evicted 2 hours later; all arrested. At the same time Norrebrogade (1 mile away) is blocked by burning rubbish skips.

April 9. 25 from 'Young Against Apartheid' peacefully blockade Shell House; all arrested and charged with breach of the peace. Town council meeting about the squats is interrupted by doughnuts and bangers being thrown from the gallery. Riot police arrive immediately. 25 arrests.

April 10. 20 from 'Young Against Apartheid' occupy 'Extra Bladet' (gutter press) to try and get them to stop advertising Shell; they refuse.

April 23. In solidarity with Hafenstrasse in Hamburg two EEC offices in Copenhagen are attacked during office hours with paint bombs and bulrylic acid. The same day actions occur in Amsterdam, Lubeck and Hamburg.

April 29. Shell garage in Naerum burnt down.

May Day. Squatters and anarchist's demo attacked by riot police. 19 arrests. A lot of bruised bodies; one demonstrator hospitalised. Later that evening four persons, naked apart from balaclavas, trash a bank.

During the May Day demo four Kurds are beaten up by racists while 60,000 socialists turn a blind eye.

May 4. Shell stations in North Jutland trashed and 2000 gallons released from the pumps.

May 5. Shell garage in Holbaek sabotaged, hoses cut, sugar in tanks; walls painted.

May 13. Colas road materials (100% Shell owned) attacked during the morning with butyric acid. The same day the Council announces it is stopping their contract with Colas.

June 3. New house squatted on Vesterbro; evicted same night during violent street fights; injuries to both police and squatters.

June 14. 'BT' (gutter press) offers reward for the person who burnt down the Shell station in Naerum.

June 15. Four people arrested for sabotage on Shell station on May 4th.

JUST ONE REGRET YOU MUST NOT FORGET THAT THE ONLY FOOD THEY'LL

LET YOU GET FOR FREE IS ...

CHORUS

BREAD — AND SO WE ATE BREAD

(GUITAR)

WE ATE SOME MORE BREAD — WE RAN OUT OF BREAD

SO WE ATE BREAD IN-STEAD — PRETZELS MUFFINS AND CROUTONS

THAT'S ALL I'VE GOT TO CHEW ON — I MAY BE UNDER-FED...

GETTING FED UP WITH BREAD —

VERSE 2:

SO I WENT DOWN THE STREET TO THE DUMPSTER
WHERE THEY THROW ALL THE FOOD AWAY
WHILE THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE ACROSS THE WORLD
STARVE TO DEATH EVERY DAY
AND EVERY DAY THAT I'D GO TO THAT DUMPSTER,
WELL, I COULDN'T BELIEVE MY EYES
I WOULD LIFT UP THE TOP, AND THEN I'D STOP
CAUSE THERE WAS NOTHING BUT BREAD INSIDE!

CHORUS 2:

DON'T WANT NO MORE BREAD
YEAH, YOU HEARD WHAT I SAID,
I'M NOT INTEREST-ED
IN ANY MORE OF YOUR BREAD.
JUST BECAUSE I DON'T EAT MEAT,
YOU THINK I SHOULD LIVE ON WHEAT?
GIVE ME SOMETHING TO EAT—
SOMETHING, ANYTHING BUT BREAD.

VERSE 3:

SO I WENT TO THE PLACE WHERE THEY SERVE
FOOD NOT BOMBS,
BUT THEY HAD NOTHING BUT BAGELS FOR ME
AND I SNUCK INTO AN ART GALLERY OPENING,
BUT THE REFRESHMENTS WERE TOAST AND COFFEE
THEN I TRACKED DOWN SOME OLD FRIENDS OF
MINE (FELLOW PUNKS):
THEY HAD JUST SCAMMED A BAG OF DOUGHNUTS.
I WENT TO THE STORE, AND ALL I COULD SCORE...
WAS CRACKERS! I'M GONNA GO NUTS!

CHORUS 3:

I DON'T WANT NO MORE BREAD,
GET THAT INTO YOUR HEAD,
I'D RATHER BE DEAD,
THAN EAT ANY MORE BREAD!
THEY'RE TRYING TO STARVE ME TO DEATH
AND WHEN I BREATHE MY LAST BREATH
THEY'LL FIND MY BONES ON THE BED
SURROUNDED BY BREAD.

VERSE 4:

ON THE FIFTIETH DAY OF MY HUNGER STRIKE
A SAD ANGEL CAME DOWN TO ME
HE SAID "WE'VE GOT TO GET SOME FOOD IN YOU, SON,
OR YOU KNOW WHERE YOU'LL SOON BE."
HE LED ME DOWN A GOLDEN HALLWAY
TO A TABLE WAITING AND SPREAD
IT WAS PILED UP HIGH AND STRAINING UNDER
THE WEIGHT
OF— YEAH, YOU KNOW WHAT? IT WAS BREAD!

CHORUS 4:

I DON'T WANT NO MORE BREAD
GET AWAY WITH YOUR BREAD
YEAH IT MAKES ME SEE RED
BUT THERE'S NOTHING BUT BREAD
IT'LL SAY ON MY TOMBSTONE
"THOU SHALT NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE"
AAAAAA AUUUU GGH H H,
BREAD.

[REPEAT INTRO]



Mes Nouveaux Copains

RECIPES FOR DINNER

This summer, I made my first ever journey to Europe. I had traveled in other countries a little before, visiting family in India and exploring Mexico, but I had never wanted to go to Europe. I think it was my own humble form of anti-imperial resistance, part of my struggle not to glorify the legacy of European anarchism over histories of struggle elsewhere. However, when the opportunity arose to go with one of my favorite traveling companions, I decided it was a good time to get away for a while, visit some of my European friends, and investigate collective living projects and anarchist communities abroad. We bought super-cheap Airhitch tickets, spent two nights sleeping in the airport, and made our way across the Atlantic. There were a few specific places I wanted to visit, people I wanted to find, and events I wanted to participate in, but, as on most of our trips, my partner and I didn't have much of a plan.

By the middle of July, we had arrived at one of the places I was most excited to visit, a farm my friends had just bought in southern France. I was thrilled to spend some time outside the city and see what they were doing with their collective land project¹. The farm was huge, spanning over ninety-five acres of old grazing fields, lush pockets of deciduous forest thick with raspberry bushes, a large pond, and a couple deep pine stands. It was so lovely to be there.

When they bought the land, there were already four buildings on it. Some people were sleeping in the main house, though it was under construction while I was there and was mostly used for storage; someday, it will house a beautiful library. The barn was stocked with all the tools one could possibly need, and while the main house was under construction it served as a temporary kitchen and dining room as well as a workshop. The old pig house was mostly used for storage, but folks sometimes slept there, too. My favorite building—the oldest, built in the 16th century—had a wood-fired oven on the first floor, and storage for garden supplies on the second floor. A hole was prepared for the foundation of another building, but that project was on hold.

The farm also included a large garden², a composting outhouse, a luxurious coop for chickens and turkeys, and a plethora of tents, trailers, and converted vehicles in which people were sleeping. As the farm had been purchased only a month earlier, one friend described the time I was there as anarchist summer camp: all the people involved in the project, who desired for the farm to exist and be sustained collectively, were on the land working intensely to prepare it for the ten or fifteen folks who would remain over the winter.

I stayed for eight days, and I can't estimate how many amazing French, Swiss, and Italian anarchists I met there. There were probably forty of us at dinner most nights. I still have no idea who actually bought the farm or how many of those people will call that place home; it was impossible to tell, the way everything was shared. My traveling partner and I were immediately welcomed upon our arrival; I felt so comfortable and so much a part of everything. The first full day we were there, one of my French friends gave me a tour around the farm, showing me where to find everything I needed: food, bicycles, tools, books. In the workshop, he showed me the drawer with the collective money in it, telling me to use it if I needed anything else.

In fact, I needed nothing more. We got up leisurely every morning to a drowsy breakfast, then fell into work. There was wood to be cut and chiseled into hundreds of fence posts, demolition to be done in the main house, cleaning and re-mortaring in the root cellar, and countless other projects. All the while, someone would be cooking a fabulous meal for us all³, which we always ate together. Usually, I would eat lunch, then take a break while everyone else went back to work. I ran around exploring the land, or struggled through a book in French; I wrote love letters and spent time with my new friends.

Everyone worked when they could and played when they needed to. There was no pressure or scheduling needed. In the heat of the day, I sometimes initiated a group trip down to the lake—there's nothing better than hot sun and cool water on my skin and an excuse to run around naked with my friends. Some days, I worked late into the day, taking breaks to swim and snack and relax; other days, I went into town to write and edit or acquire supplies for the farm⁴. It's hoped that the farm will become self-sustaining, growing food and building relationships with others in the area, but they are just getting started. However, thanks to the skill and boldness of some, the kitchen was perpetually stocked with all kinds of dried goods, juicy fruits and vegetables, and freshly baked bread.

When I was first given the tour of the farm, my friend explained that they get flour from a nearby mill and make all their bread in their oven. I was excited by the possibility of being involved in that process, and made it clear I wanted to help if the need arose. I was simply enchanted by that oven. There was something about how old it was, how many hands had worked the fire in that hearth, how many bellies had been filled by *hundreds* of years of that bread! I didn't know where the bread was stored, but no matter how much we ate, there always seemed to be one or two loaves hanging in the basket in the kitchen. At every meal, every time I went into the kitchen, I kept my eye on that basket, waiting for it to be empty.

And after I had been at the farm for a few days, we did finally run out of bread. When I realized it was gone, I went around excitedly asking who was going to make the next batch, so I could be sure to be involved. However, not only were we out of bread, we were out of flour, too. Someone would have to go to the mill the next day to bring home the giant sixty- or seventy-kilogram bags of white and wheat flour. I had to wait another day to learn to make bread in my beloved oven, and go two whole days without bread⁵! The next day, Jérémie brought home the bags of flour and promised that we would start making bread first thing in the morning.

Baking bread was a day-long project. To make enough to last a little over a week, we made forty kilograms worth⁶: four batches of the ten-kilogram recipe, two white and two wheat, each in its own container. We washed out the big plastic tubs that were normally used for washing dishes, and used them to mix the dough. We started in the morning after breakfast, up to our forearms in flour, mixing the giant batches together. Once the dough was soft and well kneaded, it sat all day rising while we did other work. Every hour, Jérémie would find me, and the two of us would run upstairs delighting in our little secret—it was time to fold the dough. Gently, we would uncover each tub, carefully fold it contents, then place the dough back into the corner. It was so exciting to watch the dough grow and grow with every passing hour! When the dough had risen enough, we cut the giant balls into over forty smaller pieces.

While the little loaves rose more, it was time to fire up the oven. The oven was a small room with a thick stone shelf separating the top half from the bottom; two small sets of heavy metal doors offered access to the two chambers. Like all the buildings on the farm, it was built from local stone. To heat it, we built a blazing fire in the top half, and let it burn down to hot glowing coals; the stone walls of the oven absorbed enough heat to remain hot for hours. Then we transferred the coals to the bottom half of the oven, and put the loaves of bread into the top half with a fifteen-foot wooden spatula. In an hour, we had dozens of loaves of steams-when-you-cut-it-and-melts-in-your-mouth bread.

My partner and I left a few days later, and our friends sent us on our way with the biggest loaf of the batch. I ate that bread feeling a fullness and warmth I haven't felt from any of the dumpstered and stolen bread products that have so often filled my kitchens (and closets, and countertops) at home. That loaf of bread lasted us all the way through Spain to Italy.

¹Back home, my friends across the country have been talking about the need to buy land, houses, or apartments in the city—whatever we can secure. Perhaps this is simply because those of them that do pay for housing are tired of paying rent, but I think people are realizing the benefits of having legal spaces of our own. Fuck landlords, we should either be squatting or buying. Once we have necessities like food, clothes, and shelter covered, we can focus our energies on more pressing projects.

²In which I spent many hours weeding ferns!

³There was a sign-up sheet to cook lunch or dinner and to clean and wash dishes, and people were really good about taking turns taking care of each other.

⁴Aside from building materials and tools, requests always included really good coffee, chocolate, and cheese—this was France, after all!

⁵To be honest, the latter was more difficult. I hadn't realized how much that soft crusty yummy bread had become a staple in my diet.

⁶That's eighty-eight pounds!

To make bread (*Faire du pain*)

makes 10 kg

Le levain : Make it the night before – 2 kg
(make 1 kg, then add another 1 kg an hour later)

baker's yeast 100 g; flour 1.2 kg; water .8 kg

Each time you make bread, save a little levain (a couple hundred grams). Store in the fridge or a cool, dry place. Then, you can just add flour and water to make the full 2 kg, and you will not need to keep adding yeast.

The combined temperatures of the air, flour, and water should add up to 60°C; air + flour + water = 60°C (or a little more). Measure the temperature of each, and heat the water to account for cold air or flour.

15 g salt per kg of bread; 2 kg le levain; 6 kg flour;
4 L water (mix the salt into the water for even distribution)

Pétrir (mix) : Mix well, adding water until the flour and water are evenly combined. Add herbs, spices or other desired ingredients. Turn and fold the dough, taking care not to tear it, until it feels smooth and light to the touch. When you press it lightly, it should feel airy, not dense. Cover and let it sit.

On the hour, for every four hours, fold the mixture four times—do not tear!—and re-cover. After four hours, cut the dough into loaf-size pieces. Fold each piece four times. Close the fold formed by pinching it together, and put the fold on the bottom. Let sit covered for three hours.

Cook at about 300°C (240°C is enough) for about one hour. Check the color and tap the loaves listening for a hollow sound to indicate it is done.

Later in my travels, I stayed in an amazing squat in Italy. My new friends were warm and welcoming, alternately feeding my traveling partner and me and showing us around the kitchen so we could cook for them. On our last night there, when I asked one of our hosts where they kept extra bread and discovered that the house was completely out, he immediately offered that we should make bread and started pulling out all of the ingredients before I could even answer that I would love to help. Together, in a haphazard, frenetic style that left me covered in flour and desperately wanting to stay another day, we made delicious bread that lasted through dinner and breakfast. The quick and dirty recipe for making bread (as told to me by Enzo):

Mix together a small cup of water,
a big pinch of salt,
two capfuls of oil, and
a 25 gram package of yeast.

Sift one kg of flour, and slowly mix in the liquid mixture. Add approximately 1/4 cup more oil and water until all of the dough is sticking together. The dough should be moist but not sticky.

Fold in air. Cut slits in the top of the dough before covering. Pinch the folds together on the bottom and dust with flour.

Let stand, covered for one hour. Then bake at 300°C for one hour.

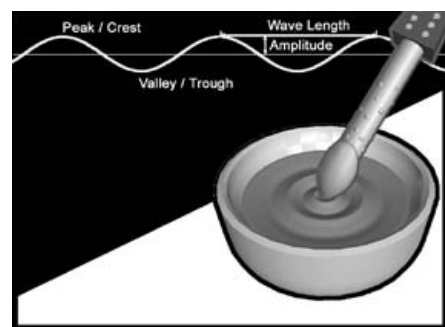
Communications Systems and Technology for Direct Action

“Some officers joined in taking whatever they could, including one New Orleans cop who loaded a shopping cart with a compact computer and a 27-inch flat-screen television. Officers claimed there was nothing they could do to contain the anarchy, saying their radio communications have broken down and they had no direction from commanders.”

When I reflect on the successes and failures I’ve witnessed over my years of direct action experience, one theme recurs over and over: the absolute failure of tactical communications at almost all of these events. Sure, some of us are ideologically opposed to technology and all that, but if we’re ever going to pose a real threat to this fucked up system we might need to be prepared to use more than signal fires and carrier pigeons. In all seriousness, I believe effective and efficient methods of communication are essential to the success of most direct action strategies.

Consider the police. How are they able to do all the fucked up things they do? Once upon a time, I would have answered, “Because they have the guns”—but when I thought about this more, I realized that it wasn’t a satisfactory answer. Sure they have guns, but so do a lot of us. Things became even cloudier when I realized that they don’t usually even have an advantage in numbers. Often, there are only a handful of officers patrolling a large area. So I’ve started thinking it has something to do with their system of communications. It seems silly, but imagine the police had no communications network. If all of a sudden their cell phones, radios, and computers just stopped working, how would they operate? They would have to sit at the station until a complaint came in—via courier, I suppose—then go to the disturbance, deal with it, and return. Meanwhile, officers in the field would be unable to receive any information as the situation changed. This system of communications would be so centralized and inefficient that the police department would... well, they’d be as ineffective as us.

Indeed, that’s where most of us are at right now. The communications infrastructure we use is so haphazard and unreliable that we’re rarely able to receive critical information when it counts. Consequently, we’re constantly behind, reacting to the actions of our opponents, never knowing where they’ll be coming from or what to expect from them. The most we can hope to do is start an engagement with them with the element of surprise; but once they’ve caught up to what’s going on, we rarely regain the initiative. I’m writing this article in order to share some of the things I’ve learned about gathering and communicating information rapidly in a protest or direct action situation, with the hope that maybe next time it will be those motherfuckers on the run.



Radio Waves

Every device described in this article uses radio waves to transmit information. In order to visualize radio waves, perform this simple experiment: fill up a bowl full of water, then take something that vibrates rapidly—like a vibrator—and touch the surface of the water with it. You’ll notice that ripples, or waves, form in the water.

Radio waves operate according to the same general principle. A transmitter oscillates very rapidly and creates an invisible electromagnetic wave. The wave travels through some amount of space and a receiver is able to pick it up and translate it into useful information.

(continued ☞)

Technology

There is a great deal of communications technology available to us today. I’m going to cover, very briefly, a few devices I think anarchists could use.

Scanners

Radio scanners are invaluable tools for gathering information that is being broadcast by someone else. They work by scanning through a great number of frequencies in a short amount of time looking for active broadcasts. When an active broadcast is found, the scanner stops so the user can listen to it.

The FCC—the agency responsible for allocating radio frequencies for different uses—typically allocates a certain “band,” or group of frequencies, for each technology. This means that if, for example, you wanted to listen to the transmissions of air traffic controllers, you could get on the internet and find out that the FCC has allocated the range of frequencies from about 960 MHz to about 1215 MHz for that purpose. You could then use a scanner to search rapidly between these frequencies, picking up any transmission that occurred. With the right scanner, potentially connected to the right computer, you could listen in on almost anything.

For the purposes of this article, I’ll focus on monitoring police frequencies. Believe it or not, most police frequencies are broadcast in the clear for anyone with

a scanner to listen to. I guess it’s done that way so reporters and military veterans can listen in and feel up-to-date or something.

Getting Started

Scanning your local police department may be easier than you ever imagined. I suggest going online and using google.com to search for local frequencies. Radio hobbyists are a resourceful and charitable bunch, and they usually post the frequencies they find on the internet. Another place you can find frequencies is in books or magazines. Radio Shack carries a book that lists many of the police, fire, and EMT frequencies in the country. If all else fails, you can usually find police channels by scanning around, especially between 150MHz and 160MHz. They’re not difficult to recognize!

Once you have the frequencies, consult your scanner’s manual (you did keep it, right?). Depending on your scanner, you should be able to program all the police frequencies into a “bank” of frequencies, so as to scan only that bank. If you can do this, you’ll hear just the police frequencies. Next, you’ll have to adjust the squelch. What is that, you ask? Typically, there will be a knob on your radio next to the volume knob. This is squelch. When you turn it all the way down, you will hear that nasty radio noise you hear when your car radio isn’t turned to a station. Slowly turn up the squelch and the noise will go away. This is a necessary step, because it adjusts your scanner for the amount of noise that is in your area. If you don’t do this, your radio won’t be able to differentiate between a real signal and mere noise. OK, now you’re ready to start scanning.

When you first start scanning, the police may sound like they’re speaking some utterly unrecognizable dialect of English. Don’t be put off—keep listening, and things will start to make sense. The first thing you’ll probably pick up on is them running names, license plates, and so on. They’ll broadcast full names, birth dates, addresses, and social security numbers. You’ll also start to recognize when they’re being dispatched, to which locations, and what for. Sometimes an officer will even announce his home phone number right over the air! The more you listen, the better you’ll get at figuring out their jargon.

Trunking

When looking for frequencies on the internet, you may find that the agency you want to listen to uses a “trunking” system. What the hell is that?

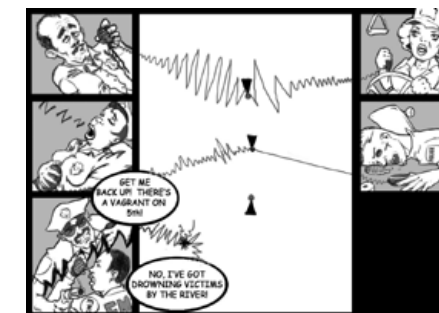
The term “trunking” refers to a system that uses advanced technology to split up a limited amount of radio frequencies. Imagine that the government of a large city—say, Chicago—wants to set up a radio network. Chicago is a very big city and has a great deal of communications needs. The Police Department, the Fire Department, the Parks Department, the Water Department, the garbage collectors, and many more all need to communicate, and many of these agencies will need to use at least a few frequencies. This creates a problem, because radio frequencies are not an abundant resource. Even a hundred or so frequencies might be impossible to come by. So, someone figured out how to utilize fewer frequencies for more activity. Most people using a radio aren’t using it all or even most of the time. Let’s say that Chicago needs a hundred separate channels, but they’ll only use each channel about ten percent of the time. That means that if there were a way to share frequencies, they could put all 100 channels on only ten frequencies. This is what trunking does.

When dealing with a trunking system, one is presented not with frequencies but with “workgroups.” Every radio is assigned to a workgroup, and each workgroup has a different purpose. The police, for example, might have five different workgroups representing different districts. The system is controlled by a computer that broadcasts a digital signal on its own frequency. Whenever someone in a certain workgroup presses the button to broadcast something, the computer assigns them a frequency to broadcast on and tells every other radio in that workgroup to listen to that frequency. In use, the system is totally transparent; it doesn’t seem any different than using any other radio.

What does this mean for you? First, if the agency you want to listen to uses a trunking system, you will need a trunking scanner. There are several different

Now imagine the waves in the water again. How can we describe them? One way is to measure the distance between peaks or valleys. In radio terms this is called wavelength. We can also measure the height of each peak or depth of each valley. This is called amplitude. Finally, we can measure how many waves go past a point in a second. In radio terms, this is called frequency. Frequency is often noted in Hertz (cycles per second), Kilohertz (thousands of cycles per second), or Megahertz (millions of cycles per second).

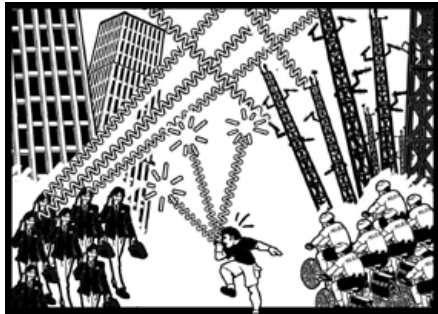
When dealing with radio devices, the property we consider most often is frequency. Every wireless communication takes place on a certain frequency. Just about every wireless device has a different but discernable frequency. For example, a commercial radio station might be around 100.5 Megahertz (MHz), a cell phone might operate around 800 MHz, and a laptop using wireless internet might operate around 2,400 MHz (or 2.4 Gigahertz).



Special tip for travelers: Most train yards use a radio system to communicate with the tower and coordinate between the bulls. A scanner could prove mighty handy in getting on the right train and keeping out of jail.

Tip: You may find that a key to the “police code”—the jargon used on the air by your local police department—is available for download off the internet.

Remember: Your radio is no substitute for your eyes and ears. Keep your head up and stay alert in the streets.



*Channel: Each channel on a radio refers to a different frequency.
Band: A band is a range of frequencies.*

Tip: Only one person can broadcast on a radio frequency at a time, so keep your transmissions brief, and don't try to talk over anyone.

Tip: When using a radio, speak calmly, and keep the microphone six to twelve inches from your mouth. Talking too loudly or too close will turn your transmission into a garbled mess.

trunking systems, so before getting a scanner, figure out which kind you'll need. The scanner I have can scan Motorola or EDACS trunked systems, which account for almost all of them. You'll also have to read your manual and learn how to program in the system you want to listen to. It's not that hard, I promise! Also, if you're scanning around and hear a bunch of random tidbits that don't relate to one another all on the same frequency, you're probably listening to bits of a trunked system.

A very small amount of agencies are now using "digital" trunking. I don't know much about this yet, except that you have to get a really expensive scanner to follow it. If your local department uses this, you might be shit out of luck.

If used properly, a scanner can keep you one step ahead of the police in the streets. At a recent small-scale street protest in a little college town, we used one to learn where police were setting up, how many of them there were, and what their standing orders were. They even unknowingly helped us find the local Starbucks and Army recruiting station! This allowed us to maneuver around town without getting cornered, and to disperse before they were ordered to arrest us. Not bad!

FRS/GMRS Radio

I most frequently see people at protests attempting to communicate by means of FRS (Family Radio Service) or GMRS (General Mobile Radio Service) walkie-talkies. These radios are often available on the "optional payment plan" at department stores, outdoor stores, Wal-Mart, and so on. Though they are cheap or free, these radios have severe limitations.

The Family Radio Service is one of the "Citizen's Bands" designated by the FCC to permit families and friends to communicate over short distances. You don't have to have a license to use one. However, the FCC has severely limited the output power on FRS radios, which means that at most they have only a one mile range. In practice, this range is much shorter, especially in major cities where there are many tall concrete buildings and other kinds of interference. My humble opinion is that these radios are totally useless in any important situation. They are simply not reliable, not to mention static-ridden. I've seen FRS radios fail to communicate over a distance of only one block!

The General Mobile Radio Service is a radio service specifically established by the FCC "for short-distance two-way communications to facilitate the activities of an adult individual and his or her immediate family members." The regulations allow for more powerful transmitters (1 to 5 watts), which means that GMRS radios have a significantly greater range. These radios tend to be much higher quality. However, in order to legally operate a GMRS radio, you must first obtain a license from the FCC. I am still somewhat dubious about how effective these radios can be in direct action, but they are definitely a much better option than FRS radios.

The operation of FRS and GMRS radios is basically the same, and usually very simple. There is typically a small LCD screen that displays a number prominently. This is the channel you're operating on. Everyone who wishes to communicate together must set their walkie-talkie to the same frequency. Some radios also have what is referred to as a "decoder" or "digital decoder." If your radio has this, a smaller number will appear next to the channel number. This is the decoder number. A decoder allows your radio to filter out unwanted transmissions by only letting those with the right decoder message through. If you are communicating in a network that has some radios with decoders and some without, those radios with decoders must set their decoder number to "0" in order to be understood by the others. Check your manual to learn how to do this.

Amateur Radio Service (Ham Radio)

Ham radio is a service specified by the FCC to allow individuals solely with a personal interest (as opposed to economic interest) to operate on several different radio bands. The ham radio specification gives an operator a lot of freedom as to the frequencies and equipment she can legally use.

The benefits of ham radio are extensive. The specification allows the use of transmitters as powerful as 1000 watts in some cases! It also allows you to use frequencies that are so low that their wavelength can be 10 or 20 or more meters

long. This means that the signal can travel extreme distances before fading. People have often used ham radio to communicate with people halfway around the world! You can even use ham radio to bounce a signal off satellites or the moon.

Like any thing else, though, ham radio has its downsides. For one, legally, you have to be licensed to operate a ham radio. Also, the equipment can be relatively expensive and difficult to obtain. It can also be a bit more complicated to operate.

The licensing process for ham radio is pretty straightforward. Local ham radio hobby groups sponsor testing all over the country. You can find out where the nearest test is being given at www.arrl.org. To study for the test, I recommend finding a copy of *Now You're Talking!* This book covers everything you need to know for the test. Honestly though, the test is very easy. If you're pressed for time, consider just reading through the questions in the back of the book: these include every possible question that could be given on the exam.

First, you'll want to take the "Technician" exam. This will give you access to the most popular ham radio bands. If you get really interested, you might consider taking the "Tech Plus" (for which you'll need to learn Morse code), "General," or "Extra" exams, each of which offers added privileges. Another reason to own a ham radio license is that it often gives you the right to carry a scanner on the street. Many states have ordinances prohibiting this, but they usually have exceptions for licensed amateurs.

Ham radios have a great deal of potential for our purposes. There are many handheld ham radios available that would be perfect for use in the streets. Because these radios are relatively small, they are usually limited to only 5 or 6 watts, which is relatively low. However, amateur hobbyists have set up a network of "repeaters" all over the country that allow you to extend the range of your radio. Essentially, a repeater is a station that receives broadcasts on one frequency, and then rebroadcasts them on a slightly different one; for example, a repeater could pick up a transmission from a relatively weak handheld radio and rebroadcast it at a few hundred watts or more. Suddenly, the range of that relatively weak handheld becomes immense. Imagine a comms team able to communicate not only throughout a whole city, but an entire region!

All in all, I think ham radio is a valuable resource. I find it to be a much better option than FRS or GMRS for anyone that can acquire the technology and take the time to get the license.

SMS Text Messaging

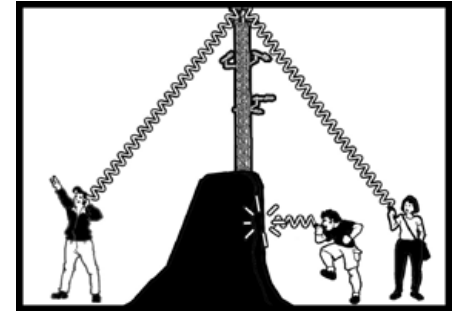
For anyone that's been living in a cave recently—I'm envious. But you may not have heard about this wonderful technology! SMS text messaging is the same thing that people all over the place are using to send little notes back and forth between cell phones. Basically, it's a protocol that allows people to send simple plain-text messages to each other via wireless devices.

SMS doesn't just work on cell phones either. You can also receive messages with an alphanumeric pager. They've even created little two-way pagers that have a full keyboard so you can receive and respond to text messages.

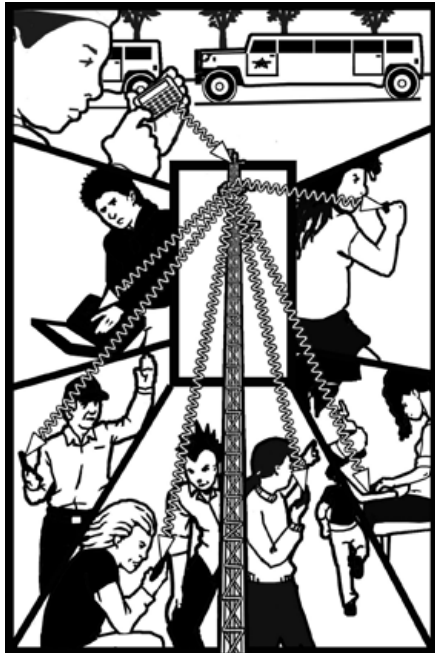
A corporate defector I know grabbed a few of these two-way pagers for me once. They turned out to be very useful. Messages came in without any possible loss of clarity. They worked almost anywhere, and you could respond quickly. I'm not sure how much the service cost because a major investment firm was paying for mine, but I've heard that it's somewhere between \$10 and \$20 a month.

The recent release of txtmob.com really established text messaging as a tactical tool. [Txtmob.com](http://txtmob.com) is the brainchild of those lovely people over at the institute of applied autonomy (appliedautonomy.com). Essentially, the service acts like an email list. People subscribe to a group, and messages sent to the group get rebroadcast to everyone else in the group. Just like an email list, a [txtmob](http://txtmob.com) group can be invite-only or open for anyone to join, and it can be moderated (only one person can send messages to the group) or unmoderated (anyone can send to the group).

[Txtmob](http://txtmob.com) was created for use during the Democratic National Convention protests in Boston. It was used by the Indymedia collective to rebroadcast reports as they received them. In this way people were sent timely and clear information



Did You Know: You can make computers communicate via ham radio, and even make phone calls?!



Remember: Any transmission that goes out over radio waves can and will be heard by the authorities.

Tip: Don't use too many codes. In a stressful situation, militants will be hard-pressed to remember the meaning of codes they're supposed to use on air, and the quality of communication will deteriorate.

regarding the activities of police and protesters in the streets.

I find this technology to be one of the most promising to protesters in the next few years. To begin with, SMS enable devices are all over the place, many people have SMS enable cell-phones, and pagers are pretty cheap. SMS can enable a large number of people to communicate almost simultaneously and with little risk of distortion or confusion. In addition, SMS devices are almost always in signal range, and messages can be broadcast across the country.

Putting It All Together

I can already hear you squirming impatiently in your seat, dear reader. You're saying, "The technology's all fine and good, but how can we use it to form effective comms teams?" In all honesty, I'm not a hundred percent sure. I have yet to operate with a comms team that worked to my complete satisfaction. However, I do have some good tips about using comms, and some ideas as to what a really good comms team might look like.

Comms Team Structure

The most important step in forming a solid communications infrastructure for an action is getting right people for the job. Those participating in a comms team should, ideally, be cool, calm, and quick-witted. There are many roles individuals can play, and it's important to match the right person to each one.

The most visible member of the comms team is the scout. Scouts are primarily useful in a mass-protest or march situation. It is their job to collect information about the movements of the police or any other potential threat to the action actually occurring. Scouts should make efforts to make themselves hard to spot and hard to capture. To this end, I've used two basic approaches: bicycles and disguises. Bicycles are great for scouts because they allow them to move very quickly about a large area. A quick and experienced bicyclist is also very difficult to stop and arrest. Disguise is a more effective technique if the group needs continuous updates on or from a given location. In the past, I've scouted an area by donning a nice suit and drinking coffee on a patio of interest. No one thinks twice about a "business person" drinking coffee and talking on a cell phone or typing on a laptop.

I believe a solid comms group should also include someone whose sole job is to monitor police transmissions. In some cases, it is actually beneficial to have several people doing this. I say this because a person can only listen in on one transmission at a time, but in a mass-protest situation there will likely be lots of police transmissions occurring simultaneously. It would be the duty of those filling this role to report back on any announced police strategies, movements, arrests, standing orders, and so on.

Scouts and radio monitors will, in many circumstances, be generating a great deal of information—too much, perhaps, to make any sense to the great majority of people participating in the action. For this reason, I believe that it can be necessary to have several people whose task it is to sort through the information, pick out the pertinent parts, and re-broadcast these to the masses. Perhaps we could call these people the vanguard! Seriously though, I do think that some situations might warrant a small level of centralization in this regard. Individuals occupying this position could make sure that important information is relayed by as many types of media as possible: e.g., radio, text messaging, cell phone calls, and so on. They could also find and disseminate crucial logistical data, such as potential alternate routes, by looking at street maps, sewer maps, and such.

At the protests against the World Bank that occurred in Prague late in 2000, there was an information clearinghouse in the form of a room with several telephones operated by people equipped with maps. They received constant updates as events developed, and plotted the movements of police and protesters on these maps; they also took phone calls from demonstrators in need of this information. By many accounts, this service was critical to the success of the protests.

Of course, your comms team may find it handy to have a tech-geek around. (I volunteer!) This person could make sure that the radios are working right, the scanners are programmed, the txtmob list is set up, the repeaters are functional, and so forth.

Account

The most successful comms team I've worked with was involved in a police brutality march in my hometown. Several months prior to it, a young and unarmed man of color had been brutally shot to death by the local pigs. There had been a great deal of outcry at the time, and during the raucous protests that followed we'd befriended some of the slain man's friends. They had organized this police brutality march and asked us to support it. We gladly volunteered, but didn't want to usurp the protest and turn it into an "anarchist" or worse yet "middle-class white kid" march. So we spoke with the organizers and decided that we would act as a comms team that could help monitor the situation and bring in physical support if needed.

The march was set to occur in the downtown financial district—which, as you may guess, is not often frequented by ragamuffin punk kids. Accordingly, we decided to go in disguise. We all pulled out our best court clothes, and teamed up in pairs. Each pair had a cell phone and an item capable of receiving txt messages, and some had walkie-talkies. These groups walked around and acted as scouts.

There was also a group of two or three that stationed themselves poolside at a fancy downtown hotel. Their job was to monitor the situation, and keep everyone advised on updates. This group was equipped with small walkie-talkies, cell phones, a laptop, and a well-concealed police scanner. They operated a phone tree to relay information and operated the txt-mob list.

As it turned out, the organizers we had befriended fell far short of their goals for turnout. This prevented the march from becoming the raucous event we thought it might, but also made it even more dangerous for the relatively small group that took the streets. Still, because we were able to keep abreast of police movements and similar developments, the protesters stayed safe, succeeded in blocking downtown traffic, and were able to drop several banners from high-visibility locations. After everything was done, they were all very grateful for our presence—they thought we were just about the most ninja thing they had ever seen. We even had to kindly excuse ourselves when they wanted to take group photos with all our undercover agents!

I think that this example offers a good starting model for the kind of comms groups we should be working to perfect. I've often imagined a horde of highly informed protesters emerging from all sorts of crevices and alleys to descend upon an out-maneuvered police force. Such actions are a definite possibility for us if we take comms more seriously. As more of us learn to utilize the available technologies and strategize accordingly, we'll become more and more capable of dealing with and confronting even the most well-equipped and well-trained police forces. And then—well, maybe my next article will be on military comms equipment for anarchist insurgent forces.

See you at the barricades—IMPACT!



Did You Know: You can make a radio repeater very simply with two radios. A repeater receives a signal on one channel, and rebroadcasts it on another; this is handy for increasing the range of a radio signal, or for allowing someone to hear the same signal on several different bands—for example, you could pick up a ham radio signal and rebroadcast it on a GMRS frequency.

To do this, you need a radio capable of receiving the signal in question, and another radio capable of broadcasting on the desired output frequency. You'll need to take these radios to an electronics store and find a cable or an adapter that allows you to connect the headphone (output) jack of the receiver to the microphone (input) jack of the transmitter. Connect the two devices. Depending on your output radio, you may need to turn on "vox" or "accessory vox." You may need to fiddle around with it, but it should work just like that.

¹ If the author is referring to the unpermitted march to which this editor guesses he is referring, a certain comic development cannot go unmentioned here. At one point, the bicycle scouts—some of precious few locals who actually knew where we were and where we were going—got separated from the march. We would have been entirely lost and at the mercy of the pursuing police, if not for the comms agent in our midst. Thanks to that individual's skillful operation of the police scanner, we were able to navigate through the city by means of their announcements plotting our movements, finally dispersing safely at a location to which they had unwittingly guided us by announcing their concerns that we might be headed there.



From an old folk tale, or a story reputed to be one; for Asimina, who told the bones of it to the author.

The Littlest

Far, far away in time and space, there once lived a young woman. She was a little taller than most women were those days, and had especially long, dark hair; but the peculiarity that set her apart from others before or since, the one unforgettable attribute the storytellers all agree on, was the character of her hands: she had the longest, nimblest fingers her countryfolk had ever heard tell of or laid eyes on.

The country she shared with them was as frigid and forbidding as only the setting of a fairytale can be. All winter long, it was black, and dark clouds rushed over unbroken snowfields on unspeakable errands; all summer, it was grey, and a freezing wind blew hail against the faces of the small tribes of hunters who lived there. They crossed and crisscrossed the regions of ice, following the packs of glacier dogs who provided their only meat in that unkindly climate.

Since the beginning of time, the cold had chilled these people to the bone. The first motion in the womb was a shiver, as was the last, on the deathbed, when the flesh finally released its little spark of warmth and welcomed that chill. All the time between, hunting, eating, sleeping, running, kissing, was spent in taut re-

sistance, every muscle rigid, every body tense. Tension was ubiquitous in these people; that is to say, it was invisible. It had molded every attitude, every custom, every posture; but while they did indeed have as many words for snow as their moon's cycle had days, they had no name to identify this tension, having never been free from it.

Born into this setting, our heroine grew up, like her peers, austere and aloof. Only at the end of adolescence did her singularity manifest itself: more than any of the other children, the girl with the long fingers was dreamy, faraway, introverted. She had been given one present at her coming of age ceremony, a crudely fashioned guitar with strings made from dog sinew, and she sat alone with it, constantly, struggling to play it with her numb, clumsy fingers. The few muffled notes she managed to wring from it were as much as anyone in that land had ever been able to: the cold temperatures and the stiffness of their joints precluded anything else. Yet she sat, sadly, listening in the silences between strums to the universes of music it seemed must exist elsewhere.

As she grew into adulthood, the fame of her cool beauty spread far across the permafrost, and the question of matrimony arose. There were twelve tribes besides her own in this land, and in each of these

tribes there was a chieftain's son who was ready to marry. These sons traveled one by one, across the snow and through ice storms, to court her; but she turned each one away, sitting there somberly with her guitar, prying a crooked note from it from time to time and sighing. The young men went away grim, embittered, some deeply offended at her offhand rejection. Marriage prospects were rare in this place, and after all, they were the sons of chieftains, not used to being denied.

And so for a few more years she lived alone at the edge of her tribe's small settlement of igloos. She lived alone until the morning when, venturing forth from her shelter after a particularly violent blizzard, she descried a small, dark shape in the snow. Approaching, she discovered it was the body of a tiny dog, too meager to make for good eating, practically frozen stiff. Moved by a sentiment she could not recognize, she took it in her arms, and brought it back to her bed. All that day it lay there beneath the skins and furs, heart barely shuddering in its bony chest, as she sat with her guitar, toiling as usual to extract a few pained notes from it with the wood blocks of her fingers. Amazing to tell, by the time she lay down to sleep again, the little animal was breathing perceptibly.



All that night she slept with him against her body, and in the morning he was a live dog again. Indeed, a remarkable warmth had come into his body, and he leapt and frolicked quietly as she patiently broke her heart against the uncaring strings; and when again she lay down to sleep, he crept into her arms and wrapped his scrawny body tightly around her impossibly long fingers, as if by careful design.

And so it happened that, on the following day, she awoke to a sensation she had never felt before, that perhaps it had been long generations since her countryfolk had felt. At first she was unable to recognize or understand it: it was as if there was a pain in her fingers, a sweet, sharp pain, but it was not a pain. She shook them, then, more slowly, flexed them, and found that they danced before her like a line of bal-

lerinas. It took her a full minute more to realize what she must do, and by then it was almost too late: she scrambled for her guitar, and in the instants before the cold gnawed back into them her fingers fluttered up and down its fretboard. A wave of song flooded out such as her ears had never heard—perhaps it was the first such melody any ears had heard in that region of the earth—and fell silent, as the frost

reasserted its sovereignty. Wet tears, real drops of salty water, flowed down her face, and formed icicles on her cheeks: the universe she had dreamed of did exist, and she had beheld it.

To look through this window into the infinite and then have it shut before her was almost unbearable. The remainder of the day, she stayed far from the guitar, angry beyond reason that it could give

her such a glimpse and then cut her off as she reached out. That night, finally, reluctantly, she returned to her bed—and there was the dog again, a little less gaunt, waiting for her, a warm thing in a world of cold. She lay down, and again he pushed into her arms and enfolded her hands—and she lay there, breathlessly, waiting for sleep and almost fighting it off with hope and fear.

And so it was that the next morning when she awoke, barely rested, she knew exactly what to do with her prickling, freshly fluid hands. She seized the guitar immediately by her bedside and set her fingers to it, and the sounds that swelled forth were heavenly. Her neighbors all, one by one, froze in their morning rituals, and, hypnotized, followed the unearthly sound to its source at the threshold of her

igloo. It was another thirty seconds before her fingers fell again to benumbed silence, and in that eternity her kinsfolk heard things they had never dreamed of, laughing brooks and fluttering butterflies and sunshine upon blowing sheaves of wheat. When the moment had passed they remained there, arrested, speechless before this vista she had thrown open to them, all those visions for which they had no names still hanging in their eyes. Lacking words, they finally returned to their tasks in mystified silence.

But the next day, of course, they awakened before even her and hurried to hear what might spring from her fingertips. And once more, the little dog having spent the night pressed against her chest, her fingers were limber, and she was able to play, to summon melodies even more magical than those of the morning before. These lasted a few precious moments, no longer than the song of the preceding day; then her blood ran cold and silence reigned again.

So it came to pass in this settlement that every morning the village folk would gather to hear their kinswoman play otherworldly music for their attentive ears. She became a seer of sorts for them, a sorceress whose strange ways they did not understand but whose craft each treasured as the breath of life itself. She too, keeping herself to herself, did not feel she understood; but so long as the divine was pleased to speak through her, she would give it voice.

Word of this new wonder spread to the twelve other tribes scattered across the snow, and her kinsfolk speculated that soon the twelve chieftains' sons would set out again to seek her hand in marriage. She was happy in her strange life, as happy as she had ever been; and if she was certain of one thing, it was that she did not want to give up her place as intermediary of the infinite to be a mere wife of a chieftain's son. She pondered long and hard how she might once and for all ward off their attentions, and finally, after a performance one morning, addressed an announcement to her neighbors.

She explained, as simply as one might explain anything, that she had indeed chosen a suitor to be her husband: at the end of the moon's cycle, as was the custom,

she would wed her partner in life, the dog with whom she spent each night's sleep.

The other members of her tribe were uneasy about her announcement. No one had ever done such a thing—who could know what the gods would feel about it? Still, as they thought it over, her disclosure began to seem less unusual. She was already different: she lived apart from them, she channeled music from another world, she seemed even to obey laws of a different nature; and so most concluded that, as one simply could not know what was customary or common for such a woman, it was best to keep a safe distance and let her do as she would. And so she and the little dog—which, thanks to her care, was now somewhat more robust, and even elicited hungry sidelong glances from time to time—were married at the conclusion of that moon's cycle, much to the bewilderment of everyone who was to hear about this for years and years.

Reports of this further strange development spread close on the heels of the last news to the campsites of the other twelve tribes, and cut a path straight to the ears of the chieftains and the chieftains' sons. The chieftains scoffed and sneered to hear of this strange girl who had married an animal scarcely fit to be eaten, and their sons, ears reddening at the thought that they had only recently pursued this madwoman, chaffed and spat with contempt. And some of these young men did not let the thought pass; a couple did not jeer or spit at all, but sat in the chill winds darkly brooding on the affront that had been done them by this arrogant girl. That she would refuse them and marry a dog! The ache in the ever-tight muscles of their shivering bodies, the constant constriction of the cold, had turned these youths sour and grim.

Another cycle of the moon passed, and it came time for the yearly council of the tribes. Each tribe sent its strongest, sharpest young men across the plateaus of ice, and they gathered to discuss the year's events and settle minor disputes. Among these young men, of course, were the twelve spurned suitors, and after the more pressing topics had been addressed, they fell to talking about the woman who had

refused all of them to wed a four-legged beast. The discussion wore on, a distraction in the biting cold, each endeavoring to outdo the others in swaggering indignation; and finally the gang decided that she must be punished for her insolence.

In the meantime, the guitarist and her dog had been living quietly and happily, after their fashion, on the outskirts of their encampment. She rose at the commencement of each day to serenade the villagers with a new fragment of song, and spent the rest of her hours nursing her numb fingers in a quiet contemplation punctuated only by the simple tasks and chores of arctic life. She had no reason to fear or expect changes; as far as she could tell, all the world had forgotten them here, except in the moments when her neighbors came to hear her play.

So it was with confusion that she regarded the tidings that a host of men, the same men whose courting she had refused, were approaching her campsite. Hadn't she turned them away already, leaving no doubts as to her decision? What could they possibly want from her now? Perhaps they, too, only wished to hear her play, as her neighbors did. That was fine; she could play for them as well.

The men arrived at her igloo at the dawn of a new hunting day, at the same hour that her neighbors gathered to begin their day with her melodies. These outsiders were led by one hulking, wicked fellow with a face contracted into a permanent grimace and teeth that chattered constantly, as if some parasitic insect were broadcasting its territorial rights from his tongue. "We've come to see justice done and lessons taught," he informed the villagers coarsely, and they all shrank, shivering, from his icy stare.

The guitarist emerged a moment late that morning, hurrying out with the red in her long fingers already fading as she raised the crude instrument to her knee. The hulking fellow struck it out of her hand immediately, and before she could register her surprise, two others seized her by the arms and dragged her away from it. The dog appeared at the threshold of her igloo, curious about the commotion; one of the men forced it back inside with a swift

kick. Her kinsfolk looked on in shock, but took no action: nothing like this had happened in their camp before, but then, no one like her had ever been a part of their tribe—she had played strange music, she had married strangely, and now strangers had arrived to take her away. Everything about her took place in another jurisdiction; she was beyond their understanding or interference.

Coming to grips with the situation, she struggled to turn and face the severe, expressionless brute who had almost smashed her guitar. "Before you do whatever you have planned," she counseled, calmly, as the two men fought to restrain her, "let me play for you. Just one minute. Let me play." She looked at the guitar lying a few feet away, and blanched involuntarily as she felt her fingers swiftly turning back to blocks of ice. Then she fixed her eyes hard upon his and waited, each second an eternity.

He stared back at her, unflinching, and then, without removing his eyes from hers, placed his boot squarely upon the neck of her guitar, and pressed down until it splintered. "We're taking her away," he informed the onlookers, and turned to lead his companions out of the camp. They followed, forcing the defiant guitarist with them. The villagers witnessed all this in stony silence, frozen where they stood.

Out they marched, until the camp was a speck on the horizon, until it had disappeared under the horizon. They were resolved to take her into the region beyond the edge of the world, the wasteland where no one dared venture, and leave her there to think on her insolence. Blood-chilling blasts of blizzard wind beat their faces and tore at her wrists, still bare and gripped in the mittened fists of the men who pushed her forward. On and on they trekked. At a distance, unseen by all, the little dog followed, a tiny black speck in a storm of white.

Finally, they came to the place their ancestors had only heard of in tall tales, the edge of the world. Here, the ice ended and fell away, and all that remained up to the seam of the horizon was a reflection of the sky: a boundless body of water, churning with troubled currents, dark as the empty eyes of those men standing upon the first

coastline they had ever reached. She looked out across the mysterious, merciless expanse, and struggled to flex her frostbitten fingers in her captors' clasp, cursing them and bitter life in the same breath. The music she had believed in, lived for, and even given voice to once upon a time seemed quite far away now. Then, shuddering, she beheld something more fantastic and frightening. Resting by the side of this sea, as if by fate, was an ancient relic: a battered little wooden boat, with a single cracked oar lying inside.

The tribesmen had no idea how to handle such a boat, but it was clear enough from its appearance what it could do. Some of them had developed cold feet; it seemed it should be enough to leave the offending woman here, to give her a good scare from which she might yet return to her people with more humility. But the hulking one with the permanent scowl was only getting a taste of the powers he wished to exercise. Growling through his ever-chattering teeth, he demanded to know which of the men were true sons of chieftains, which ones would come with him over the water in the strange sleigh that, clearly, had been placed here by the gods to bear this woman to the doom her hubris ordained. Most of the men shrank away, their hearts not yet totally anesthetized by the cold; but a few stepped forward, other silent monsters in whom the ceaseless rigors of the climate had instilled a similar rigidity.

They pushed her into the prow and piled in behind her, shoving off from the side of that great glacier. Still held by two of them, she watched the coast shrink behind them, a third man grappled with the oar against the antagonistic waters. With a little jump of hope, she spied her tiny companion as he entered the water to the left of the men on the shoreline and paddled after the boat. He fought valiantly against the waves to keep up, a little black dot in a sea of grey; but the boat was swifter, and the sea freezing, and at last the poor creature turned back towards the shore.

Finally they reached oblivion, that space beyond the earth where no land is visible in any direction. Now all the men but the one hesitated; she thought her chance had

come. Looking deep into the eyes of the man gripping her right arm, she stared him down, and when he loosened his grip, she shoved him back and sprang up, twisting her other arm free. She made a dive for the man with the oar—but the man with the grimace leaped forward while her balance was unsteady, and, with a push, sent her sailing into the frigid sea.

The cold shot into her like a volley of knives. Yet even as the nerves went dead in her body, a fierce fire animated her heart, and she kicked against the water and rose to the surface. For the first time, her hands were free, and she seized the lip of the boat with them in a grip that could not be broken. The men pried and pushed and beat upon her fingers, but, numb though her limbs were, her grasp held, and nothing they could do could disengage her.

At that moment, the grim, frozen-faced one drew out his stout, dark-bladed knife, and there was a hush as everyone apprehended what was about to happen. The other men shrank back, averting their eyes, as he raised the weapon and brought it down upon her long fingers, severing all ten of them in one blow. In silent slow motion, she and the fingers fell back into the water.

She floated there as the boat departed, struggling against unconsciousness to hold her breath, gazing down into the water and watching as her fingers sank slowly past her into the bottomless black of the ocean below. Soon she was alone in the middle of an empty sea, with no features in the gathering darkness but the ten distant white lights of her sinking fingers. Everything became dimmer and dimmer and slower and slower; and though she fought hard to stay awake, the world began to recede as the cold entered the last chambers of her heart.

But presently, something extraordinary happened: though the fingers were getting more and more distant, they appeared to be growing greater and greater in size. Certain she was hallucinating, she blinked, and tried to move her leaden limbs in the frigid water. That was impossible—but at the same time, it was clear now that the fingers were indeed changing size and shape. Soon, they seemed to be returning, moving upwards out of the black depths,

grown to enormous proportions. As they approached, gliding gracefully through the waters, she could see that they were returning in a different form: they had become great finned sea animals—porpoises, in fact, though she had never encountered such beings before.

These creatures swam nearer, until they were circling close around her, looking into

her face with what she imagined were encouraging expressions. One of them swam between her legs, and lifted her up out of the water on its back. Its body was almost warm, and as she breathed air again she felt a tiny spark of life return to her own. With her hands reduced to palms, she could not grasp, but she wrapped her arms around it and held on as best she could,

clasping herself to it for dear life as it set out across the seas with the others leaping and dancing in the waters around.

For what seemed like weeks they traveled like this, her companions taking turns carefully bearing her across the surface of the sea, until eventually she began to feel something distantly familiar in her body. It was that sweet, sharp prickling she had

once experienced in her fingers, only now it seemed to be spreading to every limb. As the first sun she had ever seen appeared from behind the clouds overhead, her muscles loosened and her body became almost as fluid as the warm waters through which they were passing. The tension flowed out into the sea around—and at that moment, pressing her body tight against the skin of

her mount, she beheld it upon the horizon: the land she had heard in those songs, on those mornings so long ago when she had played the guitar. There were green trees, leaves trembling in sea breezes, seals sunning themselves on the shore; there were coconuts dangling in the branches, and monkeys tugging at them, and calico crabs at play on the golden sands of the beach.

And the storytellers relate that she lived there, happily ever after, in that world she had once visited in those moments of song; though, fingerless, she never could again evoke it in music. No matter: with the iron grip of that cold released from her arms and thighs, she danced those songs of joy across the shores with her body for an instrument. ¶



I lie to you



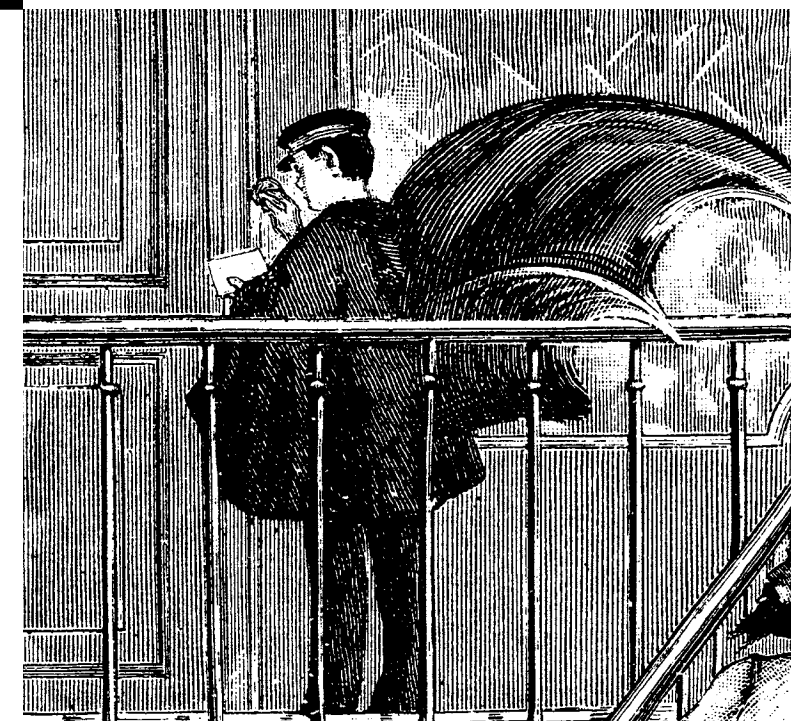
because I cannot accept the truth—at least not this truth. I delay, desperately, wishing each night as I fall asleep that I will somehow awaken in another world. Each morning I do not, I steel myself against reality so I might come through another day without acknowledging it—and try my luck once more, more desperately, that night.



because I fear you, as well as the truth. I am not prepared to confront it, and neither are you, and you've made that absolutely clear.

because there are sides to this truth that are inexpressible, invisible to outside eyes, and these have become precious to me. Such treasures are crushed beneath the weight of words, become mere scandal, wreckage, dust. I love you, but I will not raze my secret cities to rubbish heaps and shame for you.

because I don't know how to communicate this truth to you. Should I tell it in the words by which I would apprehend it myself, even if you will interpret them to designate something entirely different? Or should I tell with words I hope will make you feel the way I believe you would feel if I could somehow convey it to you wordlessly and without distortion? Which is honesty? Which is lie?





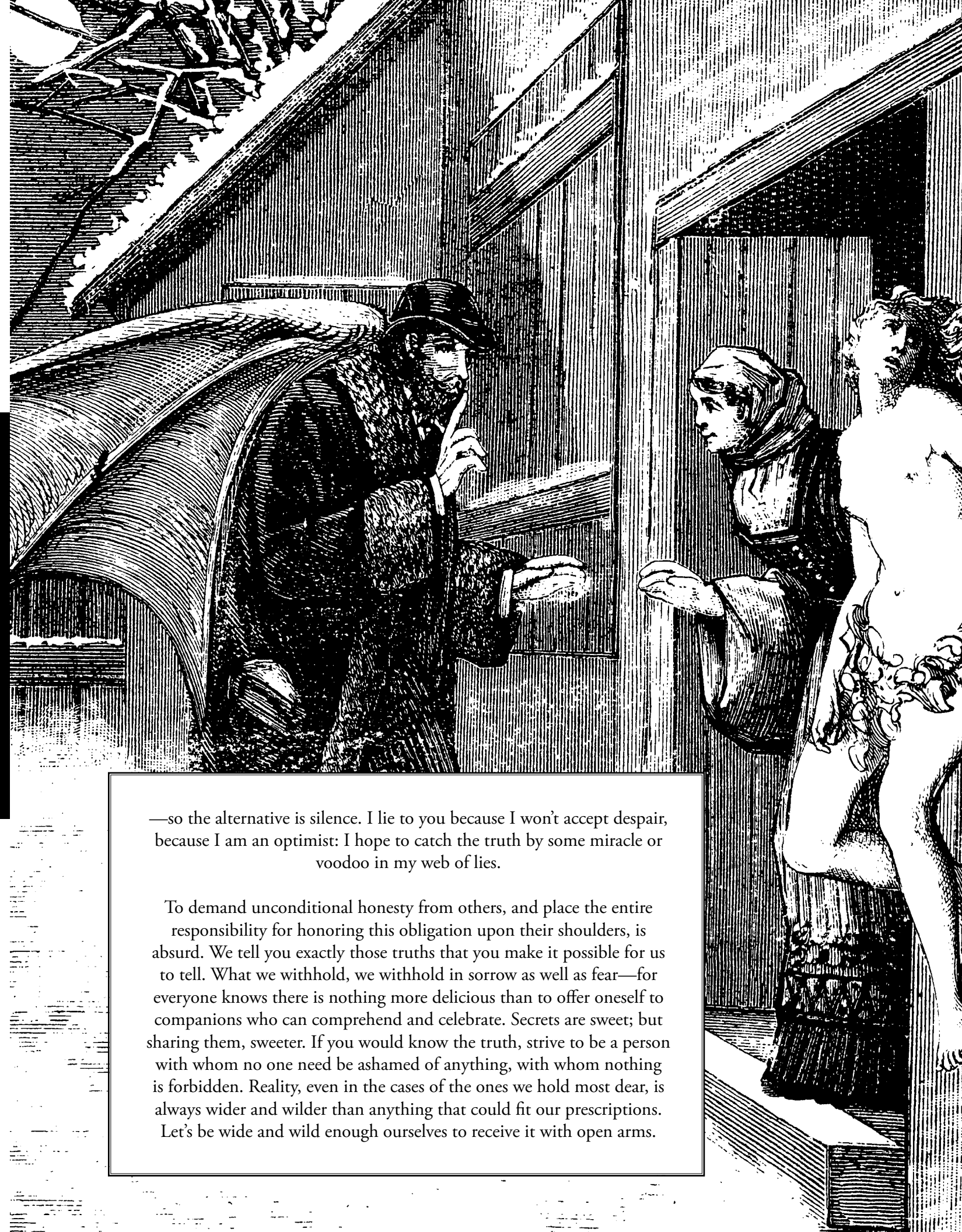
to preserve something, anything, of my own,
in this impersonal, impoverishing world.

because I am a coward, of course. Or is it
because a hidden demon in me delights
in trouble?

because this truth would destroy us all. I
shoulder this crime, dishonesty, as a defender
of humanity and all things beautiful . . .



because words lie in my mouth—in any
mouth. Words cannot express anything
that matters—



—so the alternative is silence. I lie to you because I won't accept despair,
because I am an optimist: I hope to catch the truth by some miracle or
voodoo in my web of lies.

To demand unconditional honesty from others, and place the entire
responsibility for honoring this obligation upon their shoulders, is
absurd. We tell you exactly those truths that you make it possible for us
to tell. What we withhold, we withhold in sorrow as well as fear—for
everyone knows there is nothing more delicious than to offer oneself to
companions who can comprehend and celebrate. Secrets are sweet; but
sharing them, sweeter. If you would know the truth, strive to be a person
with whom no one need be ashamed of anything, with whom nothing
is forbidden. Reality, even in the cases of the ones we hold most dear, is
always wider and wilder than anything that could fit our prescriptions.
Let's be wide and wild enough ourselves to receive it with open arms.

Poetry

The Invisible Sovereign

Rita Mae Brown

I have sat upon this pile of broken bottles
Feeling the pain no longer
Until I shift my weight
And am cut anew.
As blind men fear glass
I fear and find myself amid the terror,
A forest of frightening familiars.
Blind go I
But for her voice
Calling me through a smashed world
And calling up the awesome world within me.
Strangely, she stops now and then.
And you can see me, unseeing
Perched atop this decomposed glass city
Like some emaciated scarecrow
Ravaged by ulcerous holes within
Where a world once was,
Listening, listening.

Reportback from the Conference Revolution

Cliché Guevara

The anarchists are defeated
Conquered by anarchism.

What they said was true enough,
But our feet never left the floor;
And as my report, too,
Must be true, however short,
I am forced to relate
That Ms. Milstein complained about the availability of parking,
Dozens of professed teen saboteurs
Drank and hooked up at the show,
And thousands upon thousands of badly photocopied handouts
Were collected and never read.
Where freedom of speech accustoms us
To words without action,
To sorrow without tears,
To outrage without outcry,
I would sooner and more proudly
Earn and wear a gag.

Be great, Anarchy,
Or do not exist.

Matthew XXV: 30

a fragment from Jorge Borges

“Stars, bread, libraries of East and West,
playing-cards, chessboards, galleries, skylights, cellars,
a human body to walk with on the earth,
fingernails, growing at nighttime and in death,
shadows for forgetting, mirrors busily multiplying,
cascades in music, gentlest of all time’s shapes.
Borders of Brazil, Uruguay, horses and mornings,
a bronze weight, a copy of the Grettir Saga,
algebra and fire, the charge at Junin in your blood,
days more crowded than Balzac, scent of the honeysuckle,
love and the imminence of love and intolerable
remembering,
dreams like buried treasure, generous luck,
and memory itself, where a glance can make men dizzy—
all this was given to you, and with it
the ancient nourishment of heroes—
treachery, defeat, humiliation.
In vain have oceans been squandered on you, in vain
the sun, wonderfully seen through Whitman’s eyes.
You have used up the years and they have used up you,
and still, and still, you have not written the poem.”

Eulogy

*for Dan Young, one of the countless thousands who take their
lives rather than be taken*

even a rib cage
was too much confinement
for that heart

BANK BALL!

OK!

You'll need:

- A lightweight, rather large ball: a beach ball works well, but other balls probably work, too.
- A large open space: stuck in the city, we started playing this game in bank parking lots — hence the name.
- A bandana or piece of cloth.

So, one person, the "it," I guess, has the bandana sticking out of a back pocket. This person also has the beach ball. The "it" is trying to throw the ball at the other people to tag them — think dodgeball!

Right now, everyone is SPEEDWALKING. No running. It's hard, but it is much more fun this way.

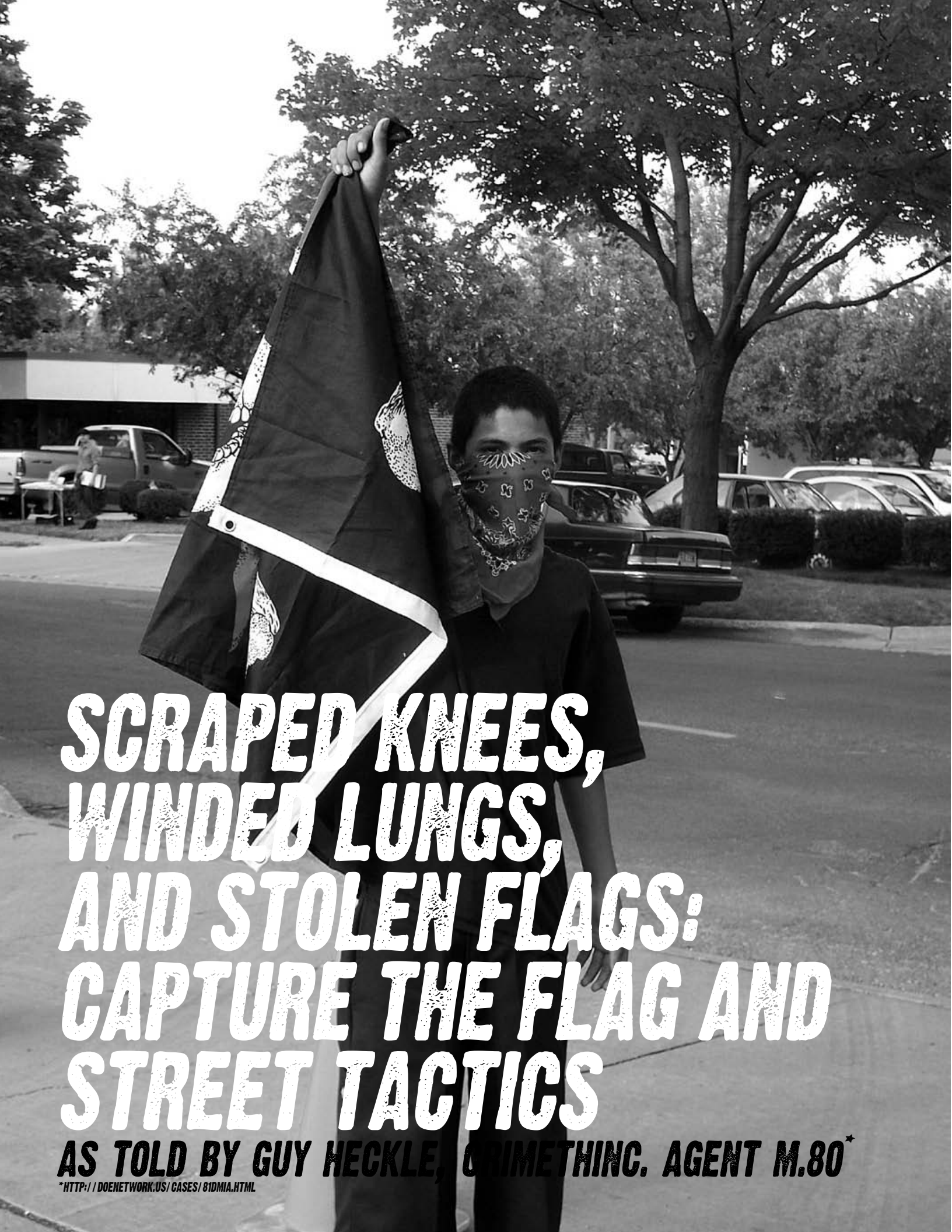
When whoever is "it" throws the ball, then and ONLY THEN, the person who is "it" can run until she gets the ball again. Then it's back to speedwalking for everyone.

Everyone who is not "it" is trying to capture the bandana from the back pocket of the person who is "it." But remember, everyone is speedwalking.

It definitely makes the game more exciting if the folks who are trying to get the bandana from "it" act like zombies or like they are in West Side Story.

When a person gets tagged or hit with the ball, she is frozen until someone goes under her legs — think freeze tag!

When someone grabs the bandana from the back pocket of the "it," she has to yell "Bankball!" before the "it" does — think Uno! If they don't, the bandana goes back to the person who was "it" before.



SCRAPED KNEES, WINDED LUNGS, AND STOLEN FLAGS: CAPTURE THE FLAG AND STREET TACTICS

AS TOLD BY GUY HECKLE, *SOMETHING*. AGENT M.80*

*[HTTP://DOENETWORK.US/CASES/81DMI.HTML](http://doenetwork.us/cases/81dmi.html)

When I was young, about eleven or so, I played my first game of Capture the Flag. We crashed through the woods around the Boy Scouts cabin, ran through poison ivy and mud, leapt fences and tackled each other in desperation and elation. I might never have remembered the feeling of invincibility that so completely possessed me those summers so long ago if it hadn't been for my comrades in Des Moines, who still play this thrilling game. Rediscovering the terrain of our childhood, we find together, a long lost world once characterized by wonder and possibility.

Capture the Flag also teaches urban exploration, cooperation, affinity group action, and stealth reconnaissance. It familiarizes players with public spaces to a degree nigh unimaginable to the typical urbanite; in exploring the secret nooks of their town, the players become intimately acquainted with spaces most—cops included!—barely know at all. Not only do we become proficient scouts, but, knowing the streets, we become more comfortable on them.

A group of friends accustomed to acting efficiently and effectively, adept at solving problems under stress and keeping clear heads in the face of danger, can accomplish just about anything. In honing these qualities, Capture the Flag raises generations of good citizens ready to do their part for a better tomorrow. Likewise, playing challenging, high energy games on a regular basis helps maintain momentum that can carry over into other activities.

RULES AND REGULATIONS

A game of Capture the Flag requires two or more equally matched teams, each presiding over a territory and guarding a flag. Anything can be a flag: a road-cone, a dog-eared copy of *Rolling Thunder*, a bag of bagels. The flag is located somewhere inside of the team's territory, visible from three or more directions, within arm's reach of the shortest person playing and easy for one person to remove. Each team also designates a jail where they can keep imprisoned opponents.

The objective of the game is to capture the opposing team's flag and carry it to your territory. If you are tagged by an opposing player in enemy territory, that player can take you to their jail. While escorting you to jail, the arresting player must hold your hand. If your escort re-

leases your hand, you can try to escape to your territory; if you do so without being tagged again, you are free. A player can only escort one person to jail at a time.

If you manage to capture another team's flag, you must return to your territory without being tagged; if you are tagged, you have to drop the flag and be escorted to jail. Only one player may guard the flag, and that player must stay ten paces away from it; all other teammates must stay fifteen paces away. If you manage to find the opposing team's jail and tag an imprisoned teammate, you have initiated a jailbreak: everyone in jail may go free and must return directly to their territory. They cannot be recaptured until they return to enemy territory. Only one person may guard the jail at any given time, and that player must stay five paces away from it at all times. All other teammates must stay ten paces away.

The game ends when one team has captured all of the flags in the game and brought them back to their territory. If more than two teams are playing, teams whose flags have been taken may "recapture" them; they must do so before capturing any other flags. After a game, if people wish to play more, it is often good to switch teammates and territories. Not only does this give players a chance to explore spaces from a different perspective, it also builds connections between players who would otherwise stay opposed to one another throughout the series of games.

VARIATIONS

Unarresting: You can replace the flag with a captive who must be returned to her territory. The prisoner is kept in constant motion via escort. Up to three people may escort the prisoner, but only one can hold the prisoner's hand. When a team rescues the prisoner, she does not get free passage to her team's territory; she must return without being captured. When she accomplishes this, the game is over.

Capture the Bag: You can replace the flag with a briefcase or backpack, placing this in a public area such as a bus stop, outdoor café, or playground. The opposing team must infiltrate this area, capture the bag, and return it to their territory. This incorporates the public into your game, challenging players to work crowds and navigate potentially awkward or even surreal social interactions. In one such game, a team hid their briefcase at a table at an

outdoor restaurant; members of the invading team approached the manager and mentioned having left a briefcase at their table. When the manager went to retrieve the case, there was nothing the defending team could do to protect it, short of a snatch-and-dash that would have brought police to the scene for sure.

Capture the Flags: On days set aside for sickening displays of nationalistic fervor, you can cut to the chase and fan out throughout your city to collect flags from dutiful patriots. The team that captures the most wins. Advanced players can use a point system: for example, one point per square foot of flag stolen, plus ten points for scaling walls, twenty for narrow escapes, fifty for stories involving police officers, and so on.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Make sure boundaries and territories are clear to everyone from the outset.

It can be helpful to use a signal for when the game is over, such as a bell, fog-horn, whistle, car alarm, or fireworks display, so no one is left in the area still hiding and searching for a nonexistent flag.

In an urban environment, it is important to be aware of traffic. Nothing spoils a game like somebody running in front of a four-door sedan going forty miles an hour. It can be wise to allow free passage across streets or establish neutral zones in busy areas. Be safe—don't get caught up in the game and stop considering your safety or the safety of your playmates.

These days, kids incorporate all the "modern conveniences" into every aspect of their lives. It might be beneficial to set rules regarding the use of cars, cell phones, and anything else that might throw the odds in a game. Sometimes these things can be fun—imagine a cell phone call to a pay phone to distract the jail guard for a jailbreak scheme. Other times they can ruin the game; Capture the Flag is all about unmediated experience.

Make sure everyone is having fun and no one gets carried away or upset. At the end of the night, it doesn't matter who ran the fastest or made the most amazing jailbreak, it's about transformation and participation, demanding excitement from that dull concrete and corporate architecture. If you succeed at that, everyone should walk away from the game feeling fulfilled, perhaps even inspired to further action.

ACCOUNT

It was a chilly February night, and the last band had just finished its set when a shadowy audience member began whispering to friends in the crowd: *Capture the Flag tonight, Nollen Plaza, eleven o'clock—bring your friends.* Word spread throughout the venue and through cellular phones to the ears of those not present. Parents were called and told that their children would be coming home a little later than expected. Momentum grew and grew. The provocateur arrived downtown to find over forty people ready to get down and dirty in the surrounding alleys. Boundaries were negotiated, teams were chosen at random, and flags were designated: a tattered American flag and a fresh Jolly Roger.

I remember distinctly the looks of confusion and fear on the faces of bar patrons and club-goers that night. We covered our faces with black and white bandanas to separate the teams; we looked like bandits, madly shouting and laughing in the parking lots, alleyways, and sidewalks. The game was now in play, and I took my post. I was on "offense," attempting to infiltrate the enemy zone and capture their flag; as it happened to be red, white and blue, you might say I had a personal motivation.

In the course of my experience playing Capture the Flag, I've hidden in dumpsters, run through buildings, leapt over cars, even rappelled down from sky-walks. This time, I chose to start from a building just behind enemy lines. I snuck cleverly past the opposing team's front guards and silently entered the building. At this point I had two options. I could go up two floors to the sky-walk and hope to avoid being spotted from the alleys below, or I could sneak out the back door into the alley—assuming no one was guarding it. I decided on the back alley; to my knowledge, most people playing didn't even know about that exit, and it felt safer than being up in the air where I would be more visible. I walked casually through the building, so as to avoid attracting the attention of the real guards employed by the apartment complex. I gently opened the door and poked my head out. No one was in sight.

Knowing that the other team hadn't seen me sneak into their territory, I could move with some comfort. I went to the end of the alley, and hid behind a

dumpster around the next corner. Peeking around it, I could see three or four guards standing in position. It was hard to tell what they were guarding at first, and then I saw a fellow teammate. I had found the jail! Now the question was, "How the fuck am I going to get past all those guards without getting caught, so I can rescue my friends?"

As I sat patiently behind the dumpster, playing out scenarios in my head that were sure to land me in jail, I heard footsteps behind me. Without hesitating, I slipped into the dumpster, crossing my fingers that I hadn't been noticed. I could hear the footsteps growing closer and closer, until finally I heard a voice whisper, "Guy, it's us, we're on your team." Relieved, I conversed with my teammates, remaining within the dumpster so as not to attract the attention of the nearby guards. Now that

there were four of us, we could surely find a way to make a jailbreak, and perhaps even find their flag!

The situation resembled guerrilla warfare more than anything else, and our plan was as strategic as any commander of any army could have devised. Erik would act as a diversion, baiting one or two of the guards in the opposite direction. Jessica would run deliberately into the arms of a guard, so the guard would be forced to walk her back to jail, thus being kept occupied. Peter and I would split up and charge the jail full on—there would only be one guard to stop two people.

We waited for the perfect moment to attack. As soon as the guards had their backs turned, Erik ran out shouting and taunting them. He ran faster than I'd seen anyone run, at one point barely escaping capture by leaping over the hood

of a car; before long, both he and the guard were well out of sight. Taking her cue, Jessica ran furtively forward, as if she were attempting to make a jailbreak, and was caught immediately. Now everything rested on Peter and me. We quietly counted down... five, four, three, two, ONE! Peter flew around the corner like a puma straight for his kill. In one swift move, I hurled myself out of the dumpster, instilling visible fear in the remaining guard as I charged towards him and my imprisoned fellow comrades.

As we ran parallel, I caught a glimpse of Peter, a boy I barely knew. His eyes

were full of fire and intensity, like those of a honey badger, and in that instant I couldn't help but feel that this was more than a game. Our city was coming to life in a way it never had before, and we were making it happen. This space, normally designated for dumpsters, automobiles, and consumers, was becoming liberated territory. As that moment passed through me, I found myself airborne, diving to tag what I now imagined to be a political prisoner, to free us both from the constraints we fight against everyday. No, this wasn't a game. I felt my fingertips brush against a teammate's shoulder, and I knew

that we had done it. "Jailbreak!" We all laughed, jumping with joy as we held hands back to the neutral zone.

We had rescued our friends, but the enemy flag was still safe and sound. Suddenly, a person dressed in all black flew past us, shouting, "I have the flag!" waving the American flag overhead. Almost twenty members of the opposing team were on his tail. We shouted for his safe arrival to our zone, as the rules ordained that we could do nothing until he stepped back onto our territory. Triumphant, he flew across the boundary, a yelling throng behind him and another receiving him.

Looking around, we saw all the players from both teams in the square. We had won!

I walked around the plaza, through the congregation of people, overwhelmed by how excited everyone was to be there in that moment. I heard stories of clever escapes from real policemen, business owners, and drunken bar patrons looking for a fight. I observed kids of all ages talking together with a sense of urgency about an experience that couldn't be described in that moment.

Some of us had come that night to demand something better from a city we had almost lost hope for, others to escape the dullness of weekend partying and all the other routines that lull and dull the teenage population. Some came to hone their skills for urban warfare, hoping to topple governments one day, while others came just for fun—and probably got more of it than they expected. No matter what our motivations, it was obvious we all felt the change in our city that cold February evening. We knew we would see each other again the next week, and the week after that, until we were introduced to every alleyway and parking garage, until we met every neighbor and learned every neighborhood. We knew we wouldn't stop playing—and to this day, we haven't.



Flag players capture the streets

On a Friday night in the Court Avenue district, you will encounter bar crawlers, out-to-dinner couples and a smattering of homeless people. But there is a new contingent: Teams competing in games of capture the flag.

"I think it will be interesting once it gets warmer and older people start playing," said Michael Bauman, 23, who acted as a team captain March 4. "There are about 15 to 20 regulars and we are gaining people every week. Lots of people come back."

The group doesn't identify organizers or planners. Instead, word is spread through e-mails to friends, postings on Web communities and by recruiting interested passers-by leaving area businesses. It makes it tough to separate the players from the bar patrons.

The guy walking by might have just left a show at the Vaudeville Mews, or he might try to grab your flag.

"It's good exercise and it's fun," said Katharine Settle, 18. "Something you can do late at night and meet a lot of cool people."

The players set territories and a neutral zone each week. New players are informed which businesses have asked that players walk, instead of run, by their storefronts. Also, for safety reasons, players must walk across streets with their hands raised. The players hope their respect for the rules will allow their games to continue unimpeded.

"Capture the Flag is not illegal," Bauman said.

Fliers distributed downtown give a mission statement that includes, "Demanding some excitement from that dull concrete and corporate architecture." Also, "We plan to demonstrate our rights on these streets every Friday until we're introduced to every nook and cranny of every alleyway and every parking garage. Until we've met every neighbor of every neighborhood, we won't stop playing."

Urban Capture the Flag

WHERE: Nollen Plaza, Third and Locust streets
WHEN: 10 p.m. Fridays
MORE INFO: capturetheflagdsm@hotmail.com

Memoirs of a Warsaw Ghetto Fighter

Kazik

(Simha Rotem)

At night we continued our reconnaissance patrols. The “streets” were nothing but rows of smoldering ruins. It was hard to cross them without stepping on charred bodies.

We assembled in the courtyard before we left, standing in straight rows. I shall never forget the picture of the gathering: it was night, but the flames made it bright as day. Everything all around was on fire, walls were crashing down.

We went out to search for food in empty bunkers and cellars. Once we went down to a cellar whose walls emitted waves of heat. My companions and I found ourselves walking on a kind of soft, light ground, like feathers. It was ash with scorched bodies lying in it. In a corner we came on a barrel of honey. We dipped our hands in it and it was almost boiling. We licked that honey until we got sick.

Let us begin with the scene of a world turned upside down. The mighty Germans, having attempted to enter the Jewish Ghetto to finish off the last of its inhabitants only to be driven out by the meager forces of the Jewish insurgency, have retreated outside its walls to bomb and burn the ghetto into dust. Only at this extreme juncture, when the Jewish puppet government has been wiped out along with the last vestiges of normal life, do the other residents of the ghetto regret their inaction and flock to throw their lot in with the freedom fighters—only now, when it is too late. For the insurgents, it is a moment of bitter irony, of triumphant defeat. They, who have had to live in secrecy and fear, concealing their efforts from even their own neighbors and friends, can

now walk the streets openly, guns on their shoulders—now that almost no one else is left. Formerly reviled by all, they are now welcomed as heroes by a populace about to die. At last, at the end of everything, the neighborhood and the hearts of its denizens finally belong to the insurgents who hoped to liberate them: they have won these just as they are destroyed.

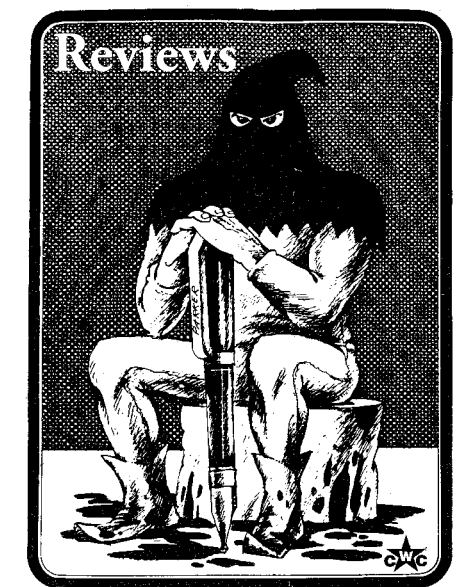
Yes, this is a dramatic account, of dramatic times. By the seventh page, the young author is trapped in the rubble of the house in which he grew up, most of his family dead around him, his neck wrapped in a tangle of live electrical lines and pierced with a broken wooden beam. Such an experience falls far outside the frame of reference of most residents of North America, as common as it might be in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Yet for the aspiring anticapitalist revolutionary, much in this book will be surprisingly familiar, if grander in scale—in fact, some of it may even feel vindicating, for those who feared that our humble attempts to engage in resistance here have nothing in common with the glorious struggles of yesteryear. The youth are the ones doing most of the fighting—more on that in a couple paragraphs—and at first their primary opponents are the Jewish police and the *Judenrat*, the Jewish council appointed by the Nazis to administer the ghetto and carry out their commands¹. To raise funds, the insurgents must rob and extort wealthier Jews, the only targets they can reach under the circumstances; in one early action, they break into the jail belonging to the Jewish Authority and, holding the guards at gunpoint, liberate the inmates. Indeed, until everything is in flames and it is obviously too late for any semblance of business as usual, the major-

¹ This is a stark reminder of the extent to which people can be enlisted in their own oppression, and of the complicity of those whose first priority is “law and order” in injustice wherever it appears. Likewise, it is a sad irony that today, the ones who will most readily recognize this story in their own lives are insurgents in Palestine who struggle with both the policemen of the Palestinian Authority and the occupying Israeli soldiers, some of whom are direct descendants of fighters in the Warsaw uprising. From this inversion of roles, we can see that resistance alone, no matter how courageous, is not enough: those who wish their efforts to secure liberation for others as well as themselves must not only resist, but also be ever vigilant lest they become oppressors in the image of those they once resisted.

ity of those in the ghetto mistrust or even oppose the insurgents—presumably believing they are needlessly making things worse for good law-abiding Jews. With the hindsight of history, this seems almost unthinkable, but it’s an important lesson for those who accuse militants of the same thing today. It’s also important to point out that, despite the risks they took, those who joined in the uprising survived with greater frequency than those who did not. Audre Lorde was right about silence not protecting anybody.

Many of the other themes herein will be easily recognized as timeless features of life underground. The stories of premarital love, sex, and abortion among the Jewish insurgents will surprise anyone who assumes they were all religious fundamentalists. The sectarian splits, the bitter debates over tactics and goals, the narrow escapes enabled only by the kindness of strangers or quick-witted fabrications, the war stories of calculated risks and stunning tragedies—these all have parallels, if more humble ones, in today’s anticapitalist movement. The author even dwells on the question of looking “good,” that is to say, being able to pass as a German or Polish Christian, with the same concern and attention to detail with which participants in modern day direct action assemble their civilian disguises.



In one particularly gripping anecdote, the author and his comrades, having charted a route through the sewers from the burning ghetto into a district of Warsaw in which life is proceeding as usual, must pick up Jewish refugees as they exit a manhole onto a major thoroughfare. The insurgents hijack a delivery truck, carefully timing this so they will be able to meet the escapees at the appointed hour. They must carry out the operation at ten in the morning, in the full light of day, in front of everyone in the street. Polish civilians crowd around, gawking



and making snide comments as the emaciated, filthy survivors drag themselves one by one out of the sewer. The German Guard is only a few hundred feet away. Every nerve taut, the author stalks back and forth between the spectators and the truck, monitoring every movement and counting the seconds until the operation is over. It's not difficult for those who have themselves carried out crazy actions in front of uncomprehending civilians to imagine themselves in his place.

Let's return to the comparative youth of those who participated in the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. The oldest of them were in their late twenties; most were between eighteen and twenty-one, and many were significantly younger than that. The anarchist movement in North America is predominantly young, too, and many feel that this somehow disqualifies it from being taken as seriously as resistance movements in other times and places. Yet current North American anarchists and the Warsaw Ghetto fighters of the 1940s are hardly the only young people in the history of insurrection. The partisans who gathered with Nestor Makhno, himself only in his late twenties, to defend anarchy in the Ukraine were undoubtedly a bunch of youngsters, as were the urban guerrillas of resistance movements throughout Latin America and Europe in the 1970s. George Orwell, who was in his early thirties when he traveled to fight at the side of the anarchists in the Spanish Civil War, was an exception; it seems that those who are willing to take great risks to fight for freedom tend to be young.

Why is this? In another holocaust memoir, *And There Was Light: The Autobiography of Jacques Lusseyran, Blind Hero of the French Resistance*, the author—who, like nearly all his comrades in arms, was a teenager at the time—decries the complacency of French adults under the Nazi occupation. The majority of older people, to hear him tell it, would suffer any indignity and tolerate any abuse, so long as they could retain their property and routines. By and large, older generations, having had more time to become habituated to survival and accommodation and to invest themselves in the compromises they have made, tend to be the partisans of the existing order, however unconscionable it may be, while young people are more likely to be able to imagine the world being different and take the risks necessary to make it so. To be fair, it may also be that by the time any insur-

rection reaches the point of open warfare, most older militants have already been captured or killed—but this is not exactly a comforting thought.

Perhaps if young anarchists today can think of themselves not as awkward, inconsequential juveniles, but as being the same age as Joan of Arc or Rimbaud or Billy the Kid were at the peaks of their powers, it will enable them to expect more from themselves—and thus be more capable of delivering it. There is nothing inherently invalid or unqualified about youth; often, young people possess an unclouded perspective that provides a wisdom inaccessible to those who have lived longer.

On the other hand, what does this mean for those of us who, like Orwell and for that matter the author of this review, arrive at the threshold of middle age without losing the desire to engage in militant struggle? Are we indeed extraneous, or frozen at an early stage of emotional development, or doomed to be the first against the wall when it all goes down? Perhaps, instead of leaping to one of these conclusions, we can simply look to the historical role young people have played in resistance movements as a reminder not to be too sure of “the wisdom of our years,” and to temper our own self-righteousness and ageism.

But to return to the book: this is instructive and inspirational reading for aspiring revolutionaries of all ages and denominations. It is important to know that human beings can endure such grievous hardships and accomplish such daring feats. If the conflict here in North America intensifies, we may one day earn the chance to say, as the author's lover said in her final days when, trapped in the flaming ghetto, she rallied her fellows to fight to the end, “We can expect hard battles, and every day that passes when they don't break us is unbelievable.” For those who put their lives on the line to struggle for freedom, every day's survival is a triumph spiting the forces of repression. For those who, like the Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto who did not join the uprising until it was too late, attempt to preserve their comfort rather than their dignity, survival itself can be a defeat, a sign that they did not risk their lives when not doing so meant a fate worse than death. This is the simple aspiration of all freedom fighters, regardless of the terrain on which their struggles are waged: to be able to say, at the conclusion of each day, *we live*, and know that this is a victory, not a reason to be ashamed.

Abolishing the Borders from Below: Anarchist Courier from Eastern Europe

Issue #20, August 2005
[bimonthly]

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Subscriptions: abolishingbb_subs@riseup.net
www.abb.hardcore.lt

Abolishing the Borders from Below provides extensive news of anarchist activity and on-the-spot analysis of current events throughout Eastern Europe. It serves this role so admirably that I would recommend it to every reader of *Rolling Thunder* who wishes to maintain an international perspective.

In this issue, one can learn the background and particulars of the recent insurrection in Uzbekistan and the Polish miners' protests, both in greater detail and with keener insights than any radical or corporate news source from further west provides. One can read of gay pride parades in Warsaw, Bucharest, and Riga, savoring the story of the anarchists who pied the politician responsible for unsuccessfully banning the Polish event. One can learn about Food Not Bombs in two former Soviet republics, animal liberation raids in Russia and Turkey, the situation of Chechen refugees and tenants' rights groups in Poland, and the dynamics between electoral and anti-electoral politics in Bulgaria. In calling for demonstrations against the G8 summit to be held in St. Petersburg in 2006, the editors don't just present an analysis of why the G8 and Eurocentrism in general are bad for those outside the so-called First World—they also run extensive accounts and discussions of comparable earlier mobilizations in Eastern Europe in order that these may inform preparations for this protest. In discussing the attempt on U.S. President Bush's life in the republic of Georgia last May, an effort that only failed on account of technical difficulties, the editors conclude with a humorous remark on the bright side of corporate globalization:

“The more U.S. capital invests in the region, the better the tools used by all kinds of ‘soldiers’ will become.”

Those who wish to make their own connections in Eastern Europe can use this publication as a veritable directory: a full three pages at the end of the magazine list the contact information of well over a hundred anarchist groups in twenty different nations. I know from my own travels in Eastern Europe that many of these groups are indeed involved in exciting projects. In providing concrete facts straight from the source, in intelligent analysis that never strays into tiresome abstractions, in framing world events in terms of what we can do to participate in shaping them, this magazine sets the bar high. Anarchist publishing like this makes me proud to be a part of this community, and eager to hold my own contributions up to the same standards.

Abolishing the Borders from Below compiles such an excellent overview of the context and events in one part of the world that it occurs to me there ought to be analogous publications covering other parts of it, as well. Any one such magazine would be a more useful publishing project than the all forums for intellectual squabbling that currently have to suffice for radical journalism in some circles. If you can imagine a network of anarchist news magazines that could enable informed action and connect people from distant communities, consider starting one for your own region—and track down a copy of this periodical.

Out of the Night

Jan Valtin

As the newest addition to AK Press's *Nabat* series, I suspected that this would be an interesting book. In fact, it is an absolutely amazing account of the world political scene in the 1920s and 1930s, in the form of a memoir of an organizer in the German Communist Party. At heart, though, the book is an act of revenge; an attempt to expose the Communist Party for its betrayal of the author and all of those who sacrificed themselves for the benefit of The Cause. It is also one of the most incredible adventure stories I have ever read, detailing one man's quixotic attempt to do anything possible for the advancement of the Communist Party while living with the mantra

“there's nothing a Bolshevik can't do.”

This book is an excellent example of how powerful narrative history can be. It is much more compelling than abstract overviews of how many people Stalin murdered or how the Communist Party operated. Reading about how these things intersect with Jan Valtin in the context of his life, love, hopes, and dreams is priceless. Far from a historical account of the Communist Party from a wide-angle lens, this is a description of how the first world war, Stalin's rise to power, and the emergence of the Nazi party affected the life of a German worker.

In the end, it is overwhelming to realize that this book is written by someone who rowed a dinghy across the straights of Juan Del Fuca, did time in San Quentin, sacrificed the lives of his family, and endured four years of near-continuous Nazi torture for the benefit of the Communist Party—only to end up wanted dead by the Party itself. His life story vividly demonstrates how painful sacrifice to an organization or ideology can be, and how even victories in that context are empty victories. His life and death strongly warn us against organizations and ideas that make demands extending beyond the needs of the individuals involved.

Heartcheck

Jeffrey “Free” Luers and
Rob “Los Ricos” Thaxton

\$7 for 1 copy, \$6 each for 2-5 copies, \$5 each for 6-9 copies, \$4 each for 10 or more from Free's Defense Fund, P.O. Box 3, Eugene, OR. 97440
Available online at www.freefreenow.org.
All proceeds benefit the authors.

Every activist in the United States should be familiar with the cases of Jeff Luers and Rob Thaxton. These are two very real examples of state repression of the current anarchist movement.

Jeff Luers is in his fifth year of a twenty-two year prison sentence for setting fire to two SUVs at a Eugene, Oregon car dealership in an effort to raise awareness about global warming. Although the action injured no one and the cars were later resold, Jeff's sentence is considerably longer than those of many convicted of murder, kidnapping, and rape in Oregon state.

Rob Thaxton is serving the last year of a seven year sentence for throwing a rock at a



police officer in self-defense during a Reclaim the Streets action on the “International Day of Action Against the Global Economy” in Eugene, Oregon, June 18th, 1999.

Heartcheck is a collection of writings by these two anarchists. The title refers to the overwhelming gulf between talk and action prevalent in both the dominant culture and many anarchist communities. This expression, as Jeff and Rob explain in the introduction, is prison slang “used to call someone out when you grow weary of listening to him run his neck or talk out of his ass. For example, if a person is wronged by another and he talks endlessly about getting him back, but does nothing other than talk and whine—‘Heartcheck!’ Do it or shut the fuck up.” The introduction continues, “For many years, various militant elements have been making empty threats and promises. As two individuals doing time for actions others only talk about, we are calling them out.”

Heartcheck is a wake-up call to the anarchist communities Jeff and Rob come from; it is a demand for urgency and action addressed to activists in the United States, and an expression of solidarity with those fighting for self-determination and freedom around the world. Jeff and Rob are reaching out to activists today, shaking us by the shoulders, telling us not to let their actions have been in vain—telling us that, yes, we have lost momentum since they were imprisoned during the high point of activity around the turn of the millennium, but that momentum can and must be regained and taken further. As Jeff writes, “There is a world of possibilities open to us. The only thing holding us back is ourselves.”

They touch on a wide range of topics here. The theme of urgency is expressed clearly in Jeff's article "Time's Up," in which he draws on facts and statistics from a variety of sources to present an overview of the current global ecological crisis. He sums up, "We are not running out of time, we are out of time. We have to act now just so it doesn't get any worse." Rob Thaxton's article on the Kabylia Uprising in Algeria provides insight into a struggle rarely discussed by radicals in this country, and includes bitter criticism of self-professed "militants" in the U.S. whose focus often seems far removed from real struggles in other parts of the world. In another article, Jeff looks at the SHAC ("Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty") campaign in the United States and the UK as a model for causing crippling financial and social damage to multi-national corporations. In the article "Fitness and Training," he emphasizes the need for those who are committed to direct action to be serious about physical fitness. Elsewhere, Rob reflects on the action models of mass demonstrations and international days of action, arguing that radicals may be more effective taking up the tactics of the Earth Liberation Front on a larger scale.

Jeff and Rob provide a unique perspective on a variety of topics on the minds of many in radical communities today. How do we build foundations for lasting change? What are the best strategies and tactics for moving from this society based on domination and greed to a world of freedom for all? Speaking in a clear and straightforward tone, these writings are from the heart—not polished or academic, but very real expressions of frustration, outrage, vision, and hope.

Anarchists in the United States would do well to familiarize themselves with the stories of Jeff and Rob and the over one-hundred-and-fifty other political prisoners in US prisons. As the global crisis becomes more dire and resistance increases, so will state repression; support for political prisoners must be part of our response. For a start, pick up this publication, share it with your community, and consider the ideas Jeff and Rob present. Their imprisonment underscores the pressing need for action, not just on their behalf but for the liberation struggles for which they've given their freedom.

New Winds "A Spirit Filled Revolution" CD & book

Refuse Records, P.O. Box 7, 02-792 Warszawa 78, Poland (refusexresist@go2.pl, www.refuserecords.prv.pl)
www.newwinds.com, newwindshq@yahoo.com

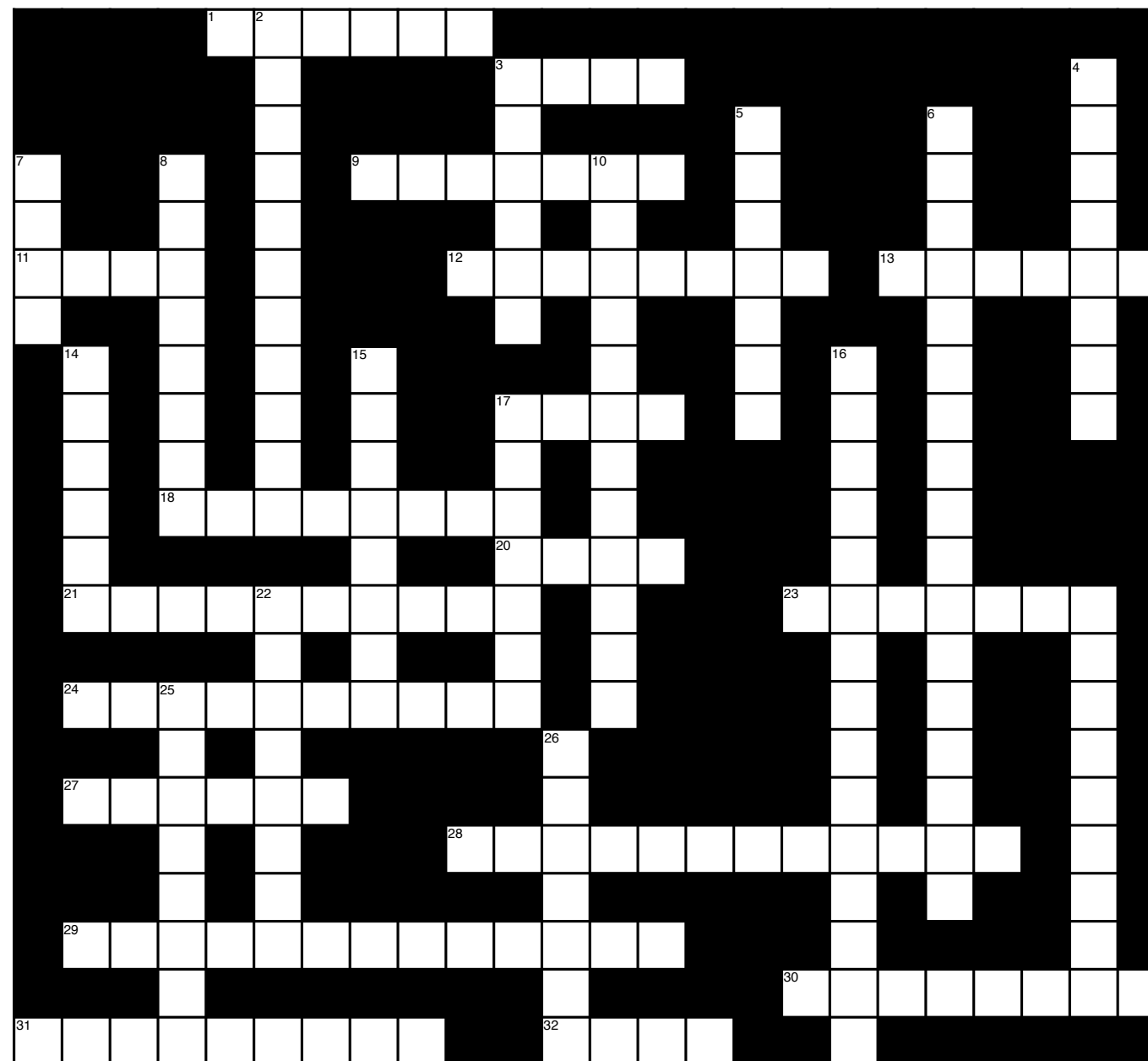
Political punk rock is no more dead now than it was in the days of Crass and the Dead Kennedys, or for that matter of Bikini Kill, or Trial. It rises and falls in tides, and sometimes the crest of the wave is on the other side of the world—for example, in the margins of the European Union, where a Polish label has just released the most explicitly political, elaborately packaged record of the year.

Before the word "catholic" was monopolized by the unspeakably despicable Catholic Church, it meant something along the lines of "including a wide range of perspectives." In that sense of the word, New Winds are catholic revolutionaries. They describe themselves as anarchists, but they're interested in just about anything and anyone that could loosely be construed as supporting the struggle for liberation, from Martin Luther King and Che Guevara to Lao Tzu and Brazil's squatting movement, the MST. Don't get me wrong, they do take concrete stands: for women's reproductive rights, against the IMF, for aboriginal land rights, against the Israeli state terrorism in Palestine. The 168-page book that accompanies this CD includes the lyrics and song explanations, texts from and about political prisoners, writing from several contributing authors outside the band, interviews with the band, and an appendix of recommended reading and contacts for active organizations.

Their sweeping approach to revolutionary politics has much to recommend it; it sidesteps ideological rigidity, and in exposing the listener to a broad array of perspectives offers enough points of departure that at least one is bound to click. It's also bound to give everyone something to gripe about, and in my case the main thing that rubs me the wrong way is the occasional emphasis on famous individuals. I don't like to see so much attention focused on the great thinkers and radical heroes of

world history; I'd rather all those inspirational quotes be printed unattributed, so no one has to feel small in comparison. I would have expected the occasional "spiritual" references to have vexed me as well, but these don't seem to point to any ugly authoritarian or superstitious undercurrents. My only other complaint is that the layout of the book, taking cues from punk record inserts more so than book design, is difficult to read in places. That said, I'm critiquing the one music release with enough content to warrant coverage in this issue of *Rolling Thunder*. Better I should take all the others to task for not challenging themselves or us this much!

But what about the songs, you ask? They're actually excellent. This is not a case of cynical activists grudgingly playing mediocre music to hoodwink people into checking out their ideology. These songs are intensely charged with energy, tension, and longing. The music is descended from the bloodline of melodic, high energy hardcore that has been represented in the United States before by Ignite—not nearly as earnest or intelligent a band as New Winds—and before them by Uniform Choice, if you go back far enough; in Portugal, New Winds' native country, X-Acto would be a better reference point. In addition to their obvious sincerity, New Winds is set apart from their predecessors by their singer's amazing high range and impeccable delivery. Few hardcore vocalists dare to sing this freely, and it really takes the songs to another level. If you live in North America, you probably haven't heard of New Winds, even if you love and keep up with radical hardcore punk—but you would probably get a lot out of this record.



ACROSS

- 1 The contraction of the ischio-cavernosus muscles will make a penis ___ and can create an orgasm
- 3 Socially unacceptable, yet inexplicably fun means of sexual play
- 9 Giving yourself the space to identify what you feel so that you can communicate it to yourself and others
- 11 A person who desires to knock boots with many people (ethically)
- 12 A broad term that for a feeling that describes specific kinds of insecurity
- 13 We see it every time we look in the mirror
- 17 Honey pot, love cave, coochie snorcher, pocketbook, and vulva are all sweet ways some folks describe theirs
- 18 The use of force or manipulation to pressure people into doing, accepting, or agreeing to things against their wishes

20 A natural lube

- 21 Smooths the way for sex better than a bottle of jack daniels
- 23 Requires a harness, but not for climbing
- 24 Dedication to a person, relationship, community, or project
- 27 The false binary that a person is either a boy or a girl
- 28 Being honest with yourself about your needs and figuring out how to communicate them to others (so you can get what you need!)
- 29 The only kind of jewelry an anarchist can afford²
- 30 Defines what you want or don't want in a relationship
- 31 The idea that all relationships should be defined by those in them, not restricted by other relationships or organized hierarchically
- 32 Sexual play involving your often overlooked, but overwhelmingly exciting orifice

DOWN

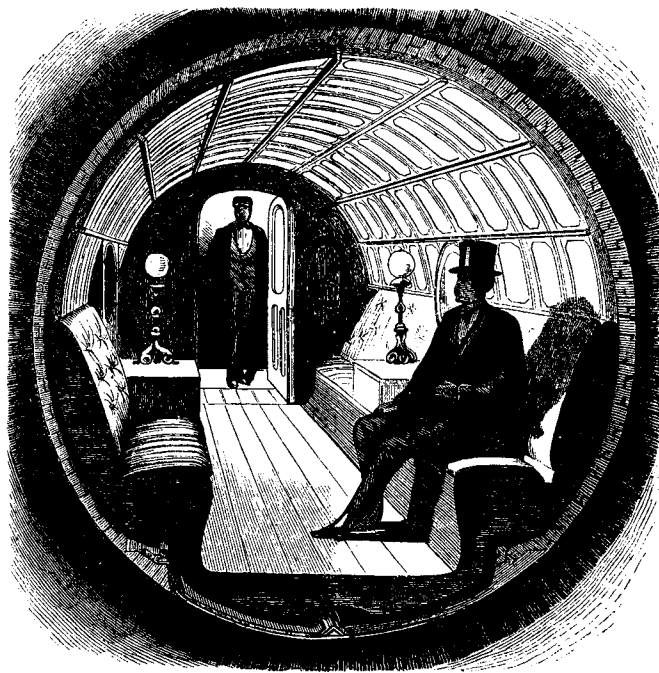
- 2 Herbs which encourage menstrual bleeding; not all are abortifacients
- 3 Reusable rubber menstrual cup
- 4 The untold treasure inside your asshole—for some.
- 5 Drink it as tea and use it as a pessary (put it in your cunt) to bring on a late period¹
- 6 The idea that, for example, boys only have sex with girls
- 7 Acronym for uppinn' the kink factor
- 8 Can prevent a fertilized egg from implanting on a uterine wall and can cause menstruation when taken in high doses^{1, again}
- 10 For example, "Do you want to ride on my latex pony?"
- 14 Originates from a word meaning sheath for a sword
- 15 With a mirror and a flashlight, you can use this to see your cervix
- 16 Staring at the components instead of taking in the whole bike . . . I mean, person

- 17 The process by which people learn to understand each other's desires and comfort levels so they can interact respectfully and considerately
- 19 Neither boy nor girl
- 22 Applied on cervixes as a contraceptive in some Egyptian societies
- 25 The idea that one person can fulfill all of your needs and that your relationship with them should be prioritized over others in your life
- 26 Can be used to (consensually, please) tie some one up in an emergency—and you may already have one in your back pocket

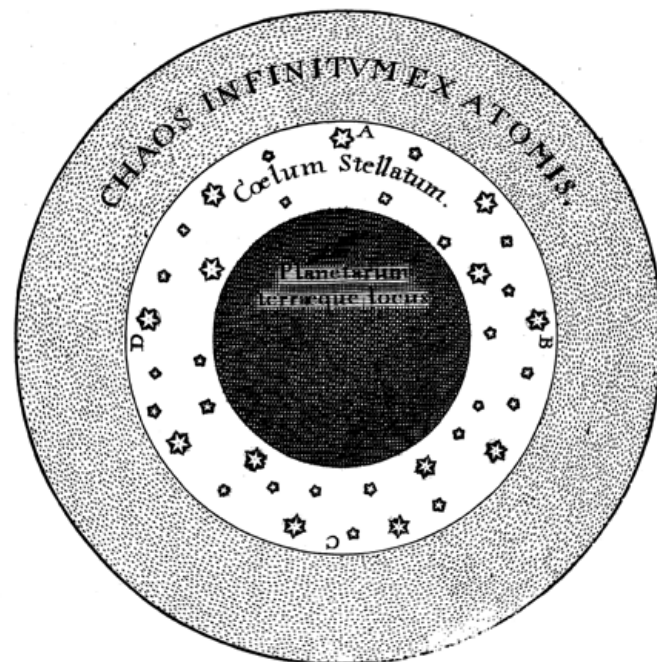
¹ Please, please, please find out more information about herbal health care before taking the advice of a crossword puzzle. Taking herbs or other "natural" remedies for healing your body, although they are often powerful treatments, can be dangerous. See *Jane: An Underground Abortion Service in the Days Before Abortion Rights* in the history section for some suggested references.

² Literally, the sexual act wherein one cums across another's chest.

Much to our misfortune, we CrimethInc. ex-workers are not only aspiring bloodthirsty revolutionaries, but also hypocritical purveyors of purportedly subversive consumer goods. We keep publishing volume after volume and releasing record after record, hoping that one of them will light the fuse of total insurrection; but, to our dismay, it seems that today's Western radicals know everything about acquiring the accoutrements of revolt and little indeed about putting them to use. If you feel unusually defensive at this insinuation, perhaps now is a good time to put off shopping in favor of getting out and doing more. If, however, you are already active as can be and find yourself poised to fire the first shot of the war to end all wars, needing only a book or compact disc with which to do so, feel free to order it from us—we won't stop you.



CrimethInc. bullet, cross-section (according to our critics)



CrimethInc. bullet, cross-section (in actuality)

Rolling Thunder #1, summer 2005—The first issue of the magazine you're holding in your hands right now. It includes a massive analysis of the past decade of direct action at demonstrations, feature articles on consent in sexual relationships and alternative conceptions of education, and testimonials from maniacs who squatted their own workplaces and set themselves on fire while fighting police, inter alia. \$5

Recipes for Disaster: An Anarchist Cookbook—A 624-page handbook for do-it-yourself subversive activity, illustrated with photographs, technical diagrams, and firsthand accounts. The sixty-two recipes run the gamut from Affinity Groups to Wheatpasting, stopping along the way at topics as disparate as Hitchhiking, Sabotage, Behavioral Cutups, and Supporting Survivors of Domestic Violence. \$12

Days of War, Nights of Love: Crimethink for Beginners—Your ticket to a world free of charge: the famous invitation to the adventure of overthrowing capitalism, hierarchy, and everything else, by turns wild-eyed, romantic, and prophetic. \$8

Rusty String Quartet—Raegan Butcher's new collection, several hundred poems long, chronicling the first few months following his release. \$10

CrimethInc. Guerilla Film Series, Vol. One

Our first DVD release features two discs loaded with some of the best films in modern anarchist filmmaking: three feature-length documentaries (*Pickaxe*, *Breaking the Spell*, and *The Miami Model*) and five short films (three documenting various thinktank experiments and two CrimethInc. essays brought to life by SubMedia). New commentary tracks recorded by the filmmakers are included for the films *Pickaxe*, *Breaking the Spell*, and *Auto-Revision*. All films are in English. All three features have subtitles in Spanish and English. Disc Two features computer-accessible DVD-ROM content including MP3s, PDFs, and other assorted documentation & reading materials. NTSC Format and Region-Free (312 Minutes). \$10

Evasion—The controversial chronicle of one boy's saga of willful unemployment, crime, and vagrancy. \$6

Off the Map—A punk rock vision quest in the form of a travel narrative, detailing the exploits of two women squatting, hitchhiking, and dreaming their way across Europe. \$3

Stone Hotel—Raegan Butcher's poems from prison: straightforward, harrowing, and sometimes uplifting. \$10

Requiem "Storm Heaven" CD—In nine songs ranging from mournful, muted beauty to operatic hardcore punk to the apocalyptic marching drums of street rioting, they pit raw fury and yearning against everything ugly in a desperate bid to rescue punk rock from its own inertia—not to mention the rest of us from ours. \$10

The Spectacle "I, Fail" CD—This is the brand new recording from the Norwegian band we consider to be the best playing hardcore today. It's slower, darker, and even more carefully refined than "Rope or Guillotine." \$10

Zegota 7—Two new songs from the long-running flagship band of eclectic and idealistic hardcore punk: an unabashed street protest anthem entitled "Anarchist Cheerleader Song," and a spine-tingling cover of the traditional spiritual "Sinner Man" à la Nina Simone. \$4

Umlaut "Total Disfuckingcography" CD—38 songs and 80 pages of depraved terrorist punk rock and propaganda from the most Finnish band of all time. Features sworn enemies of Catharsis. \$9

The Spectacle "Rope or Guillotine" CD—This album picks up where Catharsis, His Hero Is Gone, early Gehenna, and Godspeed, You Black Emperor! left off. \$10

Zegota "Reclaim!" CD—The third wide-ranging full-length album from these expatriate artistic geniuses. \$8

Face Down In Shit "Passing Times" CD—These tortured maniacs twist the punk and stoner rock traditions into something somehow at once ugly and beautiful. \$10

Sandman "The Long Walk Home" CD—Chris Sand plays achingly personal country folk music, sweet and pure and simple. \$6

Countdown to Putsch "Interventions in Hegemony" double CD—C-to-P blends punk rock, free jazz, and radical theater to create one of the most daring experimental works to come out of the do-it-yourself milieu. \$10

Blacken the Skies CD—This was Stef's band between Catharsis and Requiem; imagine early Zegota as a d-beat crust band. \$9

Zegota "Namaste" CD—Seventy-one minutes of improvisation, medley, and soul. Many still consider this the defining Zegota recording. \$10

Catharsis "Passion" CD—Even six and a half years after it was recorded, what can be said about this album? We hoped it would destroy the world and remake it utterly, and for some, it almost did. \$10

Prices include postage. CrimethInc. Far East, P.O. Box 1963, Olympia, WA 98507 USA (www.crimethinc.com)

Pop Quiz

Test your students' short-term retention of the preceding contents with this quick exercise:

Anarchists invented and popularized

- The getaway car for bank robberies
- The term "birth control"
- The struggle for the eight-hour workday
- All of the above
- Don't be silly—anarchists didn't even invent anarchy!

"Discoveries that schoolteachers all but take for granted today were proclaimed by men [sic] who paid for them at the stake!" —Walter Kaufmann, in Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist

A cursory listing of popular anarchist authors could include

- Leo Tolstoy, author of *War and Peace*, widely acclaimed as "the greatest novel in the history of literature"
- Percy Bysshe Shelley, one of the best known English-language poets, and his wife Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, who wrote the classic *Frankenstein* at age nineteen and, incidentally, was the daughter of two of the progenitors of anarchist and feminist thinking in the West²
- Ursula le Guin, celebrated writer of science fiction and children's literature
- Alex Comfort, author of *The Joy of Sex*
- All of the above

"My opinions lean more and more to anarchy (philosophically understood, meaning abolition of control, not whiskered men with bombs)..." —J.R.R. Tolkien, in a letter to his son

A list of well-known artists who embraced anarchist politics, even if it was limited only to French men from a century ago, would include

- Paul Signac
- Woodcut Artist Felix Vallotton
- Henri de Toulouse-Latrec
- Impressionist Camille Pissarro
- All of the above, and Proudhon's friend Gustave Courbet, who participated in the Paris Commune

"What do you think an artist is? An imbecile who has only his eyes if he's a painter, or ears if he's a musician, or a lyre at every level of his heart if he's a poet, or even, if he's a boxer, just his muscles? On the contrary, he's at the same time a political being, constantly alive to heartrending, fiery, or happy events, to which he responds in every way. How would it be possible to feel no interest in other people and by virtue of an ivory indifference to detach yourself from the life which they so copiously bring you? No, painting is not done to decorate apartments. It is an instrument of war for attack and defense against the enemy." —Pablo Picasso [all gendered pronouns sic, despite his own flirtations with anarchism]

Anarchist enthusiasts of "propaganda by the deed" assassinated

- Russian Tsar Alexander II
- King of Italy Umberto I
- President of the United States William McKinley
- French President Sadi Carnot
- All of the above, plus an Austrian empress, two different Spanish presidents, etc.

"Anarchism is a crime against the whole human race. All mankind [sic] should band together against the anarchists." —Theodore Roosevelt

¹Kaufmann continues: "Nor is such martyrdom imposed merely externally. Many a heretic who was burned publicly was only suffering once more, for all to see, what he had experienced a thousand times within his soul."

²For those who think of veganism as a recent and temporary addition to the radical tradition, it's also interesting to note that Mary and Percy were both vegetarians.

Assemble the friends you trust most. Together, you constitute a cell—or, if you prefer, a collective. Take on some small-scale projects: host a potluck so talented locals can meet one another, design a poster and paste it up around town, hold a bake sale to raise money for political prisoners. Move on to more and more ambitious missions as you gain experience. Acting in such a group will make you exponentially more effective in the following suggested activities, among others.

Establish a “needs board” in a public place in your community, by means of which people can announce that they are looking for something (an old piano, a quantity of wood chips, a ride to Tacoma) or have some resource to offer.

Take a paint marker to every office, school, and shopping mall in your town and visit all the washrooms, one by one, putting up educational graffiti as you go.

Make sure there is always a table offering free radical literature at every tattoo convention, liberal rally, cutting-edge author’s book-signing, city parade, street fair, punk show, theatrical production, and college campus.

Coordinate monthly Really Really Free Markets in your community, in which everyone brings things to share. You’ll be surprised how broad a range of people can intuitively grasp the advantages of this format. Do your part to make sure there are surprising, exciting things there every time, not just the usual stale bagels and ragged jeans.

Stay abreast of speakers invited to lecture at the nearest university. Next time they fly in some right wing author, former military big shot, or corporate representative to spew filth and lies, make sure he or she gets a pie or paint balloon in the face. Have an accomplice take photos; these can be delivered immediately and anonymously to the local paper as well as posted on independent media websites.

Take special care to invite the friends and acquaintances you don’t think of as “radical” or “part of the radical community” to participate in all the wild things you do. You might be surprised by the results. Rather than just doing “outreach” to strangers with whom you have no common context, make sure those with whom you already have a starting place are included in anything they might be able to enjoy or enhance. This is how radical communities and networks are formed—from interlocking circles of friends, not disconnected waves of converts.

Organize a series of amazing entertainment events of increasingly dubious legality. Without any of the usual short-cuts—in toxicants, superficial promiscuity, the trappings of fashion and status—you should be putting on the best parties around, so when people think of having a good time they think first of your events. At first, these should be non-confrontational—a masked ball in the woods, a dance in an abandoned warehouse area—but as you attract more interest and participation, slowly escalate your tactics, until every event involves a demonstra-

tion of the power people have to seize, rearrange, and enjoy public spaces. Eventually, regular attendees who never would have thought of themselves as political should come to associate great fun with openly opposing authority—and vice versa.

Whenever you see police officers, approach them and vitriolically demand to know why they have chosen a career in which they may be ordered to repress their fellow citizens. Ask what they would do if they were commanded to do something they believed was unjust, and how they feel being used as pawns to protect the wealth and power of the rich in return for peanuts.

Forcefully criticize their life choices and inform them they are not welcome in your neighborhood until they seek new employment; recommend that they apply to be transferred to the fire department if they really want to offer something to society. This is especially effective if you look like their image of a law-

abiding, repression-tolerating “good citizen,” and have no plans to do anything that could make it inconvenient for local police officers to recognize you. Encourage others who fit this description to do the same.

Show up to a performance featuring your favorite musicians with a harmony part or additional rhythm of your own written to complement one of their compositions, and perform it along with them from within the audience. Thus practiced, do something similar at a political rally or similar event featuring personages of whom you approve somewhat less.

Open a printing company—the very best—and after years of preparation and development, wreck the economy by printing massive quantities of fake dollar bills and distributing them to the needy.

Pick a date a year or two in advance. It could be the date of an important protest, or a day invested with a lot of associations and expectations, like the first of May, or—for experts who really desire a challenge—an entirely arbitrary date. Publicize this through all channels as a turning point in world history: scrawl it on the walls, spread wild rumors, start a band or publication named after it. Lay plans for how you will do your part to make it extraordinary, and set forces in motion that will compel others to do the same. When the morning arrives, get the date tattooed on your body. Now make it something you’ll never forget.

Set yourself a demanding regimen of risky activities, behavioral experiments, and exercises in the extraordinary spanning a period of years such that, at its conclusion, you will be capable of believing in the assertion anything can happen.

Launch a magazine that will outdo *Rolling Thunder*—or, failing that, start by distributing and contributing to this one.

WHAT WE WANT FROM YOU

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Everything remains to be done. All the adventures are still out there, awaiting adventurers.



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OUT OF CONTROL

Even before the rain stopped falling, some locals decided to take advantage of the chaos in the city and loot the stores, lifting things ranging from jeans to big-screen TVs