

Rolling Thunder

ISSUE NUMBER FIVE / SPRING TWO-THOUSAND EIGHT / A BULLETIN FROM THE CRIMETHINK EX-WORKERS' COLLECTIVE

an anarchist journal of dangerous living

Resistance is the motor of history.
Again and again we revolt against everything
that exploits, oppresses, outrages, and depresses us;
again and again our revolts are re-absorbed,
becoming new conventions, new confines,
new systems of control.
Buried in the sedimentary layers of our ancestors' defeat
it's easy to forget
what produced these structures, and can tear them down again:
our great unruliness.

“If I find in myself a desire which nothing in this world can satisfy,
the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.”

—C.S. Lewis

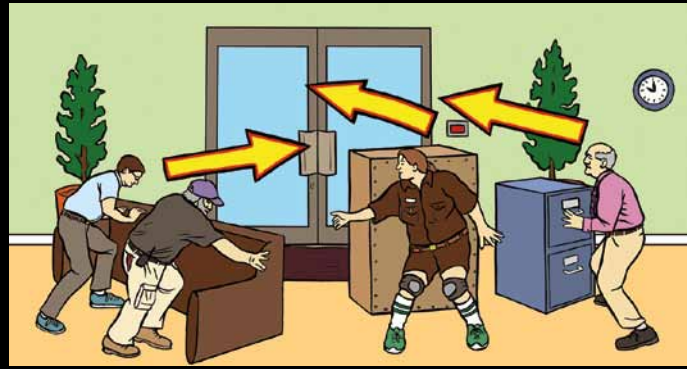


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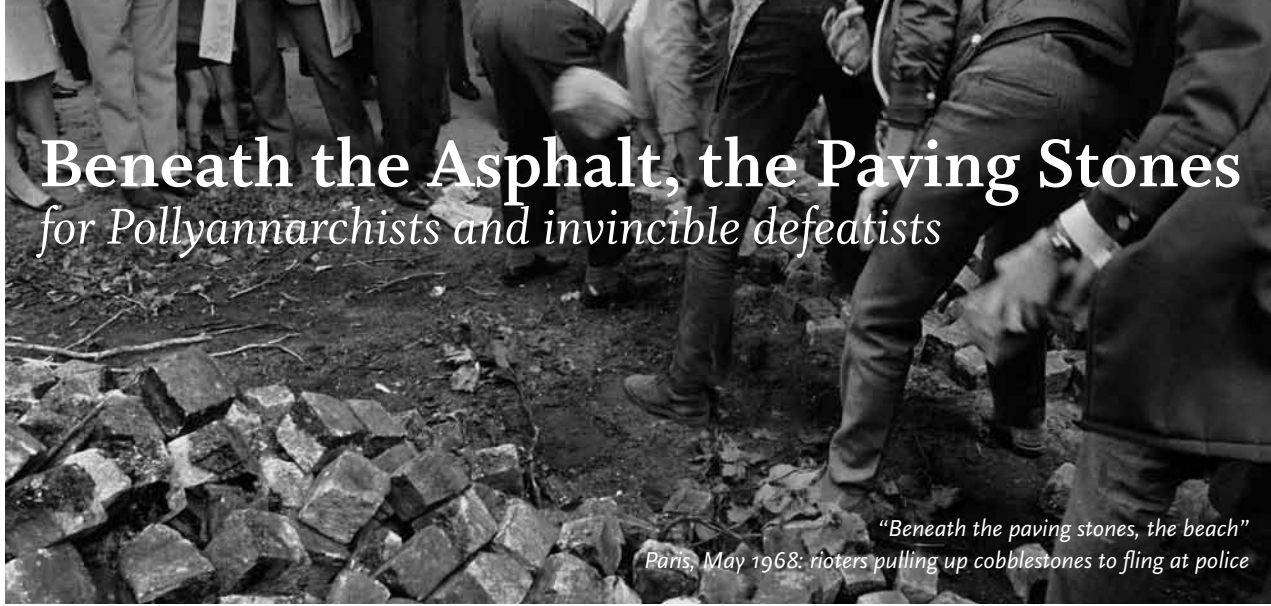
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"Today civilization is indeed in a critical stage . . . all traditions are used up, all beliefs abolished. Everything contributes to sadden people of good will. We shall struggle in the night, and we must do our best to endure this life without too much sadness. Let us stand by one another, call out to each other in the dark, and do justice as often as opportunity is given."

—P.J. Proudhon

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Beneath the Asphalt, the Paving Stones for Pollyannarchists and invincible defeatists



"Beneath the paving stones, the beach"
Paris, May 1968: rioters pulling up cobblestones to fling at police

One of the consistent themes of this magazine is the way the history of capitalism is shaped by our resistance. We shut down a city hosting a meeting of capitalist bigwigs; they move the next meeting to an island. We steal, vandalize, and riot; they set up surveillance cameras throughout entire cities. We win concessions in the workplace; they ship the jobs themselves overseas. We're used to thinking of the ruling class as the protagonists of history, inflicting their innovations upon us, but one could as easily frame the rest of us as the motor of history, and their supposed innovations as a desperate scramble to keep up.

The upshot of this is that every time we take on the capitalist system and lose, all our efforts are turned against us. The band that invented a new musical paradigm to match its radical message becomes the model for the next wave of corporate clones. Innovations in shoplifting technology and computer hacking return as the backbones of new security systems. The unions our ancestors fought to set up have become yet another shackle on today's workers. Ninety years ago the Ukraine came close to anarchist revolution, and the anarchist movement there today has yet to finish paying off the bill. "Those who make half a revolution dig their own graves," to quote the French again.

Every young radical panics when the slogans that won him over to revolutionary struggle show up in television commercials—but until capitalism is finally abolished, this will be inevitable. The entirety of the capitalist system is composed of our efforts and creativity turned against us, not just the circle-A shirts you can buy at the mall. All those malls were built by workers, just as hip hop was developed by impoverished outcasts before it became a billion-dollar business. There's no way around it—if we want to take on capitalism, we have to stay ahead of our adversaries, continuously generating new ideas as our old ones are turned against us. You can opt out of this struggle, but everything you produce will still be turned against you—only without the possibility of liberation.

Several of the articles in this issue obliquely reference the question of narrative: the stories we tell ourselves to motivate or rationalize our behavior. The idea is that if we can figure out the right story to tell ourselves about our place in history, it will help us take our destiny in our own hands. To that end, let's consider a couple options.

According to the narrative that was most popular immediately following the Seattle WTO protests of 1999, the centuries-long struggle against power and domination is coming to a head right now. Things can't possibly get any worse than they are—right?—and our enemies are teetering precariously at the tops of their towers of Babel. This is the time to stake everything on one final push to victory—if we fight hard enough, five or ten years from now we'll have won. Around the turn of the century, this story gave people magical powers of courage and determination, helping them work miracles; but when the world didn't change immediately, many of them collapsed in exhaustion. That doesn't necessarily undercut the value of what they achieved—but it does mean that, like the unfortunate Ukrainians, we have to live with the aftermath of that defeat.

For what it's worth, we still think that the anarchist project will return to the forefront of history in our lifetime. We're not eager to set anyone up for disappointment, but we still believe that there are tremendous opportunities ahead—we even think we can win, whatever that means.

But in case some readers don't find this narrative convincing or compelling, let's offer an alternative, the inverse of the story of the impending Final Battle. In this alternate version, things are getting worse and worse, but they won't hit bottom for centuries to come. If you think industrial capitalism is bad now, just wait until it's had another hundred years to devastate the biosphere and program humanity. A long night is descending, and who knows when or if it will end. According to this narrative, our resistance movements are in a steady decline punctuated by brief flashes of defiance. If this is the case, we'd better act now while we still can, so there can be some memory of freedom, some rumor of resistance in the darkness ahead. It might be just you and a friend—every stolen moment and thrown brick is a beacon of hope in the gathering gloom, all the more precious for being so isolated and unlikely.

Imagine the decades following the upheavals of 1968 without the squatting movement in Europe and the anarcho-punk scene worldwide. Both of those were hopelessly marginal phenomena, drastic retreats from the world-shaking upheavals that had preceded them; but in the wake of those upheavals, when the counterattack of capital pushed

all resistance to the fringe, those who carried on fighting were bound to be marginal. All the accomplishments of those movements, their gratuitous street battles and private grudge matches with the authorities, could never compare to the brush with collective liberation so many experienced in 1968. But the squatters and punks succeeded in keeping alive an ember of resistance until it could ignite a new explosion—as the black bloc did in Seattle 1999, and the defense of Ungdomshuset did last year in Denmark.

When the renegades of Paris 1968 coined their famous slogan about the paving stones, they were implying that the world of their dreams lay buried beneath the generations of defeat that comprise capitalist history—but that all it took to uncover that world was to resist. Now those paving stones are covered over with asphalt. At the high points of our efforts today, we can barely tear up the asphalt to reveal the paving stones beneath—but that's not so bad when you remember what those paving stones were used to do forty

years ago. Perhaps we've lost ground, but the paving stones are still down there, and perhaps below them the beach as well. We *can* fight, we can create and live out moments that compare with the resistance of our forebears—the stories in this issue of *Rolling Thunder* prove this. It's incredible how difficult it has been to kill our spirits, even with cameras everywhere, grand juries subpoenaing everyone, and police on every corner.

Some anarchists still believe—somebody's bound to—that victory is right around the corner: or, if not victory, then peak oil, industrial collapse, the end of the world, whatever it takes to excuse us from the daunting task of changing things ourselves. For our part, we're not convinced of this, but that doesn't diminish our appetite for the struggle one bit. If we're not going to see the other side of capitalism and hierarchy for a thousand years, we think it's all the more important to fucking go for it right now. *One anarchist, one revolution.*



Rostock, June 2007: rioters breaking up concrete to fling at police

The Overseas Rioting Issue?

Legend has it that an episode of a popular British television show called "Quincy" once featured actors dressed as punk rockers. Afterwards, the story goes, media-generated "punk rockers" appeared who were not connected to any social continuum, who had become punks under the influence of the mainstream media alone. Other punks dubbed them Quincy Punks.

Accordingly, an occasional contributor to *Rolling Thunder* once quipped that the United States has no insurrectionists, only Quincy Insurrectionists. Anarchists here are moved by exciting photos and translated texts from far away, and style themselves after their on-screen heroes. But they're just internet surfers, not real insurrectionists: they're not part of a social continuum,

they participate in no actual insurrections. No matter how many images of molotov cocktails they screen-print, they have to wait years between opportunities to use them—or else save up for plane tickets.

This critique hits close to home, for this issue focuses disproportionately on events overseas. It shares this with a whole niche milieu of anarchist journalism that considers burning cars more photogenic than race and gender caucuses. One disturbing trend in this milieu is that the further from home the events pictured, the more uncritically they are endorsed. Riots in Bangladesh, for example, are assumed to be anti-authoritarian, while popular struggles in Mexico are tragically coopted, and the Really Really Free Markets down the street are not even worth mentioning. It's not a stretch to guess that if the same pundits were situated in Calcutta, they would dismiss the Bangladeshi workers, look hopefully

to Oaxacan rioters, and celebrate the advanced gift economies of North America.

We feel the proper role of this magazine is to focus on the struggles closest to those who read and write for it, so as to inform our daily efforts. But as the example of the Quincy Insurrectionists indicates, there is a constant interplay between local struggles and the stories that come in from overseas, shaping our fantasies and expanding our sense of what is possible. As many of us were connected to Ungdomshuset and traveled to Germany to take on the G8 summit, and many more of us were inspired by those events, it's only natural that they turn up in these pages. If we can provide some of the background behind the exciting photographs and some of the strategic lessons the participants gleaned, perhaps we can help a generation of Quincy Insurrectionists lay the groundwork for real insurrection.



Glossary of Terms, part the fifth

Autonomist Marxist—Perhaps the most telling difference between anarchists and Marxists is that the latter tend to associate themselves with one thinker's program—Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, Mao, Marx himself—while the former regard thinking as a collective process, taking for granted that a good line of inquiry doesn't need a big-name theorist to validate it. This focus on intellectual property and leadership is doubtless interconnected with the notorious authoritarianism of most self-proclaimed Marxists; all the same, there are some who maintain that Marxism is compatible with autonomy and horizontality. But it is not enough for them simply to champion autonomy, horizontality, and the revolutionary seizure of the means of production; they still have to drop the name of the foremost authority on communism, like Christians citing the Good Book for legitimacy.

the rightfully included lived together in purity, tranquility, and belonging. There was no such thing as America before immigrants, for example, but you'd never know it listening to racists and nationalists. It is common sense that boundaries create transgressors—but one might as easily say that the invention of transgressors creates boundaries, which would be impossible without them.

their lives piecemeal. This practice is regarded as barbaric (*see figure i.*), of course, so it is generally inflicted upon those who have been demonized as more barbaric: "Sure it's scary we have so much power we can kill you if we want—but wouldn't it be worse for monsters such as this one to have that power over you?" The average politician owes a lot to rapists and murderers—without them, he might have to answer for the subtler forms of rape and murder he countenances.

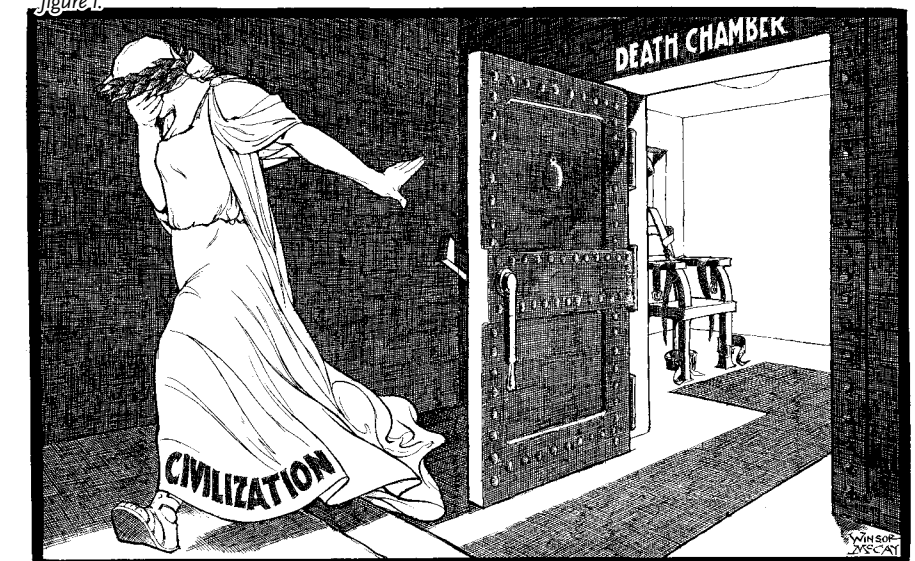
Community—The sum of all the individuals and relationships in a social milieu—that is to say, none of them in particular; therefore, at worst, the abstraction for which any of them may be sacrificed

Democracy—Three wolves and six goats are discussing what to have for dinner. One courageous goat makes an impassioned case: "We should put it to a vote!" The other goats fear for his life, but surprisingly, the wolves acquiesce. But when everyone is preparing to vote, the wolves take three of the goats aside. "Vote with us to

Death Penalty—The fact that the state occasionally takes life wholesale can't help but discourage people from complaining about the economy taking

Bad Neighborhood—From a class perspective, a neighborhood without a gate; from an economic perspective, an area where people gather without spending money; from the vantage point of the white suburbs, anywhere you can see people of color smiling

figure i.



"So long as I don't have to see it!"

Beat Cops—Please.

Beat Poets—Hell, beat them too.

Border—One way to create the illusion of a community when people share no real connection or common interest is to establish a boundary and accuse outsiders of violating it. This accusation implies that before the violation,

Collective Authorship

Most of the content herein was assembled anonymously by collective process, if not outright plagiarism—which is the way most good things come to be, if you think about it, even in this individualistic society. We have yet to achieve the perfectly horizontal and participatory internal dynamics we desire, but we're learning to collaborate, and it feels good.

We demand the immediate liberation of all text, music, programming, and other property—"intellectual" and otherwise—from the chains of private ownership, the greatest of all barriers to healthy collaboration. As we are not reformists, we don't address this demand to corporations or governments, but to *you*, dear readers. We invite you to join us in stealing and sharing *everything*, starting with the contents of this magazine, but not ending there—so we can all become, at last, the collective authors of our lives.

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Texts and images combined by the Paul F. Maul Artists' Group

figure ii.



make the other three goats dinner," they threaten. "Otherwise, vote or no vote, we'll eat you."

The other three goats are shocked by the outcome of the election: a majority, including their comrades, has voted for them to be killed and eaten. They protest in outrage and terror, but the goat who first suggested the vote rebukes them: "Be thankful you live in a democracy! At least we got to have a say in this!"

Filth—In the words of anthropologist Mary Douglas, dirt is "matter out of place": that is to say, filth is a moral category rather than a physical condition (see figure ii.). Small wonder it is associated with immigrants, poor people, manual laborers, hoboes, dissidents, and the insane. One might as easily consider deodorant, perfume, aftershave, hair gel, and other chemical additives out of place, not to mention concrete and asphalt.

Global Village—Pro football fans who visit certain parts of Africa will notice a surprising number of people wearing shirts advertising teams that have lost the Super Bowl. This is because every year, in preparation for the big game, corporations print tremendous quantities of shirts for both teams; at the conclusion of the game, the winning team's shirts immediately go on the market while the other shirts are shipped overseas to the losers,

globally speaking, presumably as a tax write-off. This is what it means to globalize the capitalist village without redressing its imbalances: the wrong side of the tracks now encompasses entire continents.

Identity—A construct for emphasizing the differences between one designated group and others (see *Border*) while suppressing and obscuring the differences between individuals within those groups (see *We*)

Ignorance—In Delhi, the poor must walk everywhere, pushing through the crowds that throng—and in some cases dwell on—the sidewalks. There, one sees poverty close up—festering injuries, untreated illnesses, chronic malnourishment, despair and desperation. Those with a little money in their pockets can ride in a rickshaw or taxi, rendering the streets a less troubling blur. The truly wealthy move in limousines and private airplanes from one walled bubble to the next (see *Mediation*), shielded from everything so they can speak unironically of investment opportunities while millions go hungry; as their vehicles belch exhaust into the outside world, they literally breathe different air than the unfortunates around them.

Contrary to bourgeois mythology, the greater a person's wealth and privilege, the less likely it is that he or she will be well-informed about reality.

Privilege means insulation from the effects of one's own actions as well as other inconveniences; often, those who contribute the most to suffering and devastation are the least aware of it. Who knows more about waste disposal plants—the people who discuss them in boardrooms, or the ones who work in them and live next to them?

Immediacy—Stories have the greatest impact on those who tell them, magazines on those who publish them, records on those who record them, pictures on those who paint them. To argue for participatory decision-making, the decentralization of power, and the abolition of the division of labor is simply to acknowledge this.

Infidelity—Some allege that polyamory is simply a way for sexist men to have sex with a lot of women without being accountable to any of them. This is unusual, considering that overt polyamory seems to be most prevalent in contexts in which women are comparatively empowered and accountability is valued at a premium. In fact, traditional patriarchal social forms (see *Monogamy*) already offer sexist men a model for having sex with different women without being accountable, which has worked well enough for them since the days of the Old Testament.

Mediation—Mediated experience is characterized by alienation from the surrounding world and one's own sensory and emotional responses. It can result from use of an external intermediary such as a television or the internet, but one might also describe it as an orientation one develops to the world when one is used to experiencing everything through intermediaries.

Picture the first human beings to land upon the Galapagos islands—the unfamiliar plants and animals, the untracked wilderness, the hot sun and salty breeze. Compare his or her experiences to those of the wealthy tourists that visit the islands today. The latter spend most of each visit inside cruise ships designed to look like fancy hotels; when they do land on an island, they are only permitted to walk along a strictly

designated trail accompanied by a guide who talks constantly at them, framing everything they experience within a standardized narration.* Extend that example to every facet of our lives, and you can begin to understand what mediation means today.

Obedience—On Christmas Eve, 1914, an informal truce broke out between German and British troops stationed across from each other in Belgium. The Germans began by decorating the trees around their trenches with candles, then started singing Christmas carols, notably *Silent Night*. The British troops responded with English carols, and both sides shouted Christmas greetings across the decimated wasteland that lay between them. A few brave soldiers stuck their heads above the fortifications and, not being fired upon, tentatively made their way forward to meet in the middle of No Man's Land. More followed, and soon the enemy combatants were exchanging gifts—whiskey, jam, cigars, chocolate—and warm embraces.

The surprise truce enabled both sides to recover the bodies of their slaughtered comrades, who had been left rotting where they had fallen in No Man's Land. Soldiers of both armies joined in funerals and mourned the dead together. The following day everyone gathered for a football match in the open field; it was a close game, and there was much good cheer and merry-making. We can only imagine what a senseless abomination the war must have seemed to everyone there that afternoon.

By January, the commanding officers had prevailed and the young men who had laughed, sang, cried, and played together were once again shooting, stabbing, and bombing each other.

* Not to say we want bourgeois tourists to be free to run wild across the Galapagos the same way they have rampaged across the rest of the world—on the contrary, we want the entire world to be free to run wild, so no one has to go halfway across the planet to see a vibrant and unique ecosystem . . . and that's bound to involve some inconveniences for the bourgeois. For more on this, see the *Papillon* review near the end of this issue.

Occupation—A protracted travesty of justice involving senseless waste of life for the sake of corporate extraction of resources, such as the United States is currently maintaining in Iraq (see figure iii.)—and you, not coincidentally, are probably experiencing here at home (see figure iv.)

Newspeak—Orwell lacked the imagination to see the future in its entirety: language is not being curtailed or redefined so much as channeled into formats that preclude meaningful communication (see *myspace.com*)

Sustainable Development—A contradiction in terms. We're all whistling in the dark at the top of our lungs as the polar ice

caps melt, and these fucking lunatics think if we just slow down a bit there'll be time for them to make another million before the end of the world. The only thing that could render human life sustainable for the future would be to block technological development, burn down housing developments, and develop an ecological defense movement with the guts to follow through on its conclusions.

Theory—Sure, it's important to refine our hypotheses and learn from past mistakes—but if every worker has to read Hegel to be qualified to fight for her own liberation, call off the fucking revolution!

figure iii.

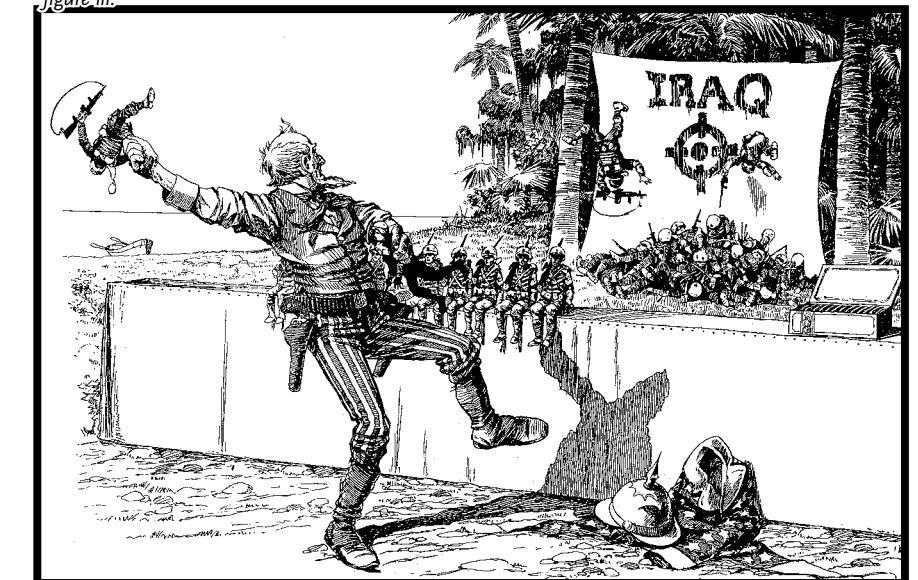
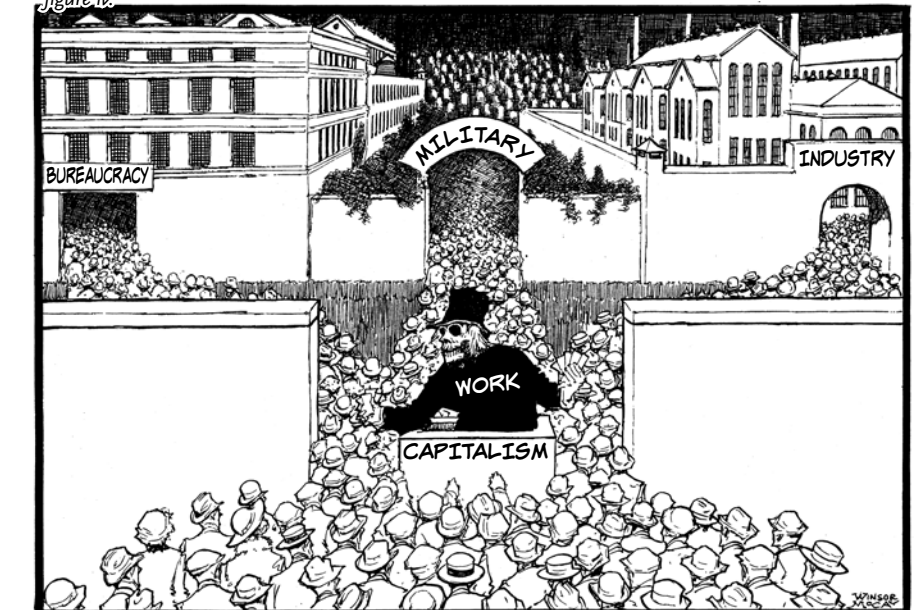


figure iv.



Word of the Issue:

We

Mark Twain famously opined that the only people who should use the word “we” are editors and people with tapeworms, but to our knowledge no one has yet undertaken a serious analysis of the power dynamics hidden within this single syllable. “We” sounds so egalitarian, so communal and participatory, when more often than not it refers to unspeakably hierarchical and constraining social configurations. Fascism, let us remember, is also a form of collectivity.

In our preliminary research, we have already discovered several variants of “we,” though this is hardly an exhaustive list:

The leader’s We: “. . . and we will give our lives, if need be, to defend our homeland!”

The executive’s We: “We’ve got productivity up 25% this year, and we’re going to see a real return on that in profits.”

The boss’s We: “We need to mop this whole kitchen in the next half hour.”

The babysitter’s We: “Are we a little testy tonight? Maybe it’s time for us to get ready for bed?”

The sports fan’s We: “We’re going to the World Series this year!” Sure you are!

The activist’s We: “Whose streets? Our streets!” Whose, precisely?

The party faithful We: “Now that the factories are in the hands of the workers, we can commence building the paradise on earth Mankind deserves!” [shortly before a one-way trip to Siberia]

Zamyatin’s *We*: An underrated novel that offered much of the inspiration for George Orwell’s *1984*.

Some forms of We refer to entirely mythical social bodies: the patriot’s We, for example, thoughtlessly includes everyone who happens to have citizenship in the nation, even if some of them consider themselves enemies of the state. Other forms, such as the We of identity politics, seek to create self-conscious social bodies by premising a mythical commonality on the basis of circumstantial evidence.

Many different forms of collective process are hidden within “We.” In the field of the arts, these range from plagiarism—in which two or more parties are involved, but a single one makes the decisions without any regard for the others’ desires—to corporate journalism, which is practically no different! In the world of politics, these include the democratic We—“We voted to kick out 40% of our membership”—and the consensus-based We: “We took four weeks to compose a paragraph I could have written in three minutes!”

No anarchist discussion of the word We could be complete without an examination of the propagandist’s We. This is a distant

relative of the “royal” We,* in that it’s not a We at all. The propagandist’s We is most popular among radicals who lack the social skills to collaborate with anyone, yet wish to sound as if they single-handedly constitute a coherent popular movement. A diligent genealogist might trace its history from the mission statements of Bakunin’s imaginary secret societies through the “FC” of the Unabomber Manifesto right up to the worst of current radical yellow journalism. At best, this We is wishful thinking; at worst, it is the We of the would-be despot, who fantasizes about fielding an army of automations because he cannot imagine any other kind of relationship.

Given all this ambiguity, what proper use remains for the word “We”? We (there it is, “we”!) would like to direct the reader to the famous joke in which Tonto and the Lone Ranger are set upon by a bloodthirsty horde of so-called Indians:

“Looks like we’re in trouble, old pal,” the Lone Ranger observes.

To which Tonto replies: “What do you mean ‘we,’ white man?”

* The idea behind the royal We—the *pluralis majestatis*—is that a monarch or other high official always speaks for his or her people. In the same way, the decisions of a Town Council are referred to as those of “the” Town, rather than of the *government* of that town: for example, “For years, the Town of Attleboro has unsuccessfully endeavored to prevent its residents from gathering downtown on Halloween night.”

HOW I BECAME AN ANARCHIST

Niamey, Niger, 1983

Mother told me we had to stay inside for a few days. I thought it was because of another sandstorm. The sand blows everywhere here, and blinds you. It prickles the windowpanes as I am trying to sleep.

I want to go outside because the neighbor has peacocks that stand on his roof and watch me play and I can show them things, like my cartwheels. They pay a great deal more attention to me than my brother does.

And I want to go visit Fatima. She lives inside the huge walls across the street. She wears my favorite dress that I outgrew—it made me look like Gretel, but the red fabric makes Fatima look like embered coal in the middle of fire.

But Mother says I must stay inside. She looks pretty worried about it all and talks in hushed tones with Father.

Seth catches a Lizard, but we have to wait until Father gets home to put it outside.

At dinner, I hear gunshots. Well, I don’t know what they are, but they “pop, pop, pop.” They clap like boards being dropped on each other. I am four and I learn to say “coup d’état.” Father explains that this means one man, and all the men who like him, are making another man, and all the men who like him, move out of his house. Father says that the new men will become the new government and everyone must wait in their homes until they are done.

I ask Father, What do they do once they move into the house? They do things for the country? Like what? Like build roads and make laws. I think about Niger. I think about the sand-swept Sahara and the camels and nomadic people. It strikes me that roads disappear, like everything else, under sand and that laws mean as much to nomadic peoples as they do to a four-year-old. And I become an anarchist.

Outside Bluemont, Virginia, mid-1980s

I have slipped out my bedroom window. Off the roof. I have, in the foggy morning, tripped across the yard to the fence line. I do not use the gate; I crawl over the stone wall instead, throwing my sack first. I cross the field, crouched low, so not to be seen. I make it to the forest line. I walk like I imagine a deer does, on the edges of twigs, so not to break them. I am silent. I am wind. Today I imagine I have no name. I have no family. I have no past. I study the lace patterns on the forest floor as the sun cuts through the canopy.

I breathe in the mud below me, the moss. I note to myself that lichens grow where there is good water and good air. Mr. Jenkins taught me that. I unfold my bandana and eat my rations—a small sandwich cut into triangles by my mother. I eat it all, confident that if need be, I can survive off mushrooms, though I really don’t like them. I could always eat the berries near the bus stop, too. I will find a hollowed out tree to live in, and befriend a crow, and if I can’t find a crow, one of those brownish birds will do. I can start fires rubbing together sticks and, failing that, I can find my brother, who has a lighter, even though he is not supposed to. I am wild. I am heathen. I am imagination. I am an anarchist.

Washington, DC, 2001

I have been pushed down from behind—the backs of my legs are screaming obscenities as they buckle under the blows of a baton. My face is on the pavement and there is a hand that must belong to a giant holding the back of my skull. I can only see black boots tethered with tight laces. These are also enormous, and it feels like there are dozens of them. I can feel pieces of asphalt lifting from the road and implanting into my cheek. Suddenly Jon’s face is in front of mine. One eye is pressed shut against the ground, but the other is focused on me. He is all I can see now. He is two inches from my face. He is grinning wildly.

There is spit coming out the sides of his mouth, and the rest is teeth. Jon has enormous teeth, I realize. I feel small, between the gargantuan hand on the back of my head, the big boots, and Jon’s teeth. He starts counting down. *Five, four, three* . . . What are we counting to? I find myself counting, also. That’s what you do when someone is staring at you unblinking and counting. *Two . . . one!* We are now running and there are hands on us, but proportionate hands, hands without gloves, and we are sprinting. I didn’t know my legs could do this. And there is yelling behind us. And sirens, and shit, as far as I know, there are tanks and guns and fucking bombs. So I keep running. We all do. I feel safe among anarchists.

Letters

Dear *Rolling Thunder* readers,

Sometimes I think I am a hopeless romantic. I'm pretty sure my friends are certain I am one. I like telling stories that breed situations and evoke action; I often paint my words with a broad stroke of syrupy emotion. I love the Steve Miller Band for their song, "Space Cowboy," I love my mom, I love my partner, and I love fireworks in the sky. I wonder just how long of an "I love . . ." list I can make. I sometimes think it took me nearly drowning in prison hopelessness before I could be so amazed by the beauty of our existence. I just said "our" existence, not "my," because this applies to you and me. Our lives are fucking remarkable and there is evidence of such everyday . . .

I love my Mom—she has shown me so much in this life. I distinctly remember when she took me to my first fireworks show. I remember being awestruck. My eyes were affixed; there was so much color. They were like big exploding flowers in the night sky. I didn't know what the fourth of July was; as far as I was concerned it was the day when the fireworks came out, nothing more. That could have been the best July 4th ever.

I spent this July 4th at Butner Federal Correctional Institution, and I got to see how the rest of America does July 4th. Holy shit! I have never seen such gluttony! There was some sort of cookout, presumably to celebrate our independence from mother England. Every inmate was given a ticket stub for their special July 4th meal. I drifted out of my cell to see what all the hoopla was about and conduct my own reconnaissance mission to seek out and retrieve any vegan options. What I found was some sort of morbid orgy of American eating. Each ticket got you a chicken breast and leg, two hamburgers, two hot dogs, two cans of soda, and a slice of watermelon. "Is this normal?" I thought to myself, can a single person eat this much food? Now don't get me wrong, I took my fare share of watermelon because it had been about a year since my last slice, but it was hard to eat in this sea of faces chewing and gorging. I started doing math equations

in my head, "1100 inmates on this compound, five compounds on this complex, chickens have two breasts and legs so divide by two... =-2750 chickens died for this meal." I asked the man across the table from me how many federal prison complexes there are across the country. "One hundred and twenty," he replied. I have no idea how many animals went into those hot dogs or how many cows lost their lives for those two burgers, but including the chickens there were definitely tens of thousands of animals who died for that meal alone. When Americans do it, they "do it big."

I could not look away from this spectacle. This time it was not beautiful colors in the skies of my childhood, it was a train wreck of eating. I guess the "do it big" imperative is also why an American "single-serve" portion is enough to feed families elsewhere, and similarly perhaps why TV screens keep getting wider, or why chrome rims on cars keep getting taller, or why SUVs are becoming houseboats. Americans "do it big!"

Hundreds of men around me were sucking meat off bones and pushing burgers down their throats in such volumes that they were actually making some sort of grotesque rustling noise. I thought to myself, this type of gluttony is not isolated to just here. This wanton disregard for the lives of animals did not begin here. This problem is one that is deeply rooted in our culture and predates all of us. It doesn't just apply to the gluttonous consumption of foods or animals. It traverses and consumes geographical borders—because more land is better; it absorbs resources—because more oil is bigger economic growth; it infiltrates military policy—because bigger armies mean you can get more of what you want when you want.

When America takes on foreign policy, America "does it big." Why use diplomacy when you can *occupy*? Why buy a portion of their oil, when you can *take all of it*? Why take only what we need to survive when we can *factory farm, augment, and genetically alter* our natural world and commodify it to make big money? Companies like Bechtel,

Halliburton, Lockheed Martin, Carlyle & Telephonics stand to make big money off the forced policy in Iraq by providing logistics and provisions to forces, by providing ammunition and armaments, by re-routing oil trade, or by rebuilding bombed roads, bridges, and city infrastructure. Oil interests and a competitive US dollar stand to "go big" against the rallying Euro-dollar

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if they can re-direct control of oil out of Iranian hands and into the hands of US affiliates, thereby stunting the growth of China, the feared future "big dog" in the race to "go big," fueling the American "do it big" economy, and providing a Middle Eastern springboard for the big plan to "democratize" the Arab world.

American companies don't just "do it big" overseas, they "do it big" at home as well. Big houses, big cars, big things with big neon signs to advertise them. Big institutions, big police forces, big county courts, big state courts, big federal courts, and big prisons. In fact, recent research shows that the American "prison industrial complex" is the next largest growing industry in this country, second only to courier services like UPS, DHL, and Logistics. Both private and government-run prisons have found a way to jump on the "do it big" wagon by maximizing the profitability of captivity. By way of very old legislation, prisoners can be stripped of their original constitutional protections as citizens for the duration of their sentence and, as wards, be used for labor at what is legally considered slave wages. This has led to the increased privatization of prisons, because private companies see so much opportunity for

I call Cito. I don't even tell Cito. I don't even cry and I don't know where I am so I cannot tell him where to find me. All I can say is *don't beat him up don't beat him up* and I am pleading with Cito who has never said he will do this and hasn't actually said anything except "Where are you?" and I say *don't beat him up*.

Because I'm going to beat him up this time. Because I'm not even hurt anymore. You hovered over me with your back arched and your pants around your ankles saying "Just if you would feel it like you used to... hold still and feel how I love you." But this is all I remember from you. This is all I remember—you slapping me so my cheeks burned and you "making love to me." You tearing apart the house and then "making love to me." No one to turn to. No one to tell. Fuck you. But this isn't happening anymore. From now on I'm going to fight like a girl just like you trained me to.

You made me everything that I am today and you will be sorry.

New Orleans, LA, 1998

I watch from the armchair as my father comes in from work and puts his coat on a chair. He stands in the doorway to the dining room and watches my mother as she bends to set the table. He does this each night, with a half-crooked smile on his face—he watches her move for a moment and his eyes soften, his cheeks turn to felt, his lips curl. Today, he did not fight any revolutions. He did not take a stand. Today there were no fiery words flung, no marches, no protests. Today perhaps nothing happened that didn't also happen yesterday. But at 5:45 every night my father falls in love again, like he has for thirty-five years. There is nothing outside this house, outside these rooms, outside this doorway. There is only my father falling in love again. My father in this moment is anarchy, and I am its witness.

Indianapolis, IN 2004

Payten is small and fat. She has dimples on the backs of her fingers, showing where they bend. She is squeezing my hand hard and you can see flecks of blood mottling the surface of her skin from the pressure. We are waiting in my office while her mother testifies about what her father has done to her. Payten has told me about the bedtime games. About how she saw blood in the toilet after she peed. Payten asks me "Am I going to have to move back in with him?" And I am told to be cautious and say, "I do not know," because I don't know—I am not the judge, I am not Child Protective Services, I do not make the decisions today. But instead I say, "No, you will never have to see him again, Payten." Because she and I can make a decision today. If these walls in my office were hurting her, I could tear them down. If the streets of this city were hurting her, I could jackhammer them up. If all the words in the world were hurting her, I would tear up the dictionary. There is nothing I wouldn't do. There is nothing I cannot do. I have become an anarchist.

Washington, DC, 1990

The TV lady says that we have gone to war. There are pictures of flashes and bangs and lights in the sky over the sullen desert. There are American flags on every station. My brother asks my father why they are doing this, and he answers "Oil." We watch a moment more. "What the hell is this about?" I ask, knowing I should not cuss. But I am twelve and aware that my dirty mouth is no big deal compared to this shit. My father opens his mouth to tell me not to cuss, and I give him a look, and he knows not to say anything . . . because we are aware of what I am.

Rural North Carolina, 2000

My fingers are blistered from summer wear, so I have to feel the softness of the beans on my palm. I lay with my eyes shut, with the sun making a kaleidoscope on my eyelids. It is so hot here. The air dares you to move. A beetle crawls on my chest, leaving a dry red clay trail behind him. You can make the soil here into clay with two passes of water. You can make a pot with only an afternoon and a fire. You can make a garden too out of the clay, with enough love. You can make a family out of the food from the garden. I sink back into the valley I have dug between the rows of beans and let gravity have its way with me. I have become . . .

Chapel Hill, NC, 2001

That motherfucker. That motherfucker. I pull myself up. That motherfucker.

All he wanted to do was talk. That's what he always said. I answered the door—I didn't know it was him. I should have looked out first. Fuck. Fuck. And I don't want to talk. What is there to talk about? It's been two years. Two years. You have a girlfriend, a house, you have it all. Fuck you for having it all. I have me. That's the one thing you don't have. I left. I never even told on you. You goddamn motherfucker.

I avoid the mirror. I wash my face. I wash my vagina over and over and over. I am rubbing my thighs raw with a bar of soap. You motherfucker. My face is starting to swell on my cheekbone. Fuck you.

I didn't even fight you this time.

I leave my apartment and drive. I smell now like soap and I want to stop smelling like soap. I drive forty-five minutes to Raleigh and park in a neighborhood I have never been in before. Fuck fuck fuck.

profit when work that would otherwise cost upwards of \$18-30 per hour per employee can be obtained for 12 cents an hour per inmate. Major corporate conglomerates are getting involved directly with prison policy, building facilities within the walls of prison compounds and creating profit for the prison, the state and federal government, and even more for the company and its client contracts.

Often the company will operate under a fake name and use a “holding company” name for a ticker symbol so that the public may invest. Such is the case in my cage, the Federal Bureau of Prisons, where a “private” company (whose name I cannot include in this article, grrr...)* operates many facilities that take on specific tasks (which I can’t specifically name, grrr...), produces a variety of products (under different brand names, grrr...), at times caters to government or private contracts, and all the while trades on the open market under the “public” holding company name (whose name I cannot include either). Nevertheless, these companies “do it big.” Just think of how “big” your profits can be if you don’t have to pay workers. What happens when it is illegal to unionize, illegal to refuse work, illegal to be late? You get to keep your shop open around the clock, your workers keep coming in, and even when you give them bonuses like a pack of Nutty Bars from the prison store you’re still saving \$17-29 an hour. That’s BIG savings! Size-wise these facilities are always big, like 10-acre concrete boxes filled with bustling people.

A friend of mine recently wrote me recounting her experience in accompanying our mutual friend as he voluntarily surrendered himself to the Bureau of Prisons. She said that these places are solid examples of “everything we hate.” She recalled saying to herself, “what the fuck are we doing? what the fuck are we doing?” I remember feeling the same way when I walked myself in about a year ago. Her words were a spooky echo of the feelings that rang through me for over a week when I surrendered myself. My heart wept along with hers, and with our friend who surrendered himself. Those times evoked a feeling in me that I used to shudder at as it would leave the mouths of pessimistic

* Editor’s note: We can only guess he’s referring to UNICOR.

folks. A feeling that there was too much evil out there, a feeling of being consumed, a feeling like drowning. I felt a tremendous weight on my shoulders and a fear that my efforts were noble but not more than a blemish on the face of evil. I want so much more in this life. I want more for others, not just me, not just humans, everything... Our lives are fucking remarkable and there is evidence of such everyday.

Every day has its ups and downs. This is true everywhere, but in prison it seems to be even more exaggerated. The July 4th meal helped me paint a picture of the “do it big” consumption that embodies everything that is wrong with our culture, right inside the theater of the prison chow hall. As a spectator, I can drown in my disgust and grow more pessimistic and jaded, or I can relish the good points on this rollercoaster ride. I remember one point so nice that as I write this I know it will just provide more evidence for my friends’ position that I am in fact a hopeless romantic.

My job in the prison has me doing a bunch of silly tasks: mostly I sweep the sidewalks on the compound, sometimes I clean the tables and set up chairs in the visiting room, other times I move boxes into the prison industrial facility. Because this prison has only been open a year, it’s not yet fully operational. One day my co-workers and I moved boxes into an industrial space the size of a shopping mall. It was empty and quiet. We had a cart to wheel the boxes in, a 6’x4’ flatbed bottom with hard plastic wheels and a handle to guide it. After we unloaded the boxes, the other inmates and I got eerily quiet and a smile came over my face.

You see, this industrial facility is what makes the prison profitable, and here it sits, idle. When it was built it was supposed to serve as a “411 call center” for people who want to buy products from the distribution service provided by the private company that uses prison labor, but something happened . . . There was a previous failed attempt at a similar call center at another prison, and it appeared that I am not the only “hopeless romantic.” Some inmates with lengthy sentences who enjoy the company of ladies had trouble getting off the phone with female customers. This apparently never made it into the BOP’s calculations when building these prison call centers, and even today if you listen carefully in this empty 10 acre

concrete box you can hear an echo from yesteryear saying “oops.”

We all laughed as we unloaded the boxes. We were convinced big brother BOP was trying to make the space seem useful by filling it with cardboard cubes of great importance. We were black, white, Hispanic, and Middle Eastern—men with all of the racial tensions of the prison complex—and we laughed together and smiled together. The cart was now empty and one of my co-workers, a white man with swastikas on his arm, climbed aboard the cart and stood like Michael J. Fox atop the van in “Teen Wolf.” A young African-American kid began to push the cart across this empty sea of concrete floor. He too jumped on board. The hard plastic wheels clicked as they rolled over the cracks that divided one section of concrete from another. Click-click, click-click. We all smiled, we all laughed, and in this moment we were free. Above us were the large plate glass windows where the corporate guys would have been supervising the hundreds of phone receptionists, below us and to all sides was a vast empty space now echoing with clicks and laughter.

I felt like I did when my mom took me to my first fireworks show. I was seeing “everything we hate” collect dust and become the space for box cart races and laughter—and a space to destroy a once tense racial dynamic. I stood there and took it all in: the echoes, the laughter, the dust bunnies on the floor. Because of the prior failed attempt to create a prison call center, the private company offering this service could not find another client. They haphazardly went ahead and built the space in hopes that another client would come along, but to no avail. I wondered what this famed Paul Bunyan of an inmate said while on the phone that struck a near-fatal blow to the revenue of the prison industrial complex? A laundry list of cheesy pick-up lines came to mind, and they fueled more laughter among us. I was reminded of the great power we have as individuals to change the whole world, and that’s a concept that scares our oppressors beyond words.

This factory space could have been filled with despair, but now it is a sea of hope, and I’m going swimming . . .

Andy



The Shock Of Victory

David Graeber

The biggest problem facing direct action movements is that we don’t know how to handle victory.

This might seem an odd thing to say because a lot of us haven’t been feeling particularly victorious of late. Most anarchists today feel the global justice movement was kind of a blip: inspiring, certainly, while it lasted, but not a movement that succeeded either in putting down lasting organizational roots or transforming the contours of power in the world. The anti-war movement was even more frustrating, since anarchists and anarchist tactics were largely marginalized. The war will end, of course, but that’s just because wars always do. No one is feeling they contributed much to it.

I want to suggest an alternative interpretation. Let me lay out three initial propositions here:

1) Odd though it may seem, the ruling classes live in fear of us. They appear to still be haunted by the possibility that, if average Americans really get wind of what they’re up to, they might all end up hanging from trees. I know it seems implausible, but it’s hard to come up with any other explanation for the way they go into panic mode the moment there is any sign of mass mobilization, and especially mass direct action, and usually try to start some kind of war to distract attention.

2) In a way, though, this panic is justified. Mass direct action—especially when organized on democratic lines—is incred-

ibly effective. Over the last thirty years in America, there have been only two instances of mass action of this sort: the anti-nuclear movement in the late '70s, and the so called “anti-globalization” movement from roughly 1999 to 2001. In each case, the movement’s main political goals were reached far more quickly than almost anyone involved imagined possible.

3) The real problem such movements face is that they always get taken by surprise by the speed of their initial success. We are never prepared for victory. It throws us into confusion. We start fighting each other. The ratcheting up of repression and appeals to nationalism that inevitably accompany some new war mobilization then play into the hands of authoritarians on every side of the political spectrum. As a result, by the time the full impact of our initial victory becomes clear, we’re usually too busy feeling like failures to even notice it.

Let me take the two most prominent examples case by case:

I: THE ANTI-NUCLEAR MOVEMENT

The anti-nuclear movement of the late '70s marked the first appearance in North America of what we now consider standard anarchist tactics and forms of organization: mass actions, affinity groups, spokescouncils, consensus process, jail solidarity, the very principle of decentralized direct democracy... It was all somewhat primitive, compared to now, and there were significant differences—notably much stricter, Gandhian-style conceptions of non-violence—but all the elements were there and it was the first time they had come together as a package. For two years, the movement grew with amazing speed and showed every sign of becoming a nation-wide phenomenon. Then almost as quickly, it disintegrated.

It all began when, in 1974, some veteran-peaceniks-turned-organic farmers in New England successfully blocked construction of a proposed nuclear power plant in Montague, Massachusetts. In 1976, they joined

with other New England activists, inspired by the success of a year-long plant occupation in Germany, to create the Clamshell Alliance. Clamshell’s immediate goal was to stop construction of a proposed nuclear power plant in Seabrook, New Hampshire. While the alliance never ended up managing an occupation so much as a series of dramatic mass-arrests, combined with jail solidarity, their actions—involving, at peak, tens of thousands of people organized on directly democratic lines—succeeded in throwing the very idea of nuclear power into question in a way it had never been before. Similar coalitions began springing up across the country: the Palmetto Alliance in South Carolina, Oystershell in Maryland, Sunflower in Kansas, and most famous of all, the Abalone Alliance in California, reacting originally to a completely insane plan to build a nuclear power plant at Diablo Canyon, almost directly on top of a major geographic fault line.

Clamshell’s first three mass actions, in 1976 and 1977, were wildly successful. But it soon fell into crisis over questions of democratic process. In May 1978, a newly created Coordinating Committee violated process to accept a last-minute government offer for a three-day legal rally at Seabrook instead of a planned fourth occupation (the excuse was reluctance to alienate the surrounding community). Acrimonious debates began about consensus and community relations, which then expanded to the role of non-violence (even cutting through fences, or defensive measures like gas masks, had originally been forbidden), gender bias, and so on. By 1979 the alliance split into two contending, and increasingly ineffective, factions, and after many delays, the Seabrook plant (or half of it anyway) did go into operation. The Abalone Alliance lasted longer, until 1985, in part because its strong core of anarcho-feminists, but in the end, Diablo Canyon too got its license and went into operation in December 1988.

On the surface this doesn’t sound too inspiring. But what was the movement really trying to achieve? It might be helpful here to map out its full range of goals:

1) **Short-Term Goals:** to block construction of the particular nuclear plant in question (Seabrook, Diablo Canyon . . .).

2) **Medium-Term Goals:** to block con-

struction of all new nuclear plants, delegitimize the very idea of nuclear power and begin moving towards conservation and green power, and legitimate new forms of non-violent resistance and feminist-inspired direct democracy.

3) **Long-Term Goals:** (at least for the more radical elements) smash the state and destroy capitalism.

If so, the results are clear. Short-term goals were almost never reached. Despite numerous tactical victories (delays, utility company bankruptcies, legal injunctions), the plants that became the focus of mass action all ultimately went on line. Governments simply cannot allow themselves to be seen to lose such a battle. Long-term goals were also obviously not obtained. But one reason they weren’t is that the medium-term goals were all reached almost immediately. The actions did delegitimize the very idea of nuclear power—raising public awareness to the point that when Three Mile Island melted down in 1979, it doomed the industry forever. While plans for Seabrook and Diablo Canyon might not have been cancelled, just about every other then-pending plan to build a nuclear reactor was, and no new ones have been proposed for a quarter century.* There was indeed a move towards conservation, green power, and a legitimizing of new democratic organizing techniques. All this happened much more quickly than anyone had really anticipated.

In retrospect, it’s easy to see most of the subsequent problems emerged directly from the very speed of the movement’s success. Radicals had hoped to make links between the nuclear industry and the very nature of the capitalist system that created it. As it turns out, the capitalist system proved more than willing to jettison the nuclear industry the moment it became a liability. Once giant utility companies

* Editors’ note: Unfortunately, federal and corporate interests are taking advantage of long-overdue public concerns about climate change to push nuclear power as a “green” energy source, so we may have to fight this battle all over again. Currently, there are 103 commercial nuclear power reactors in operation in the US, but several new ones have been proposed, primarily in southeast. There are countless reasons to oppose nuclear power, but we’ll leave you with this single one: nuclear power plants need electricity to run their cooling systems, an ominous detail in light of the current instability of the electrical grid.

began claiming they too wanted to promote green energy, effectively inviting what we’d now call the NGO types to a space at the table, there was an enormous temptation to jump ship. Especially because many of them only allied with more radical groups so as to win themselves a place at the table to begin with.

The inevitable result was a series of heated strategic debates. But it’s impossible to understand this without first understanding that strategic debates, within directly democratic movements, are rarely conducted as such. They almost always take the form of debates about something else. Take for instance the question of capitalism. Anti-capitalists are usually more than happy to discuss their position on the subject. Liberals, on the other hand, really don’t like to have to say, “actually, I am in favor of maintaining capitalism,” so whenever possible, they try to change the subject. Thus, debates that are actually about whether to directly challenge capitalism usually end up getting argued out as if

Within social movements, strategic debates are rarely conducted as such; they almost always take the form of debates about something else.

they were short-term debates about tactics and non-violence. Authoritarian socialists or others who are suspicious of democracy itself don’t like to make that an issue either, and prefer to discuss the need to create the broadest possible coalitions. Those who do like democracy but feel a group is taking the wrong strategic direction often find it much more effective to challenge its decision-making process than to challenge its actual decisions.

There is another factor here that is even less remarked on, but I think equally important. Everyone knows that faced with a broad and potentially revolutionary coalition, any government’s first move will be to try to split it. Making concessions to placate the moderates while selectively criminalizing the radicals—this is Art of Governance 101. In addition, the US government is in possession of a global empire constantly mobilized for war, and this gives it another option that most governments don’t have. Those running it can ratchet

up the level of violence overseas pretty much any time they like; this has proved a remarkably effective way to defuse social movements founded around domestic concerns. It seems no coincidence that the civil rights movement was followed by major political concessions *and* a rapid escalation of the war in Vietnam; that the anti-nuclear movement was followed by the abandonment of nuclear power and a ramping up of the Cold War, with Star Wars programs and proxy wars in Afghanistan and Central America; that the Global Justice Movement was followed by the collapse of the Washington Consensus *and* the War on Terror. As a result early SDS had to put aside its early emphasis on participatory democracy to become a mere anti-war movement; the anti-nuclear movement morphed into a nuclear freeze movement; the horizontal structures of DAN and PGA gave way to top-down mass organizations like ANSWER and UFPJ.

From the point of view of government, the military solution does have its risks.

While the anti-war mobilizations of the '80s turned out far larger numbers than Clamshell or Abalone ever had, they also marked a return to marching with signs, permitted rallies, and abandoning experiments with new forms of direct democracy.

II: THE GLOBAL JUSTICE MOVEMENT

I’ll assume our gentle reader is broadly familiar with the actions at the World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle, the IMF-World Bank blockades six months later in Washington at A16, and so on.

In the US, the movement flared up so quickly and dramatically that even the media could not completely dismiss it. It also quickly started eating itself. Direct Action Networks were founded in almost every major city in America. While some of these (notably Seattle and Los Angeles DAN) were reformist, anti-corporate, and fans of strict non-violence codes, most (like New York and Chicago DAN) were overwhelmingly anarchist and anti-capitalist, and dedicated to diversity of tactics. Other cities (Montreal, Washington, D.C.) created even more explicitly anarchist Anti-Capitalist Convergences. The anti-corporate DANs dissolved almost immediately, but very few lasted more than a couple years. There were endless and bitter debates: about non-violence, about summit-hopping, about racism and privilege issues, about the viability of the network model.

Then there was 9/11, followed by a huge increase of the level of repression and resultant paranoia, and the panicked flight of almost all our former allies among unions and NGOs. By Miami, in 2003, it seemed like we’d been put to rout, and a paralysis swept over the movement from which we’ve only recently started to recover.

September 11 was such a weird event, such a catastrophe, that it makes it almost impossible for us to perceive anything else around it. In its immediate aftermath, almost all of the structures created in the globalization movement collapsed. But one reason it was so easy for them to collapse was—not just that war seemed such an immediately more pressing concern—but that

once again, in most of our immediate objectives, we'd already, unexpectedly, won.

Myself, I joined NYC DAN right around the time of A16. At the time DAN as a whole saw itself as a group with two major objectives. One was to help coordinate the North American wing of a vast global movement against neoliberalism, and what was then called the Washington Consensus, to destroy the hegemony of neoliberal ideas, stop all the new big trade agreements (WTO, FTAA), and to discredit and eventually destroy organizations like the IMF. The other was to replace old-fashioned activist organizing styles with their steering committees and ideological squabbles, to disseminate a (very much anarchist-inspired) model of direct democracy: decentralized, affinity-group structures, consensus process. At the time we sometimes called it "contaminationism," the idea that all people really needed was to be exposed to the experience of direct action and direct democracy and they would want to start imitating it all by themselves. There was a general feeling that we weren't trying to build a permanent structure; DAN was just a means to this end. When it had served its purpose, several founding members explained to me, there would be no further need for it. On the other hand these were pretty ambitious goals, so we also assumed even if we did attain them, it would probably take at least a decade.

As it turned out, it took about a year and a half. Obviously we failed to spark a social revolution. But one reason we never got to the point of inspiring hundreds of thousands of people to rise up was, again, that we achieved our other goals so quickly. Take the question of organization. While the anti-war coalitions still operate, as anti-war coalitions always do, as top-down popular front groups, almost every small-scale radical group that isn't dominated by Marxist sectarians of some sort or another—and this includes anything from organizations of Syrian immigrants in Montreal to community gardens in Detroit—now operates on largely anarchist principles—though they might not know it. Contaminationism worked. Alternately, take the domain of ideas. The Washington Consensus lies in ruins. So much so it's hard now to remember what public discourse in this country was even like before Seattle.

Rarely have the media and political classes been so completely unanimous about anything—that "free trade," "free markets," and no-holds-barred supercharged capitalism were the only possible direction for human history; the only possible solution for any problem was so completely assumed that anyone who cast doubt on the proposition was treated as literally insane. Global justice activists, when they first forced themselves into the attention of CNN or Newsweek, were immediately written off as reactionary lunatics. A year or two later, CNN and Newsweek were saying we'd won the argument.

Usually when I make this point in front of anarchist crowds someone immediately objects: "well, sure, the rhetoric has changed, but the policies remain the same." This is true in a manner of speaking. That is to say, it's true that we didn't destroy capitalism. But we (taking the "we" here as the horizontalist, direct-action-oriented wing of the planetary movement against neoliberalism) did arguably deal it a bigger blow in just two years than anyone since, say, the Russian Revolution.

Let me take this point by point:

·FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS. All the ambitious free trade treaties planned since 1998 have failed. The MAI was routed; the FTAA, focus of the actions in Quebec City and Miami, stopped dead in its tracks. Most of us remember the 2003 FTAA summit mainly for introducing the "Miami model" of extreme police repression even against obviously non-violent civil resistance. It was that. But we forget this was more than anything the enraged flailings of a pack of extremely sore losers—Miami was the meeting where the FTAA was definitively killed. Now no one is even talking about broad, ambitious treaties on that scale. The US is reduced to pushing for minor country-to-country trade pacts with traditional allies like South Korea and Peru, or at best deals like CAFTA, uniting its remaining client states in Central America, and it's not even clear it will manage to pull that off.

·THE WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION. After the catastrophe (for them) in Seattle, organizers moved the next meeting to the Persian Gulf island of Doha, apparently deciding they would rather run the risk of

being blown up by Osama bin Laden than having to face another DAN blockade. For six years they hammered away at the "Doha round." The problem was that, emboldened by the protest movement, Southern governments began insisting they would no longer agree to open their borders to agricultural imports from rich countries unless those rich countries at least stopped pouring billions of dollars of subsidies into their own agricultural industries to ensure Southern farmers couldn't possibly compete. Since the US in particular had no intention of making any of the sort of sacrifices it demanded of the rest of the world, all deals were off. In July 2006, Pierre Lamy, head of the WTO, declared the Doha round dead and at this point no one is even talking about another WTO negotiation for at least two years—at which point the organization might very possibly not exist.

·THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND AND WORLD BANK. This is the most amazing story of all. The IMF is rapidly approaching bankruptcy, and it is a direct result of the worldwide mobilization against them. To put the matter bluntly: we destroyed it. The World Bank is not doing all that much better. But by the time the full effects were felt, we weren't even paying attention.

This last story is worth telling in some detail.

The IMF was always the arch-villain of the struggle. It is the most powerful, most arrogant, most pitiless instrument through which neoliberal policies have, for the last twenty-five years, been imposed on the poorer countries of the global South, basically by manipulating debt. In exchange for emergency refinancing, the IMF would demand "structural adjustment programs" that forced massive cuts in health and education, price supports on food, and endless privatization schemes that allowed foreign capitalists to buy up local resources at fire sale prices. Structural adjustment somehow never worked to get countries back on their feet economically, but that just meant they remained in crisis, and the solution was always to insist on yet another round of structural adjustment.

The IMF also had another, less celebrated, role: global enforcer. It was their job to ensure that no country (no matter



We're not living in utopia—
we knew that much already.
The question is why we
never notice our victories.

how poor) could ever be allowed to default on loans to Western bankers (no matter how foolish). Even if a banker were to offer a corrupt dictator a billion dollar loan, and that dictator placed it directly in his Swiss bank account and fled the country, the IMF would ensure a billion dollars (plus generous interest) would be extracted from his former victims. If a country did default, for any reason, the IMF could impose a credit boycott whose economic effects were roughly comparable to that of a nuclear bomb. (All this flies in the face of even elementary economic theory, whereby those lending money are supposed to be accepting a certain degree of risk; but in the world of international politics, economic laws are only held to be binding on the poor.) This role was their downfall.

What happened was that Argentina defaulted and got away with it. In the '90s, Argentina had been the IMF's star pupil in Latin America—they had literally privatized every public facility except the customs bureau. Then in 2002, the

economy crashed. The immediate results we all know: battles in the streets, popular assemblies, the overthrow of three governments in one month, road blockades, occupied factories. "Horizontalism"—broadly anarchist principles—was at the core of popular resistance. The political class was so completely discredited that politicians were obliged to put on wigs and phony mustaches to be able to eat in restaurants without being physically attacked. When Nestor Kirchner, a moderate social democrat, took power in 2003, he knew he had to do something dramatic in order to get most of the population to accept even the idea of having a government, let alone his own. So he did. He did, in fact, the one thing no one in that position is ever supposed to do. He defaulted on Argentina's foreign debt.

Actually Kirchner was quite clever about it. He did not default on his IMF loans. He defaulted on Argentina's private debt, announcing that for all outstanding loans, he would only pay 25 cents on the dollar. Citibank and Chase of course went

to the IMF, their accustomed enforcer, to demand punishment. But for the first time in its history, the IMF balked. First of all, with Argentina's economy already in ruins, even the economic equivalent of a nuclear bomb would do little more than make the rubble bounce. Second of all, just about everyone was aware it was the IMF's disastrous advice that set the stage for Argentina's crash in the first place. Third and most decisively, this was at the very height of the impact of the global justice movement: the IMF was already the most hated institution on the planet, and willfully destroying what little remained of the Argentine middle class would have been pushing things just a little bit too far.

So Argentina was allowed to get away with it. After that, everything changed. Brazil and Argentina together arranged to pay back their outstanding debt to the IMF itself. With a little help from Chavez, so did the rest of the continent. In 2003, Latin American IMF debt stood at \$49 billion. Now it's \$694 million. To put that in perspective: that's a decline of 98.6%. For

every thousand dollars owed four years ago, Latin America now owes fourteen bucks. Asia followed. China and India now both have no outstanding debt to the IMF and refuse to take out new loans. The boycott now includes Korea, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and pretty much every other significant regional economy. Also Russia. The Fund is reduced to lording it over the economies of Africa, and maybe some parts of the Middle East and former Soviet sphere (basically those without oil). As a result its revenues have plummeted by 80% in four years. In the irony of all possible ironies, it's increasingly looking like the IMF will go bankrupt if they can't find someone willing to bail them out, but it isn't clear that anyone particularly wants to. With its reputation as fiscal enforcer in tatters, the IMF no longer serves any obvious purpose even for capitalists. There's been a number of proposals at recent G8 meetings to make up a new mission for the organization—a kind of international bankruptcy court, perhaps—but all have ended up getting torpedoed for one reason

or another. Even if the IMF does survive, it has already been reduced to a cardboard cut-out of its former self.

The World Bank, which early on took on the role of good cop, is in somewhat better shape. But emphasis here must be placed on the word "somewhat"—as in, its revenue has only fallen by 60%, not 80%, and there are few actual boycotts. On the other hand the Bank is currently being kept alive largely by the fact that India and China are still willing to deal with it, and both sides know that, so it is no longer in much of a position to dictate terms.

Obviously, all of this does not mean all the monsters have been slain. In Latin America, neoliberalism might be on the run, but China and India are carrying out devastating "reforms" within their own countries, European social protections are under attack, and most of Africa, despite much hypocritical posturing on the part of the Bonos and rich countries of the world, is still locked in debt, and now also facing a new colonization by China. The US, its economic power retreating in most of the

world, is frantically trying to redouble its grip over Mexico and Central America. We're not living in utopia. But we already knew that. The question is why we never noticed our victories.

Olivier de Marcellus, a PGA activist from Switzerland, points to one reason: whenever some element of the capitalist system takes a hit, whether it's the nuclear industry or the IMF, some leftist journal will start explaining to us that really, this is all part of their plan—or maybe, an effect of the inexorable working out of the internal contradictions of capital, but certainly, nothing for which we ourselves are in any way responsible. Even more important, perhaps, is our reluctance to even say the word "we." The Argentine default, wasn't that really engineered by Nestor Kirchner? What does he have to do with the globalization movement? I mean, it's not as if his hands were forced by thousands of citizens rising up, smashing banks, and replacing the government with popular assemblies coordinated by the IMC. Or, well, okay, maybe it was. Well,

in that case, those citizens were People of Color in the Global South. How can "we" take responsibility for their actions? Never mind that they mostly saw themselves as part of the same global justice movement as us, espoused similar ideas, wore similar clothes, used similar tactics, in many cases even belonged to the same confederacies or organizations. Saying "we" here would imply the primal sin of speaking for others.

Myself, I think it's reasonable for a global movement to consider its accomplishments in global terms. These are not inconsiderable. Yet just as with the anti-nuclear movement, they were almost all focused on the middle term. Let me map out a similar hierarchy of goals:

1) **Short-Term Goals:** blockade and shut down particular summit meetings (IMF, WTO, G8, etc.).

2) **Medium-Term Goals:** destroy the "Washington Consensus" around neoliberalism, block all new trade pacts, delegitimize and ultimately shut down institutions like the WTO, IMF, and World Bank; disseminate new models of direct democracy.

3) **Long-Term Goals:** (at least for the more radical elements) smash the state and destroy capitalism.

Here again, we find the same pattern. After the miracle of Seattle, short-term—tactical—goals were rarely achieved. But this was mainly because faced with such a movement, governments tend to dig in their heels and make it a matter of principle that they shouldn't be visibly defeated. This was usually considered much more important, in fact, than the success of the summit in question. Most activists do not seem to be aware that in a lot of cases—the 2001 and 2002 IMF and World Bank meetings for example—police ended up enforcing security arrangements so elaborate that they came very close to shutting down the meetings themselves; ensuring that many events were cancelled, the ceremonies were ruined, and nobody really had a chance to talk to each other. But the point was not whether trade officials got to meet or not. The point was that the protestors could not be seen to win.

Here, too, the medium-term goals were achieved so quickly that it actually made the

longer-term goals more difficult. NGOs, labor unions, authoritarian Marxists, and similar allies jumped ship almost immediately; strategic debates ensued, but they were carried out, as always, indirectly, as arguments about race, privilege, tactics, as almost anything but actual strategic debates. Here, too, everything was made infinitely more difficult by the state's recourse to war.

It is hard, as I mentioned, for anarchists to take much direct responsibility for the inevitable end of the war in Iraq, or even for the very bloody nose the empire has already acquired there. But a case could well be made for indirect responsibility. Since the '60s and the catastrophe of Vietnam, the US government has not abandoned its policy of answering any threat of democratic mass mobilizing by a return to war. But it has to be much more careful. Essentially, they have to design wars to be protest-proof. There is very good reason to believe that the first Gulf War was explicitly designed with this in mind. The approach taken to the invasion of Iraq—the insistence on a smaller, high-tech army, the extreme reliance on indiscriminate firepower, even against civilians, to protect against any Vietnam-like levels of American casualties—appears to have been developed, again, more with a mind to heading off any potential peace movement at home than for the sake of military effectiveness. This, anyway, would help explain why the most powerful army in the world has ended up being tied down and even defeated by an almost unimaginably ragtag group of guerrillas with negligible access to outside safe-areas, funding, or military support. As in the trade summits, they are so obsessed with ensuring that the forces of civil resistance cannot be seen to win the battle at home that they would prefer to lose the actual war.

PERSPECTIVES (with a brief return to 1930s Spain)

How, then, to cope with the perils of victory? I can't claim to have any simple answers. Really I wrote this essay more to start a conversation, to put the problem on the table—to inspire a strategic debate.

Still, some implications are pretty obvious. The next time we plan a major action

campaign, I think we would do well to at least take into account the possibility that we might obtain our mid-range strategic goals very quickly, and that when that happens, many of our allies will fall away. We have to recognize strategic debates for what they are, even when they seem to be about something else. Take one famous example: arguments about property destruction after Seattle. Most of these, I think, were really arguments about capitalism. Those who decried window-breaking did so mainly because they wished to appeal to middle-class consumers to move towards global-exchange style green consumerism, to ally with labor bureaucracies and social democrats abroad. This was not a path designed to create a direct confrontation with capitalism, and most of those who urged us to take this route were at least skeptical about the possibility that capitalism could ever really be defeated at all. Those who did break windows didn't care if they were offending suburban homeowners, because they didn't see them as a potential element in a revolutionary anti-capitalist coalition. They were trying, in effect, to hijack the media to send a message that the system was vulnerable—hoping to inspire similar insurrectionary acts on the parts of those who might consider entering a genuinely revolutionary alliance: alienated teenagers, oppressed people of color, rank-and-file laborers impatient with union bureaucrats, the homeless, the criminalized, the radically discontent. If a militant anti-capitalist movement was to begin in America, it would have to start with people like these: people who don't need to be convinced that the system is rotten, only that there's something they can do about it. And at any rate, even if it were possible to have an anti-capitalist revolution without gun-battles in the streets—which most of us are hoping it is, since let's face it, if we come up against the US army, we will lose—there's no possible way we could have an anti-capitalist revolution while at the same time scrupulously respecting property rights.

The latter actually leads to an interesting question. What would it mean to win, not just our medium-term goals, but our long-term ones? At the moment no one is even clear how that would come about, for the very reason that none of us have much faith left in "the" revolution in the



old 19th or 20th century sense of the term. After all, the total view of revolution, that there will be a single mass insurrection or general strike and then all walls will come tumbling down, is entirely premised on the old fantasy of capturing the state. That's the only way victory could possibly be that absolute and complete—at least, if we are speaking of a whole country or meaningful territory.

In way of illustration, consider this: what would it have actually meant for the Spanish anarchists to have actually “won” in 1937? It's amazing how rarely we ask ourselves such questions. We just imagine it would have been something like the Russian Revolution, which began in a similar way, with the melting away of the old army, the spontaneous creation of workers' soviets. But that was in the major cities. The Russian Revolution was followed by years of civil war in which the Red Army gradually imposed the new state's control on every part of the old Russian Empire, whether the communities in question wanted it or not. Let us imagine that anarchist militias in Spain had routed the fascist army, which then completely dissolved, and kicked the socialist Republican Government out of its offices in Barcelona and Madrid. That would certainly have been victory by anybody's standards. But what would have happened next? Would they have established Spain as a non-Republic, an anti-state existing within the exact same international borders? Would they have imposed a regime of popular councils in every single village and municipality in the territory of what had formerly been Spain? How exactly?

We have to bear in mind here that there were many villages, towns, and even whole regions of Spain where anarchists were almost non-existent. In some, just about the entire population was made up of conservative Catholics or monarchists; in others (say, the Basque country), there was a militant and well-organized working class, but one that was overwhelmingly socialist or communist. Even at the height of revolutionary fervor, most of these would stay true to their old values and ideas. If the victorious FAI attempted to exterminate them all—a task which would have required killing millions of people—or chase them out of the country, or forcibly relocate them into anarchist communities, or send them

off to reeducation camps—they would not only have been guilty of world-class atrocities, they would have had to give up on being anarchists. Democratic organizations simply cannot commit atrocities on that systematic scale: for that, you'd need Communist or Fascist-style top-down organization, since you can't actually get thousands of human beings to systematically massacre helpless women and children and old people, destroy communities, or chase families from their ancestral homes unless they can at least say they were only following orders. There appear to have been only two possible solutions to the problem.

1) Let the Republic continue as the de facto government, controlled by the socialists; let them impose government control on the right-wing majority areas, while getting some kind of deal out of them that they would leave the anarchist-majority cities, towns, and villages alone to organize themselves as they wish... and hope that the government kept the deal.

2) Declare that everyone was to form their own local popular assemblies, and let them decide on their own mode of self-organization.

The latter seems the more fitting with anarchist principles, but the results wouldn't have likely been much different. After all, if the inhabitants of, say, Bilbao collectively decided to create a local government, how exactly would one have stopped them? Municipalities where most people were still loyal to the church or local landlords would presumably put the same old right-wing authorities in charge; socialist or communist municipalities would put socialist or communist party bureaucrats in charge. Right and Left statist would then each form rival confederations that, even though they controlled only a fraction of the former Spanish territory, would each declare themselves the legitimate government of Spain. Foreign governments would recognize one or the other—since none would be willing to exchange ambassadors with a non-government like the FAI, even assuming the FAI wished to exchange ambassadors with them, which it wouldn't.

In other words, the actual shooting war might end, but the political struggle would continue—and large parts of Spain

would presumably end up looking like contemporary Chiapas, with each district or community divided between anarchist and anti-anarchist factions. Ultimate victory would have to be a long and arduous process. The only way to really win over the statist enclaves would be to win over their children, which could be accomplished by creating an obviously freer, more pleasurable, more beautiful, secure, relaxed, fulfilling life in the stateless sections. Foreign capitalist powers, on the other hand, even if they did not intervene militarily, would do everything possible to head off the notorious “threat of a good example” by economic boycotts and subversion, and by pouring resources into the statist zones. In the end, everything would probably depend on the degree to which anarchist victories in Spain inspired similar insurrections elsewhere.

The real point of this imaginative exercise is to point out that there are no clean breaks in history. The implication of the old idea of the clean break, the one moment when the state falls and capitalism is defeated, is that anything short of that is not really a victory at all. If capitalism is left standing, if it begins to market your once-subversive ideas, it shows that the capitalists really won. You've lost; you've been coopted. To me this is absurd. Can we say that feminism lost, that it achieved nothing, just because corporate culture felt obliged to pay lip service to condemning sexism and capitalist firms began marketing feminist books, movies, and other products? Of course not: unless you've managed to destroy capitalism and patriarchy in one fell blow, this is one of the clearest signs that you've gotten somewhere. Presumably any effective road to revolution will involve endless moments of cooptation, endless victorious campaigns, endless little insurrectionary moments or moments of flight and covert autonomy. I hesitate to even speculate as to what it might really be like. But to start in that direction, the first thing we need to do is to recognize that we do, in fact, win some.

Actually, recently, we've been winning quite a lot. The question is how to break the cycle of exaltation and despair and come up with some strategic visions (the more the merrier) about how these victories can build on each other, to create a cumulative movement towards a new society.

Sometimes I think about my life as a series of plans, plots, and experiments: everything I've tried, every hare-brained scheme I've hatched, every implausible thought I've run with up until this moment. If I'm really honest with myself, the trail of ideas that disappears into the horizon behind me is completely and utterly mined over with failures. Comic failures, tragic failures, dramatic failures—failures of all types.

Anarchists are best known for their failures. They lost the Spanish Civil War, the Soviets prevailed in Hungary '56, the Paris communards were shot to death, the status quo continued after May '68. And yet, far from trying to suppress these histories, these are the stories that anarchists recount. Even anarchist holidays tend to commemorate moments of dazzling defeat: Haymarket, Sacco and Vanzetti, Berkman's botched assassination . . .

This is unusual. American patriots do not speak, with a gleam in their eyes, of the incredible number of battles that George Washington lost (and he lost almost as much as anarchists do). Instead he's there at the bow of that boat, guiding the way through the expansive darkness as he crosses the Delaware river to victory. The prevailing holidays of the various nation-states, religions, and authoritarian movements we've grown up with do not generally harp on their failures. Instead, they celebrate Independence Days, Resurrections, and the Wars They Won.

This difference between the ways nationalists and anarchists talk about their histories seems fundamental. Of course, it's possible that anarchists talk about defeat simply because they have no other histories to choose from.

not only have we never had any notion or desire to win but not even any notion that there was anything to be won anywhere and then you know if I really think about it now to me the word winning seems exactly the same as dying

—Nanni Balestrini, *The Unseen*

The Promise Of Defeat

Anarchy Is Not a “Winning” Strategy

But I like to think that it's because anarchists see past the tendency towards quantifiability—that they know there are moments in time, even preceding defeat, when people learn more about themselves, and feel a greater sense of inspiration from what they're experiencing, than from all the George Washingtons victoriously sailing across all the Delawares of the world.

Here's a story about defeat.

I live in a city some would call a “high pressure zone”—a place with a thriving service sector and a centrality to the workings of the global economy.* Real estate values here have been exploding for decades now, and I'm almost constantly dealing with the difficulty this presents.

The ways we choose to respond to difficulty are interesting. Cultures of all types are constantly institutionalizing certain responses, and to some extent the responses we choose often reflect cultural rules as much as anything else. Anarchists are not immune to this. If you're hungry, the anarchist answer is dumpster diving. If you need space, the anarchist answer is squatting. Maybe it shouldn't be this simple. We live complex lives in complex situations, which to some degree will always defy recipes and generalizations. Besides, trying the same things over and over again eventually causes them to lose their charm. Shouldn't the anarchist response embody inspiration, dynamism, and experimentation in an unpredictable way?

At some point I started to think critically about my strategies for dodging the high rents and impossible space constraints in the city where I live. The anarchist recipe of trying to squat the few empty buildings I could find didn't really work in a town where the pressure is so high.

I started to wonder instead about the possibilities of the ocean, where the harsh lines of property end and an apparent sense of possibility begins. The idea seemed obvious: pirates. Here it was, the experiment I'd been looking for all along. The story I'd known about since the naive Halloween of my childhood. A floating piece of autonomy, off the shores of capitalism, but still within cannon range.

I didn't know anything about boats, sailing, or what might lay beyond the horizon. But I suspected that, like anything, the secret was to begin.

And so, with only a sense of inspiration under our belts, some co-conspirators and I started trying to make this happen. We found a very old, very derelict, fifty-five-foot triple-masted schooner. Finding this boat was like finding

* The term “High Pressure Zone” has been used by the Center For Strategic Anarchy to describe a growing economic phenomenon in the United States. The idea is that globalization has gutted the US manufacturing economy, while simultaneously fostering the growth of a service-based international finance economy. This has had a very physical effect on the United States, creating a large “Low Pressure Zone” of declining real estate that comprises the “Rust Belt,” while simultaneously creating sharply focused “High Pressure Zones” that function as critical nodes in the global economy. The latter are larger cities with a high population of service workers (both in the coffee shop and the stock brokerage), and of course, expensive property. For more on this phenomenon (as well as some specific strategies this might indicate for anarchists), try www.anarchist-strategy.blogspot.com

another world, and the shape of my time changed completely. Suddenly I was fiberglassing, caulking, and epoxying. I was sanding, painting, and scraping. I was cursing dry-rot as my sworn enemy, and finding a friend in fungus-hunting epoxy. I was going to sleep with sunburn on my face and waking up with sawdust in my hair. I felt strong at the end of the day with engine grease on my hands and soot on my neck.

In time, I would question the whole ocean experiment when I found myself alone on a boat in the Pacific Ocean, with no land in sight, trying to repair the rigging as I swung violently from the top of the mast. Or in the Caribbean, when I finally saw Haiti emerge from the horizon, only to spend two days completely becalmed before it under the blazing hot sun. It was easy to start questioning where I was going, and why I was traveling by the slowest means possible. But it felt right. I learned about survival, isolation, and adversity. I came to know things about the ocean, the wind, and the sky. I even learned a little about insanity.†

Years later, after being out of town for a few months, I once again found myself without a place to live upon my return. Rather than pass the time as a houseguest, I started sleeping on the roof of a large building. It was just before an anarchist bookfair, though, so I was preparing 'zines and CDs to table there. As the inventory of my on-hand possessions grew far beyond the size of my backpack, I found myself in an increasingly absurd situation. Every night, as stealthily as possible, I carried spools of three hundred CDRs, an external hard drive, a desktop inkjet printer, and a bike up to the roof of this building. Rather than going to sleep with the anxiety of being caught, I'd doze off chuckling about what that would look like. There I would be, caught squatting a rooftop, surrounded with the accoutrements of a full CD pressing operation.

Not to mention I'd finally broken down and gotten an electric toothbrush for my ever-depleting gum line. I mean, it's acceptable to charge your cell phone in a cafe, but your toothbrush? People were constantly looking at me like, “Is that your toothbrush you're charging?” And I'd give them a look that said, “Fuck yeah, that's my toothbrush. Sonicare 2000.”

It couldn't continue, though. The weather was about to change, and there were things I wanted to do that required more space and consistency than my rooftop provided. Instead, as a result of all I'd discovered off-shore in my sailing experiments, I resolved to try building a floating house along the derelict waterfront of my city. Something that would provide a lot of room and remain more-or-less stationary, but which I could dock more mobile boats to. The home base for an emerging armada, with room for friends to build their own adjacent floating islands.

I talked with some friends who were excited to try the same thing. We didn't know anything about building float-

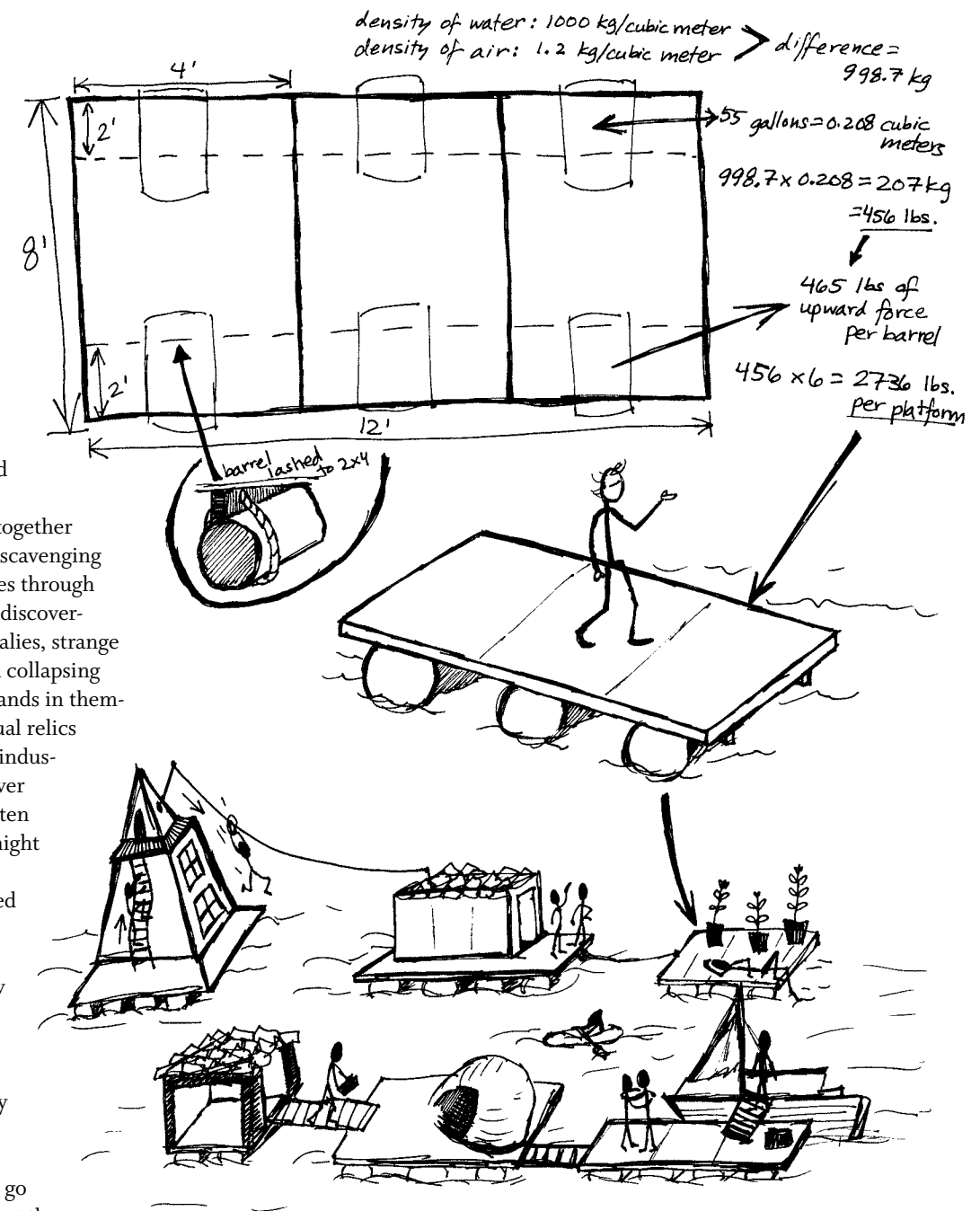
† For more on anarchist sailors, the editors recommend *Hold Fast: Stories of Maniac Sailors, Anarchist Castaways, and the Voyage of the S/V Pestilence*, an 80-minute video 'zine that tells the story of what drew four friends to the ocean and what they discovered there. Details can be found at <http://www.blueanarchy.org/holdfast/>. (also see photo on page 24)

ing houses, but decided to test a design and see if it worked. So we drew up a rough sketch that was essentially a series of twelve- by eight-foot platforms, each floating on six sealed fifty-five-gallon barrels. The idea was that the platforms could be built and floated one at a time. Then they would be joined together once they were in the water. From there, we could build structures on top of them.

Scotch and I went out together on the late-night material scavenging missions. We rode our bikes through unknown parts of the city discovering surreal concrete anomalies, strange abandoned warehouses on collapsing piers that have become islands in themselves, and mazes of unusual relics from a long-past shipping industry. Our shadows played over the wreckage of the forgotten landscape under the late-night sodium lamps as we clambered over fences, crouched in the dark, and stared in wonder through broken windows. It's amazing how something as simple as scouting for active construction sites can shake up your sense of geography so significantly, forcing you to take the roads you don't normally take and to go slow enough to really look at the things around you.

We'd have races up the hill to the bike cart while carrying sheets of plywood, our lungs stinging with the cold night air. We'd do our best to stifle laughter every time we dropped something with a dramatic crash, and every time the bike cart toppled the entire load into the street. There's nothing quite as funny as watching your friend try to throw an empty fifty-five-gallon steel drum over a razor-wire fence quietly. And it's hard not to smile when you realize there's nothing quite as conspicuous as towing a bike trailer down empty city streets at three in the morning with ten sixteen-foot lengths of two-by-four extending far into the road behind you.

Our days were spent down at the abandoned waterfront with a brace (manual drill/screwdriver) and handsaw, where we'd assemble the platforms and attach the sealed barrels



to them. The work was fun, we were by the ocean, and we ended up meeting a number of interesting characters. All the construction was happening on a giant piece of concrete embedded in the shore, which had a number of small holes in it. One day a guy suddenly appeared behind me out of nowhere—he scared the daylights out of me when I turned around. He explained that he lived below the shore, and motioned to one of the holes in the concrete. I looked down into the dark depths below, and he offered to take me in and show me around.

We both barely fit through the hole, but it opened up into a large cave that echoed with the lapping sounds of the ocean. My new friend liked to drink gin, and he told me all kinds of stories about that section of the waterfront, everything he'd seen, and the various riff-raff (referring to me) he'd encountered over the years. I asked if my construction

project was disturbing him, and he assured me that he was interested in seeing me carry the thing through.

So a few nights later, some friends and I floated the first section—all alone on the derelict shore with only the moonlight glinting off the water to help us. It took five of us to flip it over and get it poised above the rising tide. It went in with a splash, and rode high. Seeing it actually float was amazing, and we all looked at each other with huge grins. We jumped on it, danced on it, and eventually just sat on it together as we talked and looked out over the bay. When it got late, we rowed it a little ways off shore and anchored it, where it would wait for other platforms to join it.

And so I spent the next week, gradually getting to know some of the other strange characters who had made this wreckage their home. The platforms slowly came together as we managed to find more and more barrels.

One day I came down to the shore, ready to put the finishing touches on another platform. But when I looked up, I noticed that the entire floating apparatus was gone. All that remained was an empty patch of water. With a shock, I searched up and down the shore, but saw no sign of it anywhere. Eventually I found some people fishing who said they'd seen a boat full of people with orange vests arrive, unmoor it, and tow it away.

I called the police and the coast guard before eventually determining that it had been done at the behest of a man named Hadley Prince, from the Port Authority.

Hadley Prince.

The name alone conjured images of some robber baron industrialist, twirling his handle-bar mustache with menace and condescendingly adjusting his top-hat. In reality, he was your average-looking bureaucrat with a demeanor that embodied the typical lack of sympathy. He admitted to having been the one who ordered the hit on my floating house, and when I showed him the relevant sections of the state and city code (which prohibited him from taking such an action), he was very clear about his ability to do whatever he wanted—regardless of the law. When I pressed the matter even further, he looked down at my highlighted stack of paper, paused, then stood up abruptly and shouted “Get the fuck out of my office!”

I wasn't entirely surprised, but it felt terrible.

Objectively, this was defeat. In one swift move, my whole project had been destroyed by the Port Authority. And they had laughed in my face as they did it. It made me incredibly angry, and I did my best to express that contempt.

But in a way, I was prepared for it. Just like with the task of destroying capitalism, there were dizzying odds against me that I couldn't ignore.

For anarchists, I think that victory is a kind of anathema. Will there ever be a night—one glorious evening—when the world is won? Where suddenly civilization, the spectacle, class, racism, and patriarchy all simultaneously topple and remain in ruins?

Will there ever be a day when my housing desires are sated? Where I suddenly come into possession of a palace—under a maze of linked tree houses and a large skylab telescope—with room for all my friends and loved ones? Where property tax is on holiday, and all the building inspectors are out on permanent leave? Where me and all my housemates have finally overcome all our neuroses, mental anguish, and trauma to live with perfectly fulfilling relationships?

It seems unlikely it will happen in one moment.

The George Washingtons of the world offer success. This is based on “realism” and the logic of quantifiability, where it is necessary to make compromises, pass laws, and assert control. Because these are the things that can be won; this is where success is found. According to them, at the end of this experiment I was left with nothing, and so it would have made more sense to sell my soul to a mortgage for a mediocre house (that doesn't even float!) or pay rent as best I can for the rest of my life.

Anarchy, by contrast, offers us defeat. This is a logic that transcends quantifiability, emphasizes our desires, and focuses on the tensions we feel. Anarchists are such failures because, really, there can be no victory. Our desires are always changing with the context of our conditions and our surroundings. What we gain is what we manage to tease out of the conflicts between what we want and where we are. What I “won” were the wistful moon-lit bike rides, the revelation of hidden geography, the time spent with friends, the dance parties, the nights of discovery, the chance to be in control of my surroundings, and those fleeting moments of elation. Not to mention the opportunity to give Hadley Prince the contempt that he deserves.

I wish that they hadn't destroyed my project. By itself, though, longevity says very little. The state has been around longer than I can remember, and capitalism has been around for quite a while as well. Not to mention—how many anarchist infoshops or community centers have been around for years, but have lost the spark they started with long ago?

This is to say that we should never cease, even if all the banks burn and the dams of the world over come crashing down. It's what allows us to resist the institutionalization of our desires, the creeping bureaucracy, the language of patriarchy, or whatever we might find. My wish is to always hold that tension with me.

That's not to say we should all sacrifice ourselves by hurling our bodies indiscriminately against the crushing walls of capitalism. Just the opposite: given the anathema of victory, it's important to consider just how defeat should look.

Remember that success is a word used to measure. It describes dollars made, people counted, votes cast. In other words, it's a swindle. The rejection of quantification, the emphasis on the role of the individual, is what makes anarchism unique. There is no one battle I can fight to win this, even if I were to sail across the Delaware to fight it.



There are 2.2 million people in prison in the United States and 5 million more on probation or parole, and the numbers just keep going up. For many, the likelihood of prison time is simply a fact of life. In the wake of the latest FBI roundups, it's clear that even privileged white anarchists are going to prison.

But there are many kinds of prison, many kinds of cells and cubicles. Some have barred windows, others more subtle restraints. Disorderly inmates get handcuffs and solitary confinement; docile ones get carpal tunnel syndrome and lives of quiet desperation. Which do you prefer?



YOU'RE GOING TO PRISON.

You could go to prison for something you do, or something you did long ago. You could be framed and go in for something you had nothing to do with. Even if you've never broken a law, you could still go to prison—just reading these words makes you a suspect. The more people spend their lives in slavish obedience, the easier it is for the government to make an example of whomever they choose.

Look at the historical figures you respect—or maybe even your friends. If you follow the same path, chances are you're going to prison too. Come to terms with this. Imagine your time in prison, what you will do, how you will handle it.

You can go with dignity or you can go spinelessly, assisting your enemies and selling out your friends. You can go to prison for something you believe in, or you can go for no reason at all, never having stood up for yourself or anyone else.

You're going to prison. Now that you realize this, you're free. You can go to prison for whatever you want, you can do whatever you believe is right. Hell, if you're careful, you may not go to prison for a long time.

If enough people figure this out, one day there will be no more prisons. As someone who is going to prison, you understand that day can't come soon enough.

Green Scared?

Preliminary Lessons of the Green Scare

For Those Who Came in Late . . .

(for more information, try www.greenscare.org)

At the end of 2005, the FBI opened a new phase of its assault on earth and animal liberation movements with the arrests and indictments of several current and former activists. This offensive, dubbed Operation Backfire, was intended to obtain convictions for many of the unsolved Earth Liberation Front arsons of the preceding ten years. Of those subpoenaed and charged, eight ultimately cooperated with the government and informed on others in hopes of reduced sentences: Stanislas Meyerhoff, Kevin Tubbs, Chelsea Dawn Gerlach, Suzanne Savoie, Kendall Tankersley, Jennifer Kolar, Lacey Phillabaum, and Darren Thurston (see sidebar). Four held out through a terrifying year, during which it seemed certain they would end up serving decades in prison, until they were able to broker plea deals in which they could claim responsibility for their actions without providing information about others: Daniel McGowan, Jonathan Paul, Exile (aka Nathan Block), and Sadie (aka Joyanna Zacher). As of this writing, Briana Waters still waits to come to trial, while Joseph Dibee, Josephine Overaker, Rebecca Rubin, and Justin Solondz have been charged but not found. One more defendant, William Rodgers (aka Avalon), tragically passed away in an alleged suicide while in custody shortly after his arrest.

The months following the launch of Operation Backfire saw an unprecedented increase in government repression of anarchist environmental activists, which came to be known as the Green Scare. Longtime animal liberation activist Rod Coronado was charged with a felony for answering a question during a speaking appearance, and faced potentially decades

in prison. Six animal rights activists associated with SHAC, the campaign against animal testing corporation Huntingdon Life Sciences, were sentenced to several years in prison, essentially for running a website. Animal liberationist Peter Young, who had spent seven years on the run from the FBI, had finally been captured and was being threatened with double jeopardy. Tre Arrow, famous for surviving a 100-foot fall when police and loggers forced him out of a forest occupation, was fighting extradition from Canada to the United States to face arson charges. Innumerable people were subpoenaed to grand juries,* and some did jail time for refusing to cooperate. Perhaps most ominously of all, three young people were set up by an agent provocateur and arrested on conspiracy charges without having actually done anything at all. Two of them, Zachary Jenson and Lauren Weiner, pled guilty and became government informants; the third, Eric McDavid, who has contracted life-threatening health problems as a consequence of being denied vegan food by his jailers, was recently found guilty and awaits sentencing.

This phase of the Green Scare seems to be drawing to a close. Most of those apprehended in Operation Backfire are now serving their sentences. The first of the SHAC defendants has been released from prison. Peter Young has been out of prison for almost a year and is doing speaking tours. Rod Coronado's trial ended in a deadlock, and he took a plea in return for a short sentence when the

* In theory, the task of a grand jury is to examine the validity of an accusation before trial. In practice, grand juries are used to force information out of people: by granting an individual immunity regarding a specific case, a grand jury can compel him or her to answer questions or else go to prison for contempt of court.

government threatened to bring further charges against him. It's been months now since a new high profile felony case was brought against an environmental activist, though federal agents have been poking around in the Midwest. It's time to begin deriving lessons from the past two years of government repression, to equip the next generation that will take the front lines in the struggle to defend life on earth.

Distinguishing between Perceived and Real Threats

In some anarchist circles, the initial onset of the Green Scare was met with a panic that rivaled the response to the September 11 attacks. This, of course, was exactly what the government wanted: quite apart from bringing individual activists to "justice," they hoped to intimidate all who see direct action as the most effective means of social change. Rather than aiding the government by making exaggerated assumptions about how dangerous it is to be an anarchist today, we must sort out what these cases show about the current capabilities and limits of government repression.

The purpose of this inquiry is not to advocate or sensationalize any particular tactic or approach. We should be careful not to glorify illegal activity—it's important to note that most of even the staunchest non-cooperating defendants have expressed regrets about their choices, though this must be understood in the context of their court cases. At the same time, federal repression affects everyone involved in resistance, not just those who participate in illegal direct action; the Green Scare offers case studies of the situation we are all in, like it or not.

The Case of Darren Thurston, Government Informant

Darren Thurston recently released a lengthy statement presenting the history of Operation Backfire as he sees it and laying out what he apparently considers to be extenuating circumstances connected to his decision to inform. He insists that he does not condone snitching, and claims that he didn't share any information that was harmful to others; unfortunately, as Thurston has chosen to withhold from the public both his plea agreement and the debrief documents that detail his cooperation with investigators, it's impossible to verify this claim. In contrast, non-cooperating Operation Backfire defendants have made their plea agreements public in their entirety; Thurston explains that he has not done the same because in his case the materials "were not completely indicative of my cooperation and would be easily misunderstood by the majority of those who would hear about them." As his cooperation is already a matter of intense controversy, it could hardly make matters worse for him to follow the non-cooperating defendants' example. It's also worth noting that non-cooperating defendants, who have been allowed to view his plea agreement but are not allowed to speak about it, are urging people not to support him, presumably for good reason.

At the conclusion of his statement, Thurston offers "his closest comrades" a limited apology for his decision to inform, admitting it "set a bad example" but placing responsibility for his choice on others' shoulders: others cooperated first and made the case "unwinnable," the government divided communities by spreading rumors, activists abandoned and vilified the cooperating defendants before they'd even decided whether or not to cooperate, and so on. He also casts aspersions on non-cooperating defendants without ever specifying which ones he means. If this is not a matter of passive-aggressive self-justification but of serious concerns about their conduct, he owes it to the activist community to be more explicit.

Thurston states that Operation Backfire defendants were facing "guaranteed life sentences" until they cooperated. In contrast to those who attribute the considerably shorter sentences the non-cooperating defendants received to the vigorous efforts of their defense teams, he credits his partner and fellow informant Chelsea Dawn Gerlach with helping to arrange merciful plea agreements for the non-cooperating defendants—an account that is sure to be controversial. He also mentions uncritically that by the time he and Gerlach were able to communicate after their arrests, she had already informed to the government not only about his involvement in the actions for which he was charged but also about a great deal of other illegal activity he had participated in.

No doubt Thurston experienced a more frightening period of months following his arrest than most of us can possibly imagine. But this alone cannot justify a decision to inform; the fact that other defendants did not do the same shows that other options were possible. In his statement, he talks about "healing our movements and making them stronger," but that can only occur on the foundation of a commitment to unconditionally and transparently refusing to inform on each other; any supposed solidarity that does not proceed from this premise is a sham that will crumble beneath the first onslaught of government repression. Addressing the question of what constitutes acceptable conduct is not infighting and backstabbing, but an essential element of healing and strengthening our communities. As Thurston points out, we should not take the state at its word as to who is informing—but now that he has signed a sealed agreement to inform, the burden of proof is on him to show the limits of that informing. Those who read Thurston's statement should not take his analysis—or any analysis, including this one—at face value, since the perspectives of everyone who comments on Operation Backfire are inevitably colored by their own motives; the question is which motives are most likely to facilitate a useful analysis.

Thurston is in a difficult place, but there is still much he can do to facilitate the healing and strengthening of which he speaks. He can start by disclosing the full texts of his plea agreement and cooperation debriefing, and accepting complete personal accountability for his decision to inform. The state can do anything to us—isolate us, threaten us with life sentences, even, in some extremes, turn our loved ones against us. The only thing it cannot take from us, upon which any anti-authoritarian struggle must be founded, is the decision to abide by our principles come what may. Individual heroics cannot win a revolutionary struggle—only supportive communities can do that; but we can only form those communities by personally standing by our commitments, regardless of what others do.

We can commend Thurston for the actions he once took in defense of animals and the environment, but the most important round of struggle takes place not in the streets but in the interrogation chamber—it is there, when the commitments and trust that form its backbone are put to the ultimate test, that a struggle lives or dies.

Case Study in Repression: Eugene, Oregon

Operation Backfire took place against a backdrop of government investigation, harassment, and profiling of presumed anarchists in the Pacific Northwest. It is no coincidence that Eugene, Oregon was a major focus of the Operation Backfire cases, as it has been a hotbed of dissent and radicalism over the past decade and a half—although repression and other problems have taken a toll in recent years. We can't offer a definitive analysis of the internal dynamics of the Eugene anarchist community, but we can look at how the authorities went about repressing it.

One useful resource for this inquiry is "Anarchist Direct Actions: A Challenge for Law Enforcement," an article that appeared in *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* in 2005, authored by Randy Borum of the University of South Florida and Chuck Tilby of the Eugene Police Department. According to Jeff ("Free") Luers, Tilby was one of the cops who surveilled Free and his co-defendant Critter on the night of their arrest in June 2000. Tilby has given presentations on the "criminal anarchist" movement to law enforcement groups, and was intimately involved in the Operation Backfire cases, even making statements to the media and providing a quote to the FBI press release at the end of the Oregon federal prosecution.

Surprisingly, the article does not explicitly reference Eugene, Oregon at all. Besides Tilby's byline at the beginning, there's no indication that the paper was co-written from Eugene. All the same, the article provides several important clues about how the government proceeded against the Oregon defendants and those who were perceived to support them.

The authors centralize the importance of intelligence and informants for repressing "criminal anarchists," while acknowledging the difficulty of obtaining them. In the case of grand jury subpoenas, anarchists regularly fail to comply, and support groups are often set up for those targeted; one of the more recent examples of this was Jeff Hogg, who received a grand jury subpoena while the Backfire prosecutions were underway and was jailed for nearly six months in 2006 as a result. The authors



warn that “investigators and law enforcement officers should be cautious during questioning not to divulge more to the subject about the case (via questions), than is learned through their testimony.” Indeed, questions asked by grand juries turned up more than once in the pages of the *Earth First! Journal*, which was edited from Eugene for a time. It is extremely important to support those under investigation and keep abreast of investigators’ efforts. Some believe that the Backfire investigation only arrived at a position of real strength once such support started to weaken in Oregon.

Regarding infiltration, “Anarchist Direct Actions” advises that:

Infiltration is made more difficult by the communal nature of the [anarchist] lifestyle (under constant observation and scrutiny) and the extensive knowledge held by many anarchists, which require a considerable amount of study and time to acquire. Other strategies for infiltration have been explored, but so far have not been successful. Discussion of these theories in an open paper is not advisable.

What we know of the early Backfire investigation points to a strategy of generalized monitoring and infiltration. While investigators used increasingly focused tools and strategies as the investigation gained steam—for example, sending “cooperating witnesses” wearing body wires to talk to specific targets—they started out by sifting through a whole demographic of counter-cultural types. Activist and punk houses as well as gathering spots such as bars were placed under surveillance—anarchists who drink should be careful about the way alcohol can loosen lips.

Infiltrators and informants targeted not only the most visibly committed anarchists, but also bohemians who inhabited similar cultural and social spheres. Police accumulated tremendous amounts of background information even while failing to penetrate the circles in which direct action was organized. The approximately 30,000 pages of discovery in the Oregon cases contain a vast amount of gossip and background information on quite a few from the Eugene community.

A similar profiling methodology appears to have been used in nearby Portland, Oregon. In March 2001, for example, a large-scale police raid was carried out on a house party attended by Portland punk rockers. The attendees were photographed and questioned about the Earth and Animal Liberation Fronts. Some were arrested and charged with kidnapping and assault on an officer—a standard over-charging which eventually led to plea deals. The defendants from the raid were videotaped at their court appearances by officers later identified as Gang Enforcement Unit members. In the aftermath of this raid, cops routinely harassed punks on the street, demanding to be told whether they were anarchists.

In retrospect, it seems likely that such efforts were not meant simply to intimidate Portland’s punks, but to uncover information relevant to the anarchist and ALF/ELF cases of the time.* This may have been a wrong step in the Backfire investigation; right now there’s no way to know. We do

* For information on this incident in Portland, see Kristian Williams’ “The Criminalization of Anarchism, Part Two: Guilt by Association, Questionable Confessions and Mandatory Minimums,” reprinted in *Confrontations: Selected Journalism* by Tarantula Publications.

know, however, that “wide net” approaches by the state can be effective at stifling socially aware subcultures, even when they uncover no real links to radical action. Fortunately, in Portland those affected by the raid came together in response, aiding each other, limiting the damage done, and taking advantage of the situation to draw attention to police activity.

Another point of speculation is the degree to which authorities fostered division and infighting within radical circles in Eugene. This was a common COINTELPRO† tactic, and is probably still in use. Borum and Tilby hint at this in the final section of their paper, “Law Enforcement Strategies/ Implications”:

Internal conflicts are another major source of vulnerability within the movement. The DoT [“Diversity of Tactics”] debate has already been addressed, but the movement also is struggling with a perceived lack of power among women, and the lack of

† The FBI’s Counter-Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO) existed officially from 1956 to 1971 and probably continues to this day in some form. Aiming to “expose, disrupt, misdirect, discredit, or otherwise neutralize” the activities of groups like the Black Panther Party, the Program utilized a wide variety of dirty tricks. Houses and offices were searched and documents stolen without any warrants having been issued; rumors were spread in order to foster mistrust and even violence between different organizations or factions within them; group members were harassed through the courts or even wholly framed for crimes they did not commit; infiltrators and agent provocateurs were distributed within target constituencies; no act of psychological warfare or blatant violence was ruled out. The program was finally exposed when radicals broke into an FBI Office and seized documents relating to the secret program, circulating them to various sources under the name of the “Citizens’ Commission to Investigate the FBI.”

The Green Scare cases show that cooperating with the government is never in a defendant’s best interest. On average, the non-cooperating defendants in Operation Backfire are actually serving *less* time in proportion to their original threatened sentences than the informants, despite the government’s efforts to make an example of them. If every arrestee understood the difference between what the state threatens and what it can actually do, far fewer would give up without a fight.

inclusion of ethnic minorities. This kind of conflict occurred three decades ago within the leftist revolutionary movement in the United States.

For those familiar with Eugene radical circles, this brings to mind the heated conflicts over gender and feminism within that community. There is no concrete evidence that government operatives were involved in escalating such debates, and we should be careful not to jump to conclusions; such speculation can only assist the state by propagating paranoia. However, law enforcement from local to federal levels must have been aware of the vulnerabilities that opened up when real debates turned to groupthink and factionalism in Eugene. Tilby and his cohorts must have used such insights to their advantage as they devised anti-anarchist strategies. By the time Operation Backfire grand juries began following up on real leads in Eugene, many who could have come together to oppose them were no longer on speaking terms. While this does not justify the lack of integrity shown by those who assisted grand juries, it does offer some context for why the grand juries weren’t resisted more effectively.

Borum and Tilby close their paper by urging investigators to display “patience and persistence”—and indeed, patience and persistence ultimately paid off in Operation Backfire. This is not to lend credibility to the notion that “The FBI always get their man.” The investigation was riddled with errors and missteps; plenty of other actions will never be prosecuted, as the authorities got neither lucky breaks nor useful cooperation. But we must understand that repression, and resistance to

it, are both long-term projects, stretching across years and decades.

According to some accounts, one of the most significant leads in Operation Backfire came from a naïve request for police reports at a Eugene police station. According to this version, the police deduced from this request that they should pay attention to Jacob Ferguson; Ferguson later became the major informant in these cases. It is less frequently mentioned that the police were accusing Ferguson of an arson he did not participate in! With Ferguson, the unlikely happened and it paid off for the authorities to be wrong. Later on, when agents made their first arrests and presented grand jury subpoenas on December 7, 2005, two of those subpoenas were wrongly assumed to have been involved in attacks. Their subpoenas were eventually dropped, as the authorities gained the cooperation of more informants and eventually made moves to arrest Exile and Sadie instead.

The investigation was not as unstoppable and dynamic as the government would like us to think, although the prosecution gathered force as more individuals rolled on others. The authorities spent years stumbling around, and they continued to falter even when prosecution efforts were underway—but they were tenacious and kept at their efforts. Meanwhile, radical momentum was less consistent.

Let’s review the arc of radical activity in Eugene over the past decade. The anticapitalist riot of June 18, 1999 in Eugene led to jubilation on the part of anarchists, even if one participant spent seven years in prison as a result. The participants in the June 18 Day of Action had put up a fight

and fucked up some symbols of misery in the town, catching the police unprepared. The pitched battles on the streets of Seattle later that year at the WTO meeting only reinforced the feeling that the whole world was up for grabs. Most of the active anarchists in Eugene had never lived through such a period before. Despite the paltry demands and muddled analysis of much of the official “antiglobalization” movement, there was a sense that deeper change could be fought for and won. Being an anarchist seemed like the coolest thing you could be, and this perception was magnified by the media attention that followed. The ELF was setting fires all over the region at the time.

A series of reversals followed. In June 2001, Free received his initial sentence of 22 years and eight months. The following month, Carlo Giuliani was murdered on the streets of Genoa during protests against the G8 summit in Italy. While both of these tragedies illustrated the risks of confronting the capitalist system, Free’s sentence hit home especially hard in Eugene. In the changed atmosphere, some began dropping away and “getting on with their lives”—not necessarily betraying their earlier principles, but shifting their focus and priorities. This attrition intensified when American flags appeared everywhere in the aftermath of September 11, 2001. Anarchist efforts did not cease, but a period of relative disorientation followed. A year and a half later, the invasion of Iraq provided another opportunity for radicals to mobilize, but some consistency had been lost in the Eugene area. And all the while, FBI employees and police kept their regular hours, day in and day out.

Law enforcement received its most significant breakthrough in the Backfire cases—even though it started as an incorrect hypothesis—just before Free’s sentencing, in the period between anarchist jubilation and the shift to the defensive. The same fires that were incorrectly linked to Ferguson were used to justify Free’s stiff sentence, which intimidated some anarchists out of action. There was not enough reevaluation, learning, and sharpening of skills, nor enough efforts at conflict resolution; the retreat occurred by default. What would have happened if the Backfire investigation had continued under different circumstances, while radicals maintained their momentum? That would be another story. Its conclusion is unknown.

Putting up a Fight

Repression will exist as long as there are states and people who oppose them. Complete invulnerability is impossible, for governments as well as their opponents. All the infiltrators and informants of the Tsarist secret police were powerless to prevent the Russian revolution of 1917, just as the East German Stasi were unable to prevent the fall of the Berlin Wall even though they had files on six million people. Revolutionary struggles can succeed even in the face of massive repression; for our part, we can minimize the effects of that repression by preparing in advance.

For many years now anarchists have focused on developing security culture, but security consciousness alone is not enough. There are some points one can never emphasize too much—don’t gossip about sensitive matters, share delicate information on a need-to-know basis*, don’t surrender your rights if detained or arrested, don’t cooperate with grand juries, don’t sell other people out. But one can abide by all these dictums and still make crucial mistakes. If anti-repression strategies center only on what we should *not* talk about, we lose sight of the necessity of clear communication for communities in struggle.

* It does appear that Operation Backfire defendants could have done better at limiting the flow of information inside their circles. Rather than organizing in closed, consistent cells, the defendants seem to have worked in more fluid arrangements, with enough crossover that once a few key participants turned informant the government had information about everyone.

State disruption of radical movements can be interpreted as a kind of “armed critique,” in the way that someone throwing a brick through a Starbucks window is a critique in action. That is to say, a successful use of force against us demonstrates that we had pre-existing vulnerabilities. This is not to argue that we should blame the victim in situations of repression, but we need to learn how and why efforts to destabilize our activities succeed. Our response should not start with jail support once someone has been arrested. Of course this is important, along with longer-term support of those serving sentences—but our efforts must begin long before, countering the small vulnerabilities that our enemy can exploit. Open discussion of problems—for example, gender roles being imposed in nominally radical spaces—can protect against unhealthy resentments and schisms. This is not to say that every split is unwarranted—sometimes the best thing is for people to go their separate ways; but that even if that is necessary, they should try to maintain mutual respect or at least a willingness to communicate when it counts.

Risk is relative. In some cases, it may indeed be a good idea to lay low; in other cases, maintaining public visibility is viewed as too risky, when in fact nothing could be more dangerous than withdrawing from the public eye and letting momentum die. When we think about risk, we often picture security cameras and prison cells, but there are many more insidious threats. The Operation Backfire defendants ended up with much shorter sentences than expected; as it turned out, the most serious risk they faced was not prison time, after all, but recantation and betrayal—a risk that proved all too real. Likewise, we can imagine Eric McDavid, who currently awaits sentencing on conspiracy charges, idly discussing the risk factor of a hypothetical action with his supposed friends—who turned out to be two potential informants and a federal agent provocateur. Unfortunately, the really risky thing was having those discussions with those people in the first place.

Preparing for the Worst

Conventional activist wisdom dictates that one must not mix public and clandestine

activity, but Daniel McGowan’s case seems to contradict this. McGowan was not brought to trial as a result of investigations based on his public organizing, but rather because he had worked with Jacob Ferguson, who turned snitch under police pressure. Though the government was especially eager to convict him on account of his extensive prisoner support work and organizing against the Republican National Convention, McGowan received tremendous public support precisely because he had been so visible†. Had he simply hidden in obscurity, he might have ended up in the same situation without the support that enabled him to weather it as successfully as he did—and without making as many important contributions to the anarchist movement.

Considering how many years it took the FBI to put together Operation Backfire and the prominent role of informants in so many Green Scare cases, it seems like it is possible to get away with a lot, provided you are careful and make intelligent decisions about who to trust. McGowan’s direct action résumé, as it appears in the government arguments at his sentencing (see appendix), reads like something out of an adventure novel. One can’t help but think—*just seven years, for all that!*

The other side of this coin is that, despite all their precautions, the Green Scare defendants did get caught. No matter how careful and intelligent you are, it doesn’t pay to count on not getting caught; you have to be prepared for the worst. Those who are considering risky direct action should start from the assumption that they will be caught and prosecuted; before doing anything, before even talking about it, they should ask themselves whether they could

† This is not to say that all visibility is good visibility. Media attention was a significant factor in the conflicts that wracked Eugene. Such visibility can divide communities from within by creating the appearance that spokespeople have more power than everyone else, which provokes jealousy and stokes ego-driven conflicts whether or not what’s on the screen reflects reality on the ground. Those who fall prey to believing the media hype about themselves become dependent upon this attention, pursuing it rather than the unmediated connections and healthy relationships essential for long-term revolutionary struggle; the most valuable visibility is anchored in enduring communities, not media spectacles. There are reasonable arguments for using the media at times, but one must be aware of the danger of being *used by it*.

	Name	Maximum Possible if Convicted on all Charges	Actual Sentence Received	Mandatory Life Sentence if Convicted*	Terrorism Enhancement Applied at Sentencing?	Actual/Max Ratio	Charges <i>NO CONSPIRACY CHARGES INCLUDED. From OR 2nd Superceding indictment of 5/18/06, CA Litchfield & CO Vail indictments only.</i>
Non-Cooperating Defendants	Block	1015	7 2/3	Y	Y	0.008	Romania II: 35 arson, 1 Destr. Dev.; Jeff Poplar: 13 arson / att arson, Destr Dev.
	McGowan	335	7	Y	Y	0.021	Superior Lumber: 1 arson, 1 Destr. Dev.; Jeff Poplar: 13 arson / att arson, Destr Dev.
	Paul	20	4 1/4	N	N	0.213	Cavel West: 1 arson
	Zacher	1015	7 2/3	Y	Y	0.008	Romania II: 35 arson, 1 Destr. Dev.; Jeff Poplar: 13 arson / att arson, Destr Dev.
Total		2385	26 7/12	3Y, 1N	3Y, 1N	0.011	
Averages		596.25	6 3/48				
Cooperating Defendants	Gerlach	510	9	N	Y	0.018	Vail: 8 arsons; Childers: 1 arson; Boise C: 1 arson; BPA energy tower; EPD Substation: 1 arson; J Poplar: 13 ars / att arson, 1 Destr. Dev.
	Meyerhoff	1300	13	Y	Y	0.01	Vail: 8 arsons; Childers: 1 arson; Boise C: 1 arson; BPA energy tower; EPD Substation: 1 arson; Superior Lumber: 1 Arson, 1 Destr. Dev.; Romania II: 35 arson, 1 Destr. Dev.; J Poplar: 13 ars / att arson, 1 Destr. Dev.
	Savoie	310	4 1/4	N	Y	0.014	Superior Lumber: 1 arson; Jeff Poplar: 13 arson / att arson, Destr Dev.
	Tankersley	40	3 5/6	N	N	0.096	US Forest Industries: 1 att. arson; US Forest Industries: 1 arson.
	Thurston	50	3 1/12	N	N	0.062	BLM Litchfield: 1 arson, 1 Destr. Dev.
	Tubbs	1155	12 7/12	Y	Y	0.011	Oakridge: 1 arson; Cavel West: 1 arson; BLM Wild Horse: 1 arson; US Forest Ind: 1 att. arson; Childers: 1 arson; EPD Substation: 1 arson; Superior Lumber: 1 arson; Romania II: 35 arson, 1 Destr. Dev.; Jefferson Poplar: 13 arson / att. arson, 1 Destr. Dev.
Total		3365	45 3/4	2Y, 4N	4Y, 2N	0.014	
Average		560.833	7.625				
Overall Total (both groups)		5750	72 1/3	5Y, 5N	7Y, 3N	0.013	* More than two Destructive Device charges carries a mandatory sentence of life imprisonment without release.
Overall Average (both groups)		575	7.233				

accept the worst possible consequences. At the same time, as the government may target anyone at any time regardless of what they have actually done, it is important for even the most law-abiding activists—not to mention their friends and relatives—to think through how to handle being investigated, subpoenaed, or charged.

The Green Scare cases show that cooperating with the government is never in a defendant’s best interest. On average, the non-cooperating defendants in Operation Backfire are actually serving *less* time in proportion to their original threatened sentences than the informants (see chart), despite the government engaging the entire

repressive apparatus of the United States to make an example of them. Exile and Sadie were threatened with over a thousand years in prison apiece, and are serving less than eight; if every arrestee understood the difference between what the state threatens and what it can actually do, far fewer would give up without a fight.

A court case is essentially a game of chicken. Defendants should not be intimidated by the initial charges brought against them; the state starts by threatening the worst penalties it possibly can, whether or not it can follow through, in hopes of intimidating the defendant into pleading guilty and informing.

In the United States legal system, a court case is essentially a game of chicken. The state starts by threatening the worst penalties it possibly can, in hopes of intimidating the defendant into pleading guilty and informing. It is easier if the defendant pleads guilty immediately; this saves the state immense quantities of time and money, not to mention the potential embarrassment of losing a well-publicized trial. Defendants should not be intimidated by the initial charges brought against them; it often turns out that many of these will not hold up, and are only being pressed to give the state more bargaining power. Even if a defendant fears he won't have a leg to stand on in court, he can obtain some bargaining power of his own by threatening to put the state through a costly, challenging, and unpredictable trial—to that end, it is essential to acquire the best possible legal representation. When a defendant agrees to cooperate, he loses all that leverage, throwing himself at the mercy of forces that don't have an ounce of mercy to offer.

As grim as things looked for Sadie, Exile, McGowan, and Jonathan Paul through most of 2006, they looked up when McGowan's lawyer demanded information about whether prosecutors had used illegal National Security Agency wiretaps to gather evidence against the defendants. The government was loath to answer this question, and for good reason: there had just been a public scandal about NSA wiretaps, and if the court found that wiretaps had been used unconstitutionally, the entire Operation Backfire case would have been thrown out. That's exactly why so many members of the Weather Underground are professors today rather than convicts: the FBI botched that case so badly the courts had to let them go free.

No matter how hopeless things look, never underestimate the power of fighting it out. Until Stanislas Meyerhoff and others

capitulated, the linchpin of the federal case in Operation Backfire was Jacob Ferguson, a heroin addict and serial arsonist. Had all besides Ferguson refused to cooperate and instead fought the charges together, Operation Backfire would surely have ended differently.

On Informants

If becoming an informant is always a bad idea, why do so many people do it? At least eleven high profile defendants in Green Scare cases have chosen to cooperate with the government against their former comrades, not including Peter Young's partner, who informed on him back in 1999. These were all experienced activists who presumably had spent years considering how they would handle the pressure of interrogation and trial, who must have been familiar with all the reasons it doesn't pay to cooperate with the state! What, if anything, can we conclude from how many of them became informants?

There has been quite a bit of opportunist speculation on this subject by pundits with little knowledge of the circumstances and even less personal experience. We are to take it for granted that arrestees became informants because they were privileged middle class kids; in fact, both the cooperating and non-cooperating defendants are split along class and gender lines. We are told that defendants snitched because they hadn't been fighting for their own interests; what exactly are one's "own interests," if not to live in a world without slaughterhouses and global warming? Cheaper hamburgers and air conditioning, perhaps? It has even been suggested that it's inevitable some will turn informant under pressure, so we must not blame those who do, and instead should avoid using tactics that provoke investigations and interrogations. This last aspersion

is not worth dignifying with a response, except to point out that no crime need be committed for the government to initiate investigations and interrogations. Whether or not you support direct action of any kind, it is never acceptable to equip the state to do harm to other human beings.

Experienced radicals who have been snitched on themselves will tell you that there is no surefire formula for determining who will turn informant and who won't. There have been informants in almost every resistance movement in living memory, including the Black Panther Party, the Black Liberation Army, the American Indian Movement, and the Puerto Rican independence movement; the Green Scare cases are not particularly unusual in this regard, though some of the defendants seem to have caved in more swiftly than their antecedents. It may be that the hullabaloo about how many eco-activists have turned informant is partly due to commentators' ignorance of past struggles.

If anything discourages people from informing on each other, it is blood ties. Historically, the movements with the least snitching have been the ones most firmly grounded in longstanding communities. Arrestees in the national liberation movements of yesteryear didn't cooperate because they wouldn't be able to face their parents or children again if they did; likewise, when gangsters involved in illegal capitalist activity refuse to inform, it is because doing so would affect the entirety of their lives, from their prospects in their chosen careers to their social standing in prison as well as their neighborhoods. The stronger the ties that bind an individual to a community, the less likely it is he or she will inform against it. North American radicals from predominantly white demographics have always faced a difficult challenge in this regard, as most of the participants are involved in defiance of their families and

social circles rather than because of them. When an ex-activist is facing potentially decades in prison for something that was essentially a hobby, with his parents begging him not to throw his life away and the system he fought against apparently dominating the entirety of his present and future, it takes a powerful sense of right and wrong to resist selling out.

In this light, it isn't surprising that the one common thread that links the non-cooperating defendants is that practically all of them were still involved in either anarchist or at least countercultural communities. Daniel McGowan was ceaselessly active in many kinds of organizing right up to his arrest; Exile and Sadie were still committed to life against the grain, if not political activity—a witness who attended their sentencing described their supporters as an otherworldly troop of black metal fans with braided beards and facial piercings. Here we see again the necessity of forging powerful, long-term communities with a shared culture of resistance; dropouts must do this from scratch, swimming against the tide, but it is not impossible.

Healthy relationships are the backbone of such communities, not to mention secure direct action organizing. Again—unaddressed conflicts and resentments, unbalanced power dynamics, and lack of trust have been the Achilles heel of countless groups. The FBI keeps psychological profiles on its targets, with which to prey on their weaknesses and exploit potential interpersonal fissures. The oldest trick in the book is to tell arrestees that their comrades already snitched on them; to weather this intimidation, people must have no doubts about their comrades' reliability.

"Snitches get stitches" posters notwithstanding, anarchists aren't situated to enforce a no-informing code by violent means. It's doubtful that we could do such a thing without compromising our principles, anyway—when it comes to coercion and fear, the state can always outdo us, and we shouldn't aspire to compete with it. Instead, we should focus on demystifying snitching and building up the collective trust and power that discourage it. If being a part of the anarchist community is rewarding enough, no one will wish to exile themselves from it by turning informant. For this to work, of

course, those who do inform on others must be excluded from our communities with absolute finality; in betraying others for personal advantage, they join the ranks of the police officers, prison guards, and executioners they assist.

Those who may participate in direct action together should first take time to get to know each other well, including each other's families and friends, and to talk over their expectations, needs, and goals. You should know someone long enough to know what you like least about him or her before committing to secure activity together; you have to be certain you'll be able to work through the most difficult conflicts and trust them in the most frightening situations up to a full decade later.

Judging from the lessons of the 1970s, drug addiction is another factor that tends to correlate with snitching, as it can be linked to deep-rooted personal problems. Indeed, Jacob Ferguson, the first informant in Operation Backfire, was a longtime heroin addict. Just as the Operation Backfire cases would have been a great deal more difficult for the government if no one besides Jake had cooperated, the FBI might never have been able to initiate the cases at all if others had not trusted Jake in the first place.

Prompt prisoner support is as important as public support for those facing grand juries. As one Green Scare defendant has pointed out, defendants often turn informant soon after arrest when they are off balance and uncertain what lies ahead. Jail is notorious for being a harsher environment than prison; recent arrestees may be asking themselves whether they can handle years of incarceration without a realistic sense of what that would entail. Supporters should bail defendants out of jail as quickly as possible, so they can be informed and level-headed as they make decisions about their defense strategy. To this end, it is ideal if funds are earmarked for legal support long before any arrests occur.

It cannot be emphasized enough that informing is *always* a serious matter, whether it is a question of a high profile defendant snitching on his comrades or an acquaintance of law-abiding activists answering seemingly harmless questions. The primary goal of the government in any political case is not to put any one defendant in prison but to obtain information

with which to map radical communities, with the ultimate goal of repressing and controlling those communities. The first deal the government offered Peter Young was for him to return to animal rights circles to report to them from within: not just on illegal activity, but on *all* activity. The most minor piece of trivia may serve to jeopardize a person's life, whether or not they have ever broken any law. *It is never acceptable to give information about any other person without his or her express consent.*

Regaining the Initiative

We must not conceptualize our response to government repression in purely reactive terms. It takes a lot of resources for the government to mount a massive operation like the Green Scare cases, and in doing so they create unforeseen situations and open up new vulnerabilities. Like in Judo, when the state makes a move, we can strike back with a countermove that catches them off balance. To take an example from mass mobilizations, the powers that be were eventually able to cripple the so-called anti-globalization movement by throwing tremendous numbers of police at it; but in the wake of lawsuits subsequently brought against them, the police in places like Washington, D.C. now have their hands tied when it comes to crowd control, as demonstrated by their extreme restraint at the IMF/World Bank protests in October 2007. We're in a long war with hierarchical power that cannot be won or lost in any single engagement; the question is always how to make the best of each development, seizing the initiative whenever we can and passing whatever gains we make on to those who will fight after us.

There must be a way to turn the legacy of the Green Scare to our advantage. One starting place is to use it as an opportunity to learn how the state investigates underground activity and make sure those lessons are shared with the next generation. Another is to find common cause with other targeted communities; a promising example of this is the recent connection between animal liberation activists in the Bay Area and supporters of the San Francisco Eight, ex-Black Panthers who are now being charged with the 1971 murder of a police officer.



APPENDIX:

Report from Daniel McGowan's Sentencing Hearing, June 4, 2007

A summary of Assistant U.S. Attorney Stephen Peifer's presentation of the government's case against Daniel McGowan, by Gumby Cascadia

Peifer began by stating that Daniel McGowan was pleading guilty to one count of conspiracy and arson charges related to actions at Superior Lumber in Glendale, Oregon and Jefferson Poplar Farm in Clatskanie, Oregon, and that his aliases had included Dylan Kay, Jamie Moran, Sorrel, Djenni, Rabid, Agent Tart Classique, and Agent Key Lime. Peifer said he has had lengthy involvement with many underground groups, including the Biotic Baking Brigade (BBB), California Croppers, Cropatistas, Reclaim the Seeds, Washington Tree Improvement Association, and Anarchist Golfers' Association. Although many co-defendants in this case have said in court that they had never used the name "The Family," Peifer said McGowan used it often and repeatedly.

Daniel, he said, was two different people; the one his family and friends knew, and his underground persona. He characterized Daniel as having a "Jekyll and Hyde" personality. He said that, like Kevin Tubbs who committed his first arson solo, in 1997 Daniel "acted alone," breaking windows and spray painting "ALF" at a Macy's in Brooklyn that sold furs, at Zamir Furs in Brooklyn, and at a business called "Evolution" that sold parts of endangered animals.

In 1998, Daniel moved to San Francisco where he met Suzanne Savoie. In November of that year, he threw a pie in the face of the Sierra Club president. Peifer said this was "more than a symbolic act," and that by this time, Daniel had given up on mainstream environmentalism. That same month, Daniel pied the CEO of Novartis Seeds and the Dean of Natural Resources at UC Berkeley. The communiqués attributed the acts to the Biotic Baking Brigade. Peifer said that Daniel was associated with the group as late as 2004. The same year, Daniel targeted Fidelity Investments (for their investment in Occidental Petroleum) by throwing glass etching solution on their windows. In December, there was a power outage in San Francisco, and Peifer stated that Daniel took advantage of the opportunity to target the Bank of America with paint-filled balloons, "apparently just because it was a financial institution."

In July 1999, Daniel performed reconnaissance at a UC-Berkeley plant research facility. He drew a diagram of the genetically engineered corn crop, which was then used by others to tear the crops up. Daniel was not there, Peifer said, because he was busy in Lodi, California with a group calling themselves the Lodi Loppers, destroying GE corn owned by Eureka Seeds. The communiqué for the action was written by Daniel. The same year, Daniel was involved in another action against genetic engineering with a group called Reclaim the Seeds. Near the end of 1999, Daniel moved to Seattle to begin preparing for the WTO ministerial—but, according to Peifer, "his work lived on" in a 'zine called *The Nighttime Gardener*, posted on the Bioengineering Action Network's website. Peifer said it was similar to the how-to guides written by Bill Rodgers, with instructions on how to attack research facilities and "destroy years of researchers' work."

While living in Seattle, Daniel and Suzanne Savoie traveled to Pullman, Washington to target a potato research facility[†], but the action was called off due to a vehicle breakdown. In November, three days before the WTO battle, there were attacks at two GE crop sites, in Puyallup, Washington and at the University of Washington (which Peifer called "prophetic"). Daniel wasn't there because he was sick and denied writing the communiqué, but said that parts of it appeared to be based on his research. The communiqué references Toby Bradshaw, whose office was later targeted during the "Double Whammy" arson at the University of Washington.

* According to federal prosecutors, those charged in the Northwest eco-sabotage cases were part of "The Family," a shadowy association of earth and animal liberation operatives. While some of the defendants may have once referred to each other as "family," prosecutors used this phrase to suggest that the defendants were as violent and cultish as Charles Manson's "Family."

† Stenographer's note: in the course of describing all these "facilities" and "research," Peifer never once said the words "genetic engineering."

From November 30 through December 2, the World Trade Organization met [or tried to] in Seattle. Peifer said Daniel was an “integral part” of the property destruction carried out by the black bloc. He said Seattle was “understaffed by police” who “had their hands full” dealing with non-violent “legal protesters.” He referred to a planned action at Cargill that he said was called off because the team didn’t want to “tangle with Longshoremen” at the site. “McGowan changed his plans and rampaged through the streets instead,” Peifer said, “using a tire iron to smash windows. McGowan favored the use of a slingshot with ball bearings, which sounds as dangerous as it is.”

In 2000, Daniel moved to Eugene, where he was invited to attend his first “book club” meeting,* but he didn’t go to that one. “By that time, he was a trusted member of the Family, otherwise he would not have been invited,” said Peifer. Daniel committed acts of vandalism around Eugene—at Umpqua Bank and at a “health food store,” according to Peifer. For a short time, Daniel worked for the *Earth First! Journal*, which was not “radical or extreme enough” for him, according to Peifer, who quoted a line from a letter to the *Journal* from “Rabid” that read, “If Earth First! won’t support the ELF, who will?”

In June of 2000 with Savoie, Daniel targeted the Pure Seed Testing Company in Canby, Oregon, destroying their greenhouses and test plots and causing half a million dollars in damage. The communiqué released by the Anarchist Golfers’ Association was “full of McGowan’s well-known humor and ridicule,” according to Peifer. The communiqué blamed the US Forest Service and APHIS for their role in biological destruction, which Peifer said was another example of how Daniel has targeted government agencies and private facilities “over and over again” to intimidate, coerce, and retaliate.

The following month, Daniel traveled to the Midwest to work with an entirely different cell. Peifer said that the plea agreement does not require Daniel to name names, but that the Midwest group is an entirely different cell of people and that Daniel is protecting them and thwarting their investigation by refusing to name them—“not that there haven’t been leads,” he said. While in the Midwest, Daniel researched and carried out an attack on the US Forest Service Biotechnology Laboratory in Rheinlander, Wisconsin, which Peifer said was “looking for alternative ways to create wood pulp to save trees.” Over one million dollars in damage was done, and Daniel wrote the communiqué.

In September, Daniel attended the “book club” meeting in Santa Cruz, where he “lectured” to the others about actions against genetic engineering. That December, Daniel performed a recon mission at Jefferson Poplar, which was a large and challenging target, so the action was put off, and instead, Superior Lumber was targeted. Daniel reconnoitered the site a week before the arson, and moved into a nearby house “solely to prepare.” He “lived with the devices and fuel” and, on the night of the action, helped load the vehicle and rode with the crew, changed into dark clothing, checked the radios, and acted as lookout while the others set the devices that caused over a million dollars damage. After the action, Daniel and Savoie went to Portland and used a public computer to write the communiqué. Peifer said Daniel went into the bathroom at Powell’s Books to assemble the communiqué, “almost like Mission Impossible.”

In January of 2001, Daniel attended his second “book club” meeting in Olympia, prior to the “Double Whammy”[†] and Romania[‡] fires. In March, Daniel played a “major role” in the tree spiking of the Judie timber sale.[§] Peifer said Daniel researched tree spiking, so he “knew about the danger to loggers and mill workers,” that he purchased the nails and spikes, and that he personally recruited others. They worked for two and a half hours, “wearing headlamps like miners,” and spiked the trees high and low, cutting off the ends of some so that loggers would not see the nails. Daniel wrote the communiqué, which stated that, “All responsibility for worker safety now lies with the owner of the sale, Seneca Jones Corporation and their accomplices, the Forest Service. Cancel this sale immediately.” Peifer said that Daniel’s actions were

* Some of the defendants apparently met together occasionally to discuss and share skills such as computer security and lock-picking. These gatherings were referred to as “Book Club” meetings by participants.

† In the early morning of May 21, 2001, Earth Liberation Front cells burned an office and trucks at Jefferson Poplar Farms in Clatskanie, Oregon, while another group simultaneously attacked the offices of Toby Bradshaw, who worked mapping the DNA of Poplar trees at the University of Washington in Seattle. This two-state operation was known as the “Double Whammy.”

‡ On March 30, 2001, 35 Sports Utility Vehicles at the Joe Romania Chevrolet dealership in Eugene, Oregon were destroyed or damaged by fire. The ELF claimed responsibility for these arsons in a communiqué issued soon afterwards. This was the second arson attack on Romania Chevrolet in under a year. The action was claimed in solidarity with Jeffrey Luers (aka Free) and Craig Marshall (aka Critter), who were arrested for the first effort but never claimed to be part of the ELF. The scheduling of this new arson just days before Jeff Luers’ trial may have played some part in the disproportionately long sentence he received.

§ The Judie Timber Sale was an area in the Umpqua National Forest in Douglas County, Oregon, that was scheduled for destruction by loggers. On March 2, 2001, survey stakes were removed and nails were inserted into numerous trees, rendering them unsafe to cut down or process.

“callous and reckless,” and that tree spiking was renounced by Judi Bari* before Redwood Summer.

Daniel was not involved in the Romania arson, but Meyerhoff came to Daniel to approve the communiqué. Daniel was concerned that the communiqué mentioned Free and Critter, but was unable to sway the group to change it.

Originally, the action at Jefferson Poplar was supposed to be “simply destroying the trees” as with other GE actions Daniel had participated in, but this was “ratcheted up to arson.” Daniel knew about the other half of the “Double Whammy.” Peifer called it a “well-planned and coordinated crime.” Daniel helped purchase the needed supplies and took part in the construction of the devices wearing a Tyvek “clean suit” and gloves. He set the devices in the office and garage using “trailers” of bed sheets soaked in fuel to link the vehicles together, and spray painted “ELF” on the unburned building. Regarding the placement of a device near a propane tank, Peifer said Daniel and Meyerhoff had a brief discussion about it and that Daniel expressed concern, but ultimately it was still left there. Gerlach and Daniel wrote the communiqué, which was “out to get the government,” according to Peifer.

Peifer spoke again about how there had been a disagreement, involving Craig Rosebraugh,[†] about alterations made to the communiqué, and that Rosebraugh “lost his job over it,” which illustrates Daniel’s “depth of involvement” in the movement. Peifer showed an overhead projection of the *Spirit of Freedom* newsletter from June/July of ’01, which Daniel published as part of the North American Earth Liberation Prisoner Support Network he established and ran,[‡] that contained an article entitled “Fascist Legislation in the Works” about laws being passed in Oregon and Washington targeting direct action activists. Peifer used the exhibit to show that Daniel had an interest in influencing government and should have the terrorism enhancement applied in the Jefferson Poplar fire. He said, “For years, McGowan has been targeting government and private facilities.”

At Daniel’s third “book club” meeting, held in Sisters, Oregon, the altered communiqué was discussed, as was the possible dissolution of “The Family.” On June 18th of 2001, Daniel damaged logging equipment totaling \$22,000, and in July he dug up and damaged culverts at a timber sale in Oregon. Following that action, he went to Canada, and “tries to make it look innocent,” says Peifer, but grand juries were being convened in Eugene and people subpoenaed, so Daniel left to “avoid getting arrested.” He returned to Eugene briefly before moving back to New York. Peifer made the “Jekyll and Hyde” allusion again, saying that during his time back in New York, Daniel engaged in “legitimate” activism while remaining sympathetic to direct action tactics. As for Daniel’s prisoner support work, Peifer said he was only willing to support those who had not cooperated with law enforcement and that his current support is filled with “like-minded people.”

On January 20, 2004, Daniel stood by while someone tossed a pie into the face of Randall Terry, founder of right-wingnut pro-life wackos Operation Rescue [stenographer’s wording, not Peifer’s—but the following are Peifer’s words:] “Apparently free speech and lawful protest only go so far with Mr. McGowan.” Daniel wrote the communiqué, which was signed Agent Key Lime. Also in 2004, Daniel was a key organizer for the RNC Not Welcome website designed “to make conventioners feel unwelcome in his hometown.” Peifer showed articles from the *New York Times* and Salon.com in which Daniel, going by the name Jamie Moran, disavows violence against people, but not property. Peifer said Daniel was “directing his cadre of anarchists, dogging delegates, and trying to make Republicans’ lives as miserable as possible.”

* Judi Bari (1949-1997) was an organizer with Earth First! and The Industrial Workers of the World, known especially for her involvement in campaigns to save redwood forests in Northern California. As part of these campaigns, she brought together lumber workers and environmentalists in common opposition to the shortsighted and greedy policies of timber companies that valued neither workers’ lives nor the environment. It was partially in relation to this worker/environmental alliance that she called for the abandonment of tree-spiking as an eco-defense tactic; it should also be noted that this tactic had already met with diminishing returns in previous years. On May 24, 1990, Bari was seriously injured when a bomb exploded in her car—an attempted murder that the FBI initially had the nerve to blame on Bari as well as Darryl Cerney, the other occupant of the vehicle. A 2002 civil court ruling suggested that the FBI could have been involved in this bombing, and ordered them to pay \$4.4 million in damages. In this light, it is particularly noxious that Peifer would cite Bari to discredit McGowan. At the same time, this cynical maneuver reveals how one generation’s radicals become the next generation’s reference points for legitimacy. Just as John Brown, Malcolm X, and Judi Bari are celebrated today, the “extremist” actions of the ELF may one day appear quite sensible and restrained.

† Craig Rosebraugh served as a public spokesperson for the Earth Liberation Front from 1997 to 2001, and experienced numerous FBI raids, grand jury subpoenas, and other harassment as a result; in one instance, the Portland Police singled Rosebraugh out at a protest, throwing him to the ground and breaking his arm. Rosebraugh’s book *Burning Rage of a Dying Planet* details his experiences in this spokesperson role.

‡ The NA-ELPSN is the North American affiliate of the Earth Liberation Prisoners Support Network, founded in Britain in the 1990s to support people who are accused or convicted of actions in defense of the Earth and its inhabitants. More information on the North American branch is available at www.ecoprisoners.org.

* On October 19, 1998, eight fires at two different sites completely destroyed many millions of dollars' worth of property at the Vail Ski Resort in Colorado, whose expansion threatened sensitive Lynx habitat. The impressive arsons came mere days after the courts rejected legal efforts to save this habitat. William Rodgers was allegedly responsible for setting the fires.

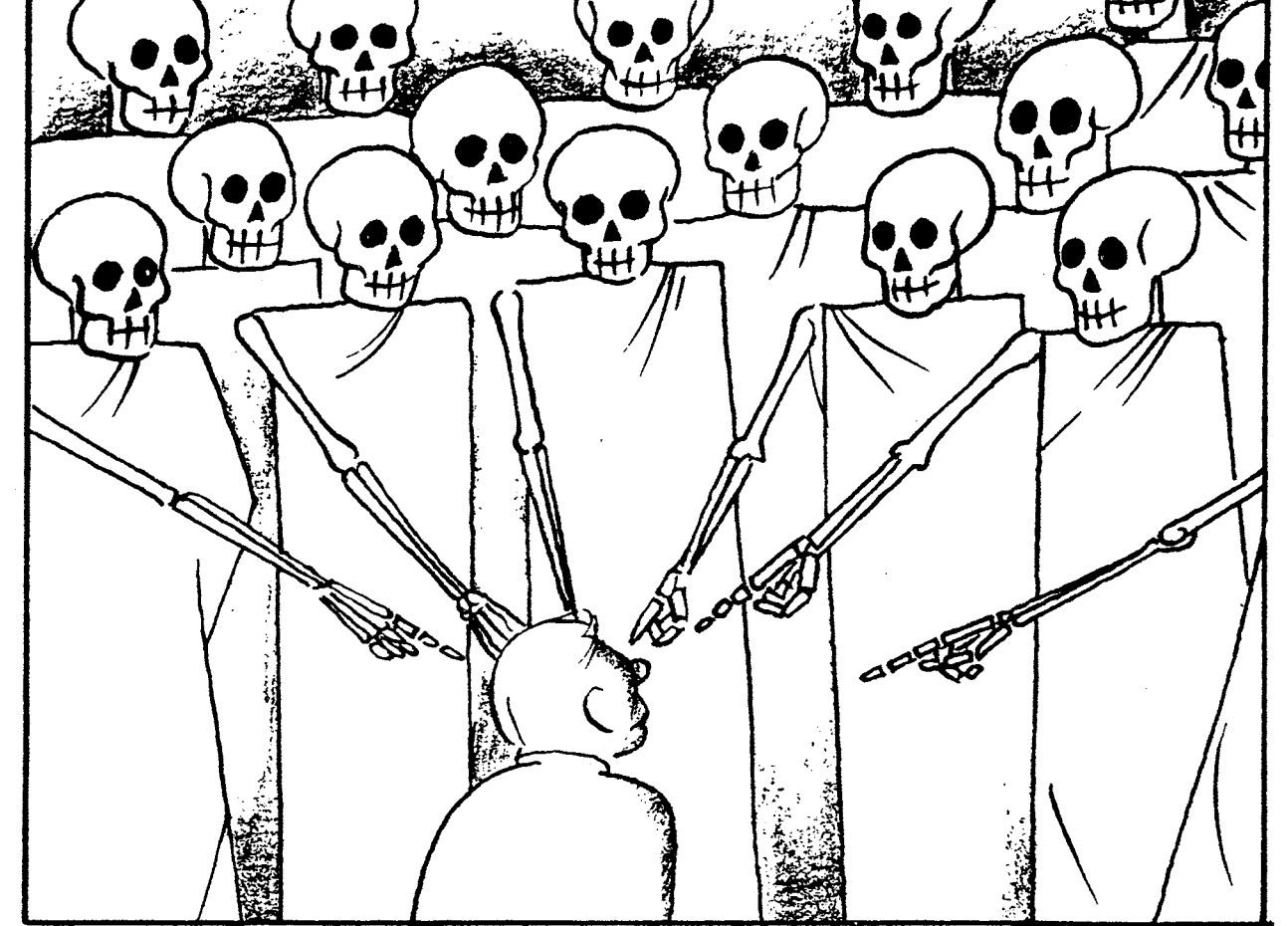
† After midnight on June 16, 2000 Jeff Luers and Craig Marshall set fire to three Sports Utility Vehicles at the Joe Romania Chevrolet dealership in Eugene, Oregon; unbeknownst to them, undercover cops had been tailing them for hours. Critter took a plea deal without informing on his co-defendant or anyone else, and was released in January 2005. Free was sentenced to 22 years and eight months following a trial in which he was also convicted for another attempted arson, a charge he denies to this day. In February 2007, the Oregon Court of Appeals overruled Free's draconian sentence, and Free currently awaits re-sentencing to a shorter prison term. For more information, see www.freejeffluers.org.

‡ This "Earth Liberation Front Guide," put together by William Rodgers in May 2001, describes the construction of timing devices for arson. Stanislas Meyerhoff, a government informant since his arrest in 2005, apparently helped with some details and device testing. The manual can still be located online.

Peifer then played excerpts of the recorded conversations Daniel had with the wired [double entendre intended] Jake Ferguson. In the recordings, captured when Ferguson visited Daniel in New York in April of 2005 and again when Daniel visited Eugene in August that year, they discuss whether the actions had any lasting effect. Daniel said he felt the actions had been a powerful symbol, even though most of the targets had been rebuilt. He referred to Vail as a "recruitment drive," and expressed that he felt the actions had been successful in changing public perception. Daniel also expressed concern about others in the cell turning on each other, and said that if any of them were ever captured, he would find the money to hire the best lawyer available for that person. He said the only reasons he felt anyone would talk were if they "found Jesus," went insane, or if they wanted money, to which Jake jumped in and said, "Money? What do you mean?" and to which Daniel replied, "That's some Judas shit, man." Daniel spoke about Free's case,† and talked about hiring a private investigator to reveal a personal friendship between Lyle Velure (the judge from Free's case) and the Steve Romania family (owners of the SUV lot Free targeted). He also spoke about putting Velure's address and phone number on a website (although he never did it).

Then Daniel talked about finding a copy of Bill Rodgers' "Setting Fires with Electrical Timers,"‡ making "clean" copies, and sending them to some distributors in hopes they would be circulated. While Ferguson drove Daniel to the airport, they passed a Seneca Sawmill (owners of a company Daniel remembered as linked to the Superior Lumber Company but that was actually connected to the Judie sale), laughed and said "Happy fuckin' New Year," (i.e. referring to the New Year arson at Superior Lumber).

Peifer said the comment showed Daniel's attitude. He said that, if Nathan and Joyanna plead out because they "had to," that Daniel's "goose was cooked" by those tapes. In them, he recounts all his major criminal acts and reveals his attitude toward the law. Peifer then quoted Emerson: "'Commit a crime, and the earth is made of glass.' Right now, your Honor, Daniel McGowan's world is made of glass." He said the government is seeking 92 months' sentence.



Postscript: Cowards . . .

"I find it ironic that you support victimized women, yet in your communiqués you verbally victimize those with whom you disagree. I wonder if you ever called scholars in the Northwest about how to be effective and take positive action. Like the professors who wrote letters to the court on your behalf, most professors are incredibly generous with their ideas. I've learned a lot in my years on the bench... seen it all... it's called the human experience. Take off the masks until the real Daniel McGowan is revealed... be the change you truly want to be. Don't use Gandhi just when it's convenient. I hope you'll go back to your website and tell who you were, what you did. You may not be as popular, but... change your website. Denounce, renounce and condemn. If you really mean it, it shouldn't be hard. To the young people, send the message that violence doesn't work. If you want to make a difference, have the courage to say how the life you lived was the life of a coward... It is a tragedy to watch these extremely talented and bright young people come in and do damage to industries. It's not okay to put people in fear doing what they need to do to survive. Take off the hoods, sweatshirts, and masks and have a real dialogue."

-Judge Aiken, in sentencing Daniel McGowan to seven years in prison with a terrorism enhancement (notes taken by Gumby Cascadia)

In reflecting on Judge Aiken's sentencing, let us put aside, for the time being, the question of whether executives who profit from logging, animal exploitation, and genetic engineering are "doing what they need to do to survive." Let's allow to pass, as well, the suggestion that those who run these industries are *more* likely to enter into a "real dialogue" with environmentalists if the latter limit themselves to purely legal activity. Let's even reserve judgment on Aiken's attempt to draw parallels between domestic violence and sarcastic communiqués—which parallels the prosecutors' assertion that the ELF, despite having never injured a single human being, is no different from the Ku Klux Klan.

There is but one question we cannot help but ask, in reference to Judge Aiken's rhetoric about cowardice: if she found herself in a situation that called for action to be taken outside the established channels of the legal system, would she be capable of it? Or would she still insist on due process of law, urging others to be patient as human beings were sold into slavery or the Nazis carted people off to Dachau? Is it fair for a person whose complicity in the status quo is rewarded with financial stability and social status to accuse someone who has risked everything to abide by his conscience . . . of cowardice? Perhaps Aiken would also feel entitled to inform John Brown that he was a coward, or the Germans who attempted to assassinate Hitler?

Once this question is asked, another question inexorably follows: what qualifies as a situation that calls for action to be taken outside the established channels of the legal system, if not the current ecological crisis? Species are going extinct all over the planet, climate change is beginning to wreak serious havoc on human beings as well, and scientists are giving us a very short window of time to turn our act around—while the US government and its corporate puppeteers refuse to make even the insufficient changes called for by liberals. If the dystopian nightmare those scientists predict comes to pass, will the refugees of the future look back at this encounter between McGowan and Aiken and judge McGowan the coward?

We live in a democracy, Aiken and her kind insist: bypassing the established channels and breaking the law is akin to attacking freedom, community, and dialogue themselves. That's the same thing they said in 1859.

Those who consider obeying the law more important than abiding by one's conscience always try to frame themselves as the responsible ones, but the essence of that attitude is the desire to evade responsibility. Society, as represented—however badly—by its entrenched institutions, is responsible for decreeing right and wrong; all one must do is brainlessly comply, arguing for a change when the results are not to one's taste but never stepping out of line. That is the creed of cowards, if anything is. At the hearing to determine whether the defendants should be sentenced as terrorists, Aiken acknowledged with frustration that she had no control over what the Bureau of Prisons would do with them regardless of her recommendations—but washed her hands of the matter and gave McGowan and others terrorism enhancements anyway. Doubtless, Aiken feels that whatever shortcomings the system has are not her responsibility, even if she participates in forcing them on others. She's just doing her job.

That's the Nuremberg defense. Regardless of what she thinks of McGowan's actions or the Bureau of Prisons, Aiken is personally responsible for sending him to prison. She is responsible for separating him from his wife, for preventing him from continuing his work supporting survivors of domestic violence. If he is beaten or raped while in prison, it is the same as if Aiken beat or raped him. And not just McGowan, or Paul, or Sadie or Exile, but *every single person* Aiken has ever sent to prison.

But Aiken and her kind are responsible for a lot more than this. As the polar icecaps melt, rainforests are reduced to pulp, and climate change inflicts more and more terrible catastrophes around the planet, they are responsible for stopping all who would take direct action to avert these

tragedies. They are responsible, in short, for forcing the wholesale destruction of the natural environment upon everyone else on earth.

Aiken might counter that the so-called democratic system is the most effective way to go about halting that destruction. It sure has worked so far, hasn't it! On the contrary, it seems more likely that she cannot bring herself to honestly consider whether there could be a higher good than the maintenance of law and order. For people like her, obedience to the law is more precious than polar icecaps, rainforests, and cities like New Orleans. Any price is worth paying to avoid taking responsibility for their part in determining the fate of the planet. Talk about *cowardice*.

and Heroes

So—if McGowan and the other non-cooperating Green Scare defendants are not cowards, does that mean they are heroes?

We should be cautious not to unthinkingly adopt the inverse of Aiken's judgment. In presenting the case for the government, Peifer described the Operation Backfire defendants' exploits as "almost like Mission Impossible." It serves the powers that be to present the defendants as superhuman—the more exceptional their deeds seem to be, the further out of reach such deeds will feel to everyone else.

Similarly, lionizing "heroes" can be a way for the rest of us to let ourselves off the hook: as we are obviously not heroes of their caliber, we need not hold ourselves up to the same standards of conduct. It is a disservice to glorify McGowan, Exile, Sadie, Peter Young, and others like them; in choosing anonymous action, they did not set out to be celebrated, but to privately do what they thought was necessary, just as all of us ought to. They are as normal as any of us—any normal person who takes responsibility for his or her actions is capable of tremendous things.

This is not to say we should all become arsonists. There are countless paths available to those who would take responsibility for themselves, and each person must choose the one that is most appropriate to his or her situation. Let the courage of the non-cooperating Green Scare defendants, who dared to act on their beliefs and refused to betray those convictions even when threatened with life in prison, serve as reminders of just how much normal people like us can accomplish.

THE BATTLE FOR UNGDOMSHUSET

photos courtesy of www.nathue.dk, among others

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Ungdomshuset ("Youth House") was a four-story autonomous social center located in the Nørrebro neighborhood of Copenhagen on Jagtvej 69—hence the prevalence of "69" tattoos throughout Denmark. It was evicted and demolished in March 2007, provoking some of the most intense rioting Denmark had seen in generations.

For those who read the article in the second issue of *Rolling Thunder* describing the Danish squatting movement in the 1970s-80s, this story basically picks up where that one left off. To offer a little context, most European countries have at least one social center left from the heyday of the squatting movement a couple decades ago: Norway has the Blitz, Austria has the EKH, Germany has Kopi in Berlin and Rote Flora in Hamburg, Slovenia has an entire occupied neighborhood called Metelkova. Over the past few years, European governments have mounted new attacks on these last redoubts; Ungdomshuset is the first in northern Europe to be successfully evicted, and both anarchists and authoritarians are watching to see whether its eviction does more to crush or reinvigorate resistance.

I was last at Ungdomshuset myself in fall of 2005; it was my fourth time in eight years to perform there with a punk band. The first time I visited Jagtvej 69, the whole neighborhood was boarded up following riots protesting a racist extradition. Police patrolled the area in armored

cars and kept the building surrounded; all night we heard them exchanging threats with the punks standing guard on the roof. The show in 2005 was less tense: just a couple hundred old and new friends enjoying delicious food and rowdy music, everyone from veteran squatters to boisterous street kids eating and dancing and talking together. As morning approached several dozen of us bedded down on mats under the high ceiling of the theater room on the second floor; I stayed awake in the dark whispering stories back and forth with the Australian traveler next to me, not wanting to miss a moment.

When our band played at a state-run center in Sweden the following evening, the contrast couldn't have been more stark. A glass cage was set around the drums to protect the precious hearing of young Swedes; state employees bustled about enforcing a host of Kafkaesque regulations, even checking the volume of the bands with a decibel meter. The teenage attendees stood awkwardly between metal barriers, not daring to violate the rules by dancing, and we literally couldn't turn our amplifiers above 1 without officials offering to cancel the show then and there. Everything was over long before midnight, and the building emptied out and locked. That's the top-down paradise offered by social democracy—a dystopia in which liability trumps liberty.

Fortunately, not everyone is willing to follow the rules.

TIMELINE: Squatting and Resistance in Copenhagen

1897 - November 12. The building is completed with the name "Folkets Hus" ("The People's House") as a headquarters for Copenhagen's embattled labor movement. Over the following decades, both Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg speak there. In 1910, the Second International holds an international women's conference at the house, during which Clara Zetkin proposes an International Women's Day. Several historic demonstrations were organized in Folkets Hus, including the massive demonstration in 1918 when workers stormed the Stock Exchange. As late as the 1950s, it was still used by associations and unions involved in the labor movement, hosting activities including boxing matches and dances.

1971 - September. Fifty activists squat Christiania, an old military compound in the heart of Copenhagen; over the following years, it becomes home to nearly a thousand people.

1981 - Punks and anarchists form a group called "the initiative for a youth house" to fight for an autonomous space for young people in Copenhagen. At first they attempt to get a house through legal means, but they are turned down by the local council.

1981 - October. The empty bread factory "Rutana" and later the empty rubber factory "Schionning & Arvé" are squatted. Police evict both buildings with tear gas and brutal violence. Next Abel Catrine-stiftelsen is squatted, which lasts for three months.

1982 - March. The former Musical Mechanic Museum is squatted along with the empty building next door Sorte Hest ("Black Horse"). The occupants make clear that they won't give up without a fight. That spring even more houses are squatted, including "The Little Feather," "Bazooka," and "Allotria."

1982 - October 29-31. The city council caves in and hands over the keys to the building at Jagtvej 69 to the squatters movement, delivering them to an undefined group called "the users of Ungdomshuset." When the mayor shows up to the opening party, squatters pour

a bucket of water on his head in front of the flashing cameras of the press. Over the following years, Nick Cave and Bjork play at Ungdomshuset, among others; the house is in constant use by thousands of people, hosting dinners, theater, meetings, a bar, and a wide variety of music.

1983 - January. Massive numbers of police storm the "Allotria" squat only to find it empty. For months, the occupants have been digging a secret tunnel; after dropping a banner reading "We decide when we fight" and yelling insults at the police outside, the occupants escape to a plumber's shop across the street and make their getaway in a truck.

1983 - Ryesgade 46 and 58 are squatted and remain occupied for three years during negotiations with the local council and the owners of the buildings.

1986 - September 14. A popular protest stops police from evicting the squatters on Ryesgade. Hundreds of activists dressed in identical work suits and ski masks defeat the police in a series of street battles during which huge barricades are erected. The standoff continues until September 22, when the city government calls on the Danish army for assistance, and the defenders withdraw to pick their next battle.

1996 - January 27. A fire damages Ungdomshuset. It is renovated by volunteer labor and funding.

1999 - May 6. The city council votes to close the house down.

1999 June 17. Seven Ungdomshuset activists stage a takeover of the national television news station, spray painting slogans on the back board of the set; after a few minutes the news program goes to "technical difficulties."

2000 - January 26. The city council puts the house up for sale. The squatters hang a tremendous banner on the front of the building reading, "For sale along with 500 autonomist, stone throwing, violent psychopaths from hell."

2000 - November 16. The city council sells the house to a shell corporation called HUMAN A/S.

2001 - September 28. The extremist Christian sect Faderhuset ("house of the Lord") buys up HUMAN A/S, after their cult leader has a dream in which God commands her to destroy Ungdomshuset by any means necessary. The squatters refuse to recognize the sale or even to permit the self-styled "owners" to enter the building. The battle between Father House and Youth House is on!

2003 - Faderhuset sues the users of Ungdomshuset demanding to take it over.

2004 - The court rules in favor of Faderhuset; the users appeal the case.

2006 - The appeal fails in court.

2006 - May 11. Protest for Ungdomshuset.

2006 - June 22-25. Ungdomshuset hosts the widely attended K-town Festival and "Bike Wars."

2006 - September. A fund entitled "Jagtvej 69," organized by Danes sympathetic to the squatters, attempts to buy the house from Faderhuset to hand it over to the users. Faderhuset refuses to sell. One final attempt is made to get an appeal.

2006 - September 23. Protest march from Ungdomshuset to Christiania.

2006 - September 24. Reclaim the streets for Ungdomshuset.

2006 - October. The court decides that the users must leave the house before December 14. The last attempt to get an appeal is denied. The chief of police promises that there will be no attempt to evict the house in 2006. Ungdomshuset supporters send out a worldwide call for assistance.

2006 - October 22. Users of Ungdomshuset visit the offices of Faderhuset.

2006 - October. Ungdomshuset celebrates the house's twenty-four-year anniversary.

2006 - December 12. The fund "Jagtvej 69" offers to purchase the house for several times its market value. Faderhuset once again refuses to sell the house. Even the capitalist press express disbelief.



2006 - December 14. Thousands of people take part in a huge protest for more autonomous places in Copenhagen.

2006 - December 14. A pirate radio station starts broadcasting from inside Ungdomshuset.

2006 - December 16, evening. An unpermitted demonstration sets out from Ungdomshuset. People from all over the world have come to participate. They only get a few hundred yards from the house when riot police attack, resulting in hours of fighting in the streets and 273 arrests.

2006 - December 29. The mayor proposes to move Ungdomshuset to Christiania in the center of Copenhagen. The proposal is turned down, since there is no space available there.

2007 - January 3. Faderhuset receives permission to tear down Ungdomshuset.

2007 - January. Liberals protest against Ungdomshuset. Nazis join their protest. Fights break out.

2007 - January 8. The mayor proposes to move Ungdomshuset further down the street to an old firehouse that is owned by the state. The request is denied by the state.

2007 - January 13. A house is squatted on Dortheavej, not far from Ungdomshuset. Police evict the place 48 hours later.

2007 - February 3. A house on Grøndalsvænge is squatted, but evicted the same day.

2007 - February 16. Morning traffic is blocked by protesters with banners for Ungdomshuset.

2007 - March 1, 7 am. Police and military units dressed as police attack Ungdomshuset in one of the biggest police operations in Danish history. Six officers are lowered from a Navy helicopter onto the roof through the barbed wire defenses the occupants have erected; two cranes lift containers filled with riot police up to windows on the first and second floors, while fire-fighting equipment from Copenhagen airport sprays the entire building with huge amounts of foam to block vision and prevent the use of molotov cocktails; a last group of cops breaks through a wall from a building next door. The police say it takes five minutes to secure the building, but in fact it is forty minutes before all thirty-five of the people inside have been arrested. Within an hour, a hundred people

have gathered and riots are breaking out; after another hour, there are 1500, and barricades appear throughout the area, some in flames. The group Feminists for More Free Space is responsible for twelve barricades, and another one later in the afternoon.

2007 - March 1, 5 pm. A march starts moving towards the building at Jagtvej 69 and the biggest riots in Denmark's history break out. Activists barricade the streets and set cars on fire to block police vans. The police shoot tear gas, and protesters return fire with molotov cocktails, rocks, and bottles. 217 people are arrested.

2007 - March 2. A group of people squats the headquarters of the mayor's political party. The police bring in cops from all over the country, and police vans from Sweden and Holland are brought in after protesters smash the local ones. That night about 2000 people once again attempt to get to Ungdomshuset; when the police attack they build barricades and set police vans on fire. The riots spread throughout the city to other parts of Copenhagen. 188 people are arrested.

Anonymous Accounts from the Defense

2007 - March 3. Police illegally raid places around Nørrebro; 130 arrests. 13 foreigners have already been expelled from Denmark. Members of the Anarchist Black Cross who had been organizing prisoner support are themselves arrested, and their phones shut down; later that day, the Black Cross announces a new phone number. Despite the violence, the support group Citizens Group for Ungdomshuset is swamped with calls from people who want to join; its membership has grown to almost 700 in the preceding days. 2000 people gather for a march in the afternoon. Solidarity demonstrations are occurring all around Europe: over the following days, Danish consulates are occupied, highways are shut down, and protesters trade projectile fire with police. That evening riots break out again all over Copenhagen. 76 people are arrested. The cost of the riots is estimated to be \$2.7 million.

2007 - March 5. Masked workers start to tear down Ungdomshuset under heavy police guard; many companies have refused to participate, if not because they support Ungdomshuset then because they can't guarantee the safety of their workers. Vehicles belonging to the companies that tear down Ungdomshuset have their tires slashed, their windows broken, and acid poured on their seats. One of the companies sends its workers home and bills Faderhuset for the damages. Late that night two trucks are burned in the parking lot of the company that has been transporting material from Jagtvej 69. The company, "3x34 Transport," announces that it is a politically neutral company and "will transport any order no matter the political, religious, or ethnic ground." Despite this, they choose to stop working around Ungdomshuset: "3x34 Transport will at any time choose to not do work that will pose a threat to the people working in the company, and has, with this in mind, chosen to not take any more orders in connection with the clearing of Ungdomshuset at Nørrebro."

2007 - March 6. The cult leader of Faderhuset gives a victory speech in which she announces that the young people of Nørrebro are possessed by demons, but that God was victorious over Satan. She says the next things to fight are homosexuality, pedophilia, pornography, abortion, and satanistic toys.

2007 - March 8. 4000 people celebrate International Women's Day, which had been proposed at Jagtvej 69 almost a century earlier, with a march in support of the struggle for Ungdomshuset. The building has been destroyed, but the fight for a new house is gathering steam.

2007 - March 16. A vanload of police stops by Jagtvej 69 just to piss on the ground where Ungdomshuset used to be. Asked by a bystander if it is not illegal to urinate on private property, the police answer, "We have a very good relationship with Ruth" [the cult leader of Faderhuset]. Meanwhile, the police department admits to having "accidentally" attacked crowds with a potentially lethal form of tear gas.

As soon as the smoke cleared, Faderhuset put the property up for sale for DKK 15 million (they'd purchased it for DKK 2.6 million). City councilors expressed irritation, since Faderhuset had refused to sell the house when "Jagtvej 69" offered to buy it for the squatters, and the riots that followed the eviction cost an estimated DKK 72 million.

In all, more than 750 arrests took place during the eviction and resulting conflicts, including 140 foreigners. Solidarity actions occurred throughout Denmark and as far away as South Korea. Thousands of people joined the fight for a new Youth House and people from the 1980s squatting movement came out of retirement, organizing weekly protests as the Grey Bloc.

And the story continues:

2007 - May 14. Police enter Christiania to demolish the abandoned Cigarkassen building. Hundreds respond, building road blocks and disabling construction vehicles; when the police retreat, people rebuild the house. By the early afternoon a few thousand people have gathered in Christiania. Police are patrolling in large groups, sometimes arresting people, sometimes being pelted with bottles and rocks. The police are eventually driven out by a combination of squatting activists and hashish peddlers;

they shoot tear gas into Christiania from outside, and a huge burning barricade is erected to keep them at bay. In the course of all this, somebody manages to pour a bucket of urine and feces on police commander "Bjarne Bonelock," who always handles cases related to Christiania and Ungdomshuset. The fighting continues late into the night, but the police never regain the upper hand. There are 50 arrests; the prosecutor demands they remain imprisoned lest they participate in further disturbances in Copenhagen, which he says is "in a state of rebellion."

2007 - August 30-September 6. A week of action occurs on the six-month anniversary of the eviction, including several massive demonstrations, a feminist day focusing on self-defense skills, the usual barricading and street fighting and property damage, and a group of children squatting a house at H.C. Oerstedsvej 69 and defending it from the police with pies and water balloons. After the riots on September 1, the US embassy sends warnings to all American citizens in Denmark to keep out of Nørrebro. At the end of the week, there are 69 simultaneous protests at 69 different locations that have the house number 69. Squatting activists have already announced that an abandoned water pumping station at Grøndalsvænge Allé 13 will be occupied the following month, using tactics from the G8 summit protests in Germany.

2007 - October 6. Almost 10,000 people gather in Nørrebro to occupy Grøndalsvænge Allé 13; nearly 1000 have trained for months for confrontations with police. After the march sets out, it divides into four different blocs, each with its own themes and preferred level of risk. The chosen building and the entire surrounded area is full of barbed wire, police, and police dogs. The vast majority of the crowd is explicitly nonviolent, but the police still attack with tear gas, dogs, and batons, even gassing themselves and innocent families at various points. 436 people are arrested, the biggest single mass arrest in the history of Denmark. Despite all this, a few hundred people manage to reach the house and raise the Jolly Roger flag from the roof. In the end, they don't succeed in holding the house, but the mayor announces that she wants to negotiate.

Ungdomshuset, March 1, 2007, 7 am

I wake up to someone screaming: "EVICTION!"

For the past months, people from all over the world have been on watch in shifts. Seven in the morning is the end of the night shift and people are tired from the strain of being on constant alert. We know that the house is going to be evicted at some point as both the police and government have promised, but the waiting game has drained a lot of our energy and in a strange way some of us are actually looking forward to it happening. The barricades separating each floor have been reinforced in every possible way we could think of. Huge plates of metal on wood, packed with wool to fuck up their chainsaws. Every window is boarded up with strong metal netting to prevent the pigs from shooting tear gas through the windows.

I've been living here since the international call went out announcing the protest in December on the original date of the eviction. The protest was a show of force, a taste of what was to come if they evicted the house. Thousands of people from all over the world came, and as the black bloc of two thousand people started to march, we only made it three hundred yards before the police blocked the road and all hell broke loose. The riots lasted for hours and several hundred people were arrested.

I sit up in my sleeping bag and almost immediately my eyes start to burn from the tear gas that has been fired from the roof. I reach for the gas mask next to me and get up. Some people are running up the stairs and some are running down them. People are yelling everywhere. Someone is fighting off cops on the floor above. I am having problems getting my mask on. I spot my friend coming down the stairs. It's getting hard to see anything as grenade after grenade of tear gas explodes inside the building, now on every floor it seems. He helps me with my mask. My eyes burn and my lungs hurt. Last night, there was a concert, and a local band missed their train, so they slept in the house. We

divide into two groups: a group to sit and wait for the cops, as they are not really there to defend the house, and a group that will see what we can do to hold it as long as possible.

To the roof! Not possible. OK. Barricades closed. Where are they? Explosions seem to be going off everywhere. Further down the back stairs, peep through the door on the second floor. Shit, they're everywhere. Even further down: a hole in the wall—so we *did* hear something last weekend! To the basement, board up the door. Nowhere else to go. They're outside the door. We can hear the group that sat down to wait behind the bar start to scream. Fuck, what are they doing to them? Fucking pigs.

They start to break down the door. We back into a small room in the back of the basement and close the door. They have broken through the outer door. Final showdown. No way out. "Let's give 'em hell!" Everyone screams as they start to break through the last door. Total chaos. A huge fight breaks out in a cramped basement full of tear gas. A cop screams. I can't tell what is happening until I am being beaten to the ground with a blow to the head from what feels like a police baton.

They sit us down in a row and rip off our gas masks. People are starting to throw up, screaming for air; a few pass out. A young guy is being lifted up and carried out by four anti-terror police officers. He is no longer conscious; some of the cops beat him unconscious in the fight. They let us sit there in the basement filled with tear gas long enough for a few of us to sustain lung damage; more of us temporarily lose sight.

They take us one by one out to their transport police bus, which is parked in the beautiful trashed backyard behind the building. Police are everywhere. I look back at the house and I can't even focus on the building. It isn't until hours later that I regain my eyesight, and several days until I can breathe normally.

I never saw the house again, only on television from my prison cell as they tore it down, my heart filled with anger and sorrow.

Copenhagen, March 1-4, 2007

Everyone has their story about the days. I've heard the most amazing tales of victories and great escapes, and there is no way I can pass on all that happened during the first few days of March. We had two days in freedom, during which the police were fought off and we held the streets, even though we didn't get to take back the house. I can only tell my own story.

Thursday

I moved to Copenhagen in November to organize for a possible eviction. I've hoped all along that the city council would change their minds and find a solution to the situation—but since my faith in the state is really nonexistent, I prepared for eviction.

I meet with my friends as soon as I hear about the eviction. I have to get in contact with a lot of people and write some indy news updates, but my friends go as close as they can get to check out the situation. They come back a few hours later to tell me that so far it's very unorganized, there are massive numbers of police, and they seem to have the upper hand.

So we wait until 5 pm. We meet up with the rest of our group at Blaaagards Plads, where the protest is to begin. I

can't believe my own eyes. For the past months, there have been more and more people showing up at the protests to save Ungdomshuset, but this is completely insane. I would say there are more than 5000 people gathered here today. Many masked and in their affinity groups. We have not been the only ones waiting for this. Let's take back our house! Tonight we will celebrate in Ungdomshuset once again. We start to move down the small street that leads to the main road. As the protest turns the corner onto the main road, three police vans are parked across the road in an optimistic attempt to block 5000 people. We don't even get into throwing range before the first stones and bottles fly through the air. The front of the protest starts to run towards the police vans, and they quickly turn around to get away.

What the fuck—there are Nazis on the sidewalk about a hundred yards down the street! 200 people charge the 20 Nazis, who run like they have never run before. The police vans have blocked off the street a little further down. The march speeds up moving towards them. Rocks and bottles smash down upon the front windows and they start to back up slowly down the street. Charge! A few hundred protesters from the front attack the police cars and chase them further down the street. Oh no, it's a trap—police vans have been waiting in a street off the main road. "PULL BACK!" Everyone starts to run back, but the police capture about 70 people—mostly bystanders, press, and some young kids.

The news shows the police losing control of the situation. My favorite clip shows the chief of operations telling an interviewer that everything is under control while people are screaming in his face that he should get the fuck out of their neighborhood and explosions are going off in the background.

They bragged of this as a great success on the evening news, though afterwards they were not able to convict any of the people caught in this maneuver.

Barricades now! The cops keep driving straight through them, so set them on fire. Block the streets to the main road. Bounce cars out into the road. They are not going to catch any of us in a trap with that tactic again. Check out the graveyard along Jagtvej. Break the locks. Damn, there are a lot of cops in there. Police dogs. No good. Move back a little. Stash the bags. Get out the map. OK, two construction sites nearby. Three parks. Remember, in the back of every block of buildings there are big trash containers. Let's get them out. Bottle recycling container: tilt it, get it open. Who has the screwdriver? Dig out the dirt around the paving stones. Let's get them out there. Get some crates and shopping carts from that supermarket. OK. We can get through the blocks *here* and *here*. This building is locked, but X has a key. Down this street, just ring the doors, people hate the pigs here—they will help us.

Can't wait until it gets dark.

The protest has been fighting the police back and forth for some hours now. Bouncing cars out onto the road is a great way to block off the street—but if tear gas is fired or people leave to go fight somewhere else, the cops just bounce the cars back and regain control of the street. People have started to set the cars on fire to prevent this. They may have 25 police vans, but they only have a couple fire trucks—and those have to be guided by police vans, and they can't do anything until people are gone.

They want us off the street. They have started shooting tear gas at every crowd of more than 20 people. On our way back to our bags, we are hit by a huge cloud of tear gas. No time for maps. We can't run since we can't see. We dive into a courtyard behind a building—the gate is locked. We can hear the cops exiting their vehicles. A door opens a few meters from us: "In here," a man says. In this part of town you can almost always trust people, as most people living here really hate the police.

We crawl through the doorway into a basement. All around us people are lying on the floor with tears in their eyes and gas in their lungs. Break out the lemon water, pass it around. It helps a bit. We start to breathe again. After ten

minutes, the guy leads us through the basement and into the courtyard. "Use these," he says, pointing to the trash containers. We peek out of the gate at the main street: the cops are further down the street—busy trying to get away from a huge crowd! Into the streets with the containers. People everywhere. The containers are set on fire. From where we are standing now, we can see more than five burning barricades. We need a break. We go back and get our bags, then head for the park. We need to get something to drink, rest for a while, and make plans.

Constant sirens, exploding tear gas grenades, fireworks being shot back. Back onto the streets. Fires everywhere. Flashing lights. It's getting late. Tomorrow another protest is planned. We start to head back. All the streets connecting to the main street have flaming barricades and burning cars in them. We heard rumors that the fighting has spread to other parts of the city to draw the police away from Nørrebro. At Christiania, about a thousand people have built barricades and are now battling police. We need more information. Back to the house. Phones, internet, television. Constant updates; the news shows the police losing control of the situation. My favorite clip shows the chief of operations telling an interviewer that everything is under control while people are screaming in his face that he should get the fuck out of their neighborhood and explosions are going off in the background. We hear that people from all over the country are on their way. The protest tomorrow could be even bigger than the one today.

We go dumpster diving to get something to eat; we hear constant sirens and explosions from the other side of the railroad tracks while we visit our favorite dumpsters. We get back, quickly cook up a meal, and eat. We can't stay here, we have to go see what's going down. We check up on friends to see who has been arrested and who is still at large. Oh no—some of our friends were on watch as they stormed the house this morning, so a few of ours have been arrested.

We hop on our bikes and ride the short distance to the Nørrebro train station at the end of the street. Even all the way down at this end of the street there are burning barricades. We park our bikes behind a building. The cops are once again driving up and down the street at top speed



to confuse people. It's not really working. We get some information from people coming down the street: further up, a group of several hundred people is trying to reach Ungdomshuset, and is fighting the cops close to Runddelen. Look out for undercover cops—they roam the streets in large groups. Luckily for us, those bastards are usually easy to spot. There are people everywhere. Many have come to see what is going on, and since it's Thursday, also known as Little Friday, there are lots of drunk people out. They have quickly learned that the police only race back and forth, so they've joined in building barricades, throwing rocks, and bouncing cars.

The police are mostly at Runddelen square, trying to fight off the many groups trying to get there. We have to take the backstreets. Every street we pass has burning cars and barricades in it or firefighters trying to put them out—but not many police. We turn off the street lights as we advance by kicking the light posts so they go out—we might need to hide. We spot about 50 people running around the corner with three police vans close behind. *In here!* We have this building marked as having an unlocked gate into the courtyard. Everyone inside. Get out a bike lock: gate is locked. The cops come running but they can't get in. The tool they need to cut the lock is in a special van that is nowhere around. "Shit!" the cop at the gate yells. Someone throws a bottle at the gate; the cop shrieks and runs back to the van with his colleagues. They drive off. They might try to get around the building. Let's go.

We don't get far before we spot a group of people sitting on benches at the far end of the courtyard. Some of them have gotten up to see who we are, and we see they're holding clubs and baseball bats. "Too bad—it's not the cops," one of them says. These guys had locked three out of four gates and were waiting for police to enter the courtyard so they could beat them up. They help us out through the back of the building and out onto the street again. People have changed clothes.

The street is dark. We head for the main road. There we go. More than a thousand people have reclaimed a large part of the main street between two barricades too big for the police vans to smash through. Banners supporting Ungdomshuset hang from windows, people are holding their ground, defending the barricades with pieces of pavement every time a police van comes too close. The police have changed tactics: instead of driving really fast up and down the street, they've now retreated to just defending the Runddelen square.

After hours, the fighting seems to have died out a bit. People share stories from the day, affinity groups huddle up, there is a people's kitchen in the middle of the street. We help gather rocks by the barricades, handing out sweets we found in the dumpsters earlier. Someone is jumping around on a barricade that is not yet burning—on a unicycle! We pass out information about the info points to everyone we hear speaking languages other than Danish. We start to head back to our bikes, turning off the street lights as we go. Almost every backstreet still has burning cars and

barricades; not many police down here. As I lay down with the TV still on, there is a special bulletin: police have been fought back outside Christiania. Damn, I can't sleep, I wish I was there. The activist news ticker is constantly updated on the computer. I finally fall asleep.

Friday

Get up. We eat and talk about yesterday. We all have things to do this afternoon before the big protest this evening. On the television, the police chief of operations tells us that everything is now under control, hundreds have been arrested, he thinks people have given up. Oh my, if he only knew. They show scenes of burnt cars, bourgeois citizens talking about how horrible it was with big smiles on their faces. They loved it, you can see it in their eyes: finally something happened. I have to help out by the info point this afternoon and help out with the internet update afterwards. We plan to meet up later. Police are still everywhere. They look tired. The theme for today's protest is "follow the green flag." I can't wait.

I take the bus, and I can't help smiling every time the bus hits a bump in the road from where one of yesterday's burning barricades left a deep scar in the asphalt. I hear amazing tales at the info point. Dozens of people were unarrested last night, even more made a run for it with their hands cuffed behind their backs with plastic strips. Three or four police vans were damaged by upside down benches with their legs at an angle. Cement in the exhaust pipes of other police vans. I help Food Not Bombs prepare dinner for thousands of people from all over the country and the rest of the world.

I meet up with my group at Sankt Hans Torv, not far from where Ungdomshuset is. We talk about the events that took place here in 1993, when the police fired 113 shots at unarmed protesters after a rigged second vote to begin the European Union. As we turn the corner, we can't believe our eyes: we are a half an hour early, and the square is already filled with people. Police vans are everywhere down every backstreet. We share a beer; I brought some food from the kitchen for my friends.

5 pm. The square is not big enough to hold all the people that have arrived. The protest van is playing music. Suddenly, plain clothes cops are trying to arrest someone wearing a mask. They get bottles thrown at them and quickly make their escape. Police vans start to move in. Tear gas—plenty of it. Part of the crowd pulls back a bit; folks with kids are helped down the only backstreet without police in it and are given lemon water. The police van closest to the square is starting to move forward when a brave soul hurls a molotov at the front windshield. Two more follow soon after. More gas. Rocks and bottles hit every van in sight. Bottles full of paint hit the police vans in an attempt to blind them. Even more tear gas grenades go off above the crowd. We run into the surrounding streets. There's the green flag. Let's go. Towards the main street. If the cops thought the gas would

make people give up and go home, they have another thing coming. Some people have scattered into the smaller streets behind the main street; we are in the main part of the protest that remains as we turn out into the main street.

The second we get to the main street, a barricade of huge trash cans, a few bikes, and two benches turned upside down is built to block the police from attacking the back of the protest. We bounce two cars out onto the road just before we reach the main street. We walk towards Ungdomshuset. We can see it behind the trees of the cemetery just next to it. It's right there, just behind those 500 police officers with helmets and batons at the corner of the street. We hear an explosion nearby. Is it gas? No, must have been fireworks or a car set on fire. More police vans speed in down at the corner. They know if we get past them, the house is ours again. The protest stops just in front of the police line. They are wearing gas masks. BOOM! Gas fills the streets. So do rocks from the pavement. Screwdriver between the stones of the sidewalk. Dig up the dirt; when one stone is removed, every other stone can be picked up. Folk science passed down for generations. Masks on. We knew it wasn't going to be easy. Someone spots plain clothes police inside 7-11. They always guard those fucked up shops. Rocks shatter the windows. More gas. People start to run. Cops move in. Let's go!

We run back a bit. Just as we pass a building, a woman in her forties pops her head out of the gate to the courtyard. "In here," she says. Furniture that has been thrown out and about six garbage containers. Furniture into the

containers—go, go. Out on the street. We smile and thank the woman for helping. "Give 'em hell boys," she says before closing the gate again. A simple lighter won't set this ablaze. Two people who helped get the stuff out on the street run to the next 7-11 down the street. "Be careful, check for cops!" we yell after them. The store has boards over every window but is still open. If someone steals a bottle of flammable liquid tonight no cops are going to come stop them. There are people everywhere. Mostly protesters, but also a lot of people using the riots as a night on the town. People nearby cheer as the flames ignite the living-room-themed barricade. We need to find a larger and tighter group of people so we can do what we came here for and take back Ungdomshuset.

Blaagards Plads, a square in the middle of social project housing—there we go. More than a thousand people have gathered here, burning barricades with flames reaching up three stories in the air. We snatched a few bike chains earlier. Time to turn out the street lights. After a few attempts, the bike chain wraps around the wires on the pole. Sparks. Darkness. Here come the cops. The van stops, the door opens, and more than twenty rocks hit it. The door closes. "Don't let them get out to fire gas," someone yells. People move forward. Let's get them out of here. More vans arrive. Same deal. The cops drive a bit down the road and turn to try to flank us. In this part of town, we have kids with cellular phones on every corner, so we are constantly updated on where the cops are, as it is shouted out whenever someone gets a call. We pass on the information in English,



My heart skips a beat when I take in the view: there are barricades burning everywhere, all over the city.

calling out directions in place of street names. They can't get through the end of the street we're on, so we head back as the cops try to get up to the other end of the road. As the first van turns the corner up the street, a molotov hits the street right in front of it. It stops just long enough for rocks to start flying. They back off. No gas yet. A lot of the locals have no interest in taking back the house; they want to stay and fight the cops here. Fair enough. By yelling, we gather a few hundred people that want to try to take back Ungdomshuset. Where is everyone else? Some think people have gathered in Folkets Park ("People's Park") just on the other side of the buildings next to us. Some think they are out in the streets blocking them off, in smaller groups.

Let's go. First Folkets Park. Sure enough, a big crowd has taken hold here. Streets are blocked by burning barricades and people are making plans around a big fire in the middle of the dark park. We can't go through the cemetery—earlier today there were hundreds of cops hiding in there, some with police dogs. All the gates are locked and we need to move a lot of people fast if we are to have a chance. No good. What's left? There are the main streets on either side of the cemetery, with a lot of cops in them; their tactic is still to speed up and down the streets and shoot gas at crowds of people. The backstreets then. The lights are off in most of them. There are a lot of places to hide and escape through, and hopefully other people there as well. So far, we have mostly seen people building barricades and defending them when the cops come rather than gathering to try to take back the house.

Off we go. We pass the main street. Six or seven burning barricades have sprung up since we were last here. Down the back streets. We meet smaller groups of people; most are doing their own thing and have no interest in joining us. We lose some people that want to stay behind, hoping for a larger group to show up. We need more people. No cops here. We can hear their sirens out on the main street as we move through the darkness. A trail of bounced cars and hasty barricades appears behind us as we move. We get to the other side of the Runddelen square right next to Ungdomshuset. Still no sign of the several thousand people that were in the protest when it started. Well, there are people

everywhere, but not in a large group. Here police are using a different tactic: they drive their vans down the street, and when they get close to a large group they jump out and start to run towards them. Then people start to run—that is, at least the first couple times. We discover that they are not really doing anything but running a bit, then returning to their vans.

No gas so far. We hope that they haven't run out. Last time that happened, in 1993, they started shooting people instead. Still no sign of the crowd—until we get a call about people gathering back where we just came from. Damn. We hold a meeting in the middle of the street, mostly with people we've never met before. We share our information, as we've noticed that police are no longer driving up and down the street but instead have positioned themselves at Runddelen next to Ungdomshuset. In case some of the people we are meeting with are cops, we are all masked; some help out translating the meeting into English for the many activists from outside the country.

We decide to take the direct route towards the place we just came from, hoping that the people gathered there are starting to move towards us from the other end of the main street. The cops have parked their cars front to front blocking the street; at least they won't suddenly come speeding towards us. A few people stay at the corners of the streets we pass on our way to the main street, in case there are other cop cars trying to creep up behind us. We're getting closer. BOOM! That was the gas. The wind is at our backs, so since they shot it over us it has no effect. I climb a street sign to see if there are people moving in from the other side of the police line. No luck. Now what? The cops outnumber us big time. From where we stand we can see some cops starting to throw something at us. They have been known to throw rocks before. But as their small tear gas hand grenades goes off, we know this is not the case. No escaping the gas this time.

Hard to breathe, no eyesight. We know they have more than one kind. This kind is really bad. Back up. Stay together. People help the ones that were gassed the worst. The cops are staying put; guess they just thought we got too close. Time out. Breathe easy. Rinse with lemon water.

We need to find more people. Don't use phones. Some people want to go back to other rally points. We need a top view of the city. We find a scaffold down a street and climb to a rooftop. My heart skips a beat when I take in the view: there are barricades burning everywhere, all over the city. The blue flashing lights are now only down at the square near Ungdomshuset. We can see people everywhere, but no larger crowd prepared to follow the original plan of taking back the house. We share a beer and a cigarette here on top of the world. No one says much. We just take in the sight. Never before in my life have I seen something as beautiful as this. We are all tired. We head home for the night.

The TV is on. Tonight people took back the streets all over the city. At the free town Christiania, the police were beaten back with rocks, paint bombs, and huge burning barricades. As I fall asleep, I think of my friends who were inside the house. I hope they are OK. The TV showed some images of unconscious people being carried out of Ungdomshuset yesterday by anti-terror police as they evicted the house.

Saturday and Sunday

I wake up late. My phone is ringing. The cops have attacked ten places looking for foreign activists. They kicked in the door and tear gassed the legal "Bumzen" squat. More than a hundred arrested. The total count is more than 600 now. The cops lost a lot of police vans last night, so now they have brought in extra vans from Sweden and Holland and extra police from the entire country. Last night the police really lost control. There was a chance—if only we had been able to stick together and take back the house. It seems the police are really organizing towards not letting people take back the streets today. All through the morning, we get more and more news. The police are now driving around the streets in masks and arresting anyone they think looks

like an activist. We continue following the updates. So many people arrested, so many more cops. It doesn't look good. Early in the evening, we head towards Folkets Park. We get a few kilometers up the main street, and by that time we have already seen two people pulled into police vans. There are plain clothes cops everywhere. We decide that we don't want to take the chance right now. We exit the main street, move across the railroad tracks, and head back home. Unless we know we have a gathering of some kind to go to, we will not go anywhere. The police are pissed about getting their asses kicked last night, so tonight they take it out on everybody they see. Some political parties want to put the army on the streets.

Saturday night brings a few rocks and barricades, more arrests, but nothing like the previous two days. Sunday brings a strange calm in the city. Images of charred cars, smashed windows, and broken police vans are all over the news. I return to help out at the info point. The stories people have to tell really scare me. The leader of Faderhuset went to inspect Ungdomshuset. Cops have already been tearing out windows and things from inside the building. The sect has decided to tear it down, and the demolition begins. The square nearby is filled with people crying, the cemetery wall has "REVENGE" written all over it.

Six Months Later

When the building lay in ruins, everyone agreed that that was just the beginning. And it has been. Since the eviction, there have been weekly protests demanding a new house, and at the beginning of September, on the six month anniversary of the eviction, the entire city was hit by riots again. The movement has exploded in numbers, and now counts thousands from all over the country and the world.

Nothing is over. It has only just begun.



Interview with a Participant: The Organizing behind the Riots

Describe the organizing that went into the defense of Ungdomshuset. Was it centralized or decentralized? What was the security culture around it?

First of all, this is my version. Since the meetings are still going on and need secrecy now more than ever, I'm going to be very general. It's kind of a touchy subject, but here goes.

The organization grew out of the weekly Monday meetings, where most things are decided in large groups. They used to be mostly about who would handle the sound system and stand at the entrance for concerts, things like that. But as the situation got worse and worse, they ended up being almost only about the coming eviction and how to deal with it.

Many groups used the Monday meetings to present ideas and ask for help or advice. In the months leading up to the eviction, "touchy subjects" were brought up in the meetings by masked people, since the press had sneaked in a few times.

The Monday meetings are closed meetings, in that you don't talk about what is going on at the meetings unless it's something really trivial. Such things are never spoken of on the phone or online. This is a level of security that has been generally agreed upon after years of experience. So the organization is closed, but still open to most people. Sometimes smaller groups meet separately, too.

The Monday meetings are still going strong now without Ungdomshuset.

Were there conflicts over tactics? How were they handled?

There were no conflicts inside the group itself. Everyone pretty much agreed upon

the line that was chosen. The disagreements that occurred were handled in the Monday meetings. These sometimes took all night, when there were heavy decisions on the agenda.

What can you say about the defense strategy?

Plans were made for several scenarios of what might follow the eviction. I can't get into the plans themselves or how people were organized inside or outside the house, as many are still on trial.

No one thought the house could actually be defended—everyone agreed that if the cops wanted to get in, they would get in. All those who chose to stay and defend the house could do was buy people outside a little time. The fortifications were the best they could have been; they would have held off a "normal" eviction attempt long enough for people to show up and fight off the police, but it was the biggest joint police and military action in Danish history.

The attempt to take the house back after the eviction was close. But there were more people distracting police and defending barricades than trying to get to the house. On the night after the eviction, the police lost all mobility for some hours and had to retreat to the square beside Ungdomshuset to keep it from being taken back. More "official" organization towards retaking the house after the eviction might have had another result.

One German organizer, when asked whether the defense of Ungdomshuset helped create momentum for the G8 protests, claimed that in fact the eviction was met with so much resistance because of the mobilization building up to the G8. What do you think about the connection between the two?

Any connection is news to me. The only connection I could imagine is that there might have been more people from outside Denmark to resist the eviction, although it was not my experience. My guess is that there were more people from outside Denmark at the big protest on December 16, 2006, the date originally scheduled for eviction, than during the eviction itself. There were many protesters from outside the country, but the vast majority were from Denmark.

What kind of preparation led up to the eviction? Why do you think so many people got involved? Is there new momentum for resistance in Denmark now?

The movement around free spaces has exploded in form and numbers, but as far as I know it was not a planned event or strategy that got people involved. It was as if people had been waiting for a cause, and the threat of eviction was some kind of spark.

In my opinion a lot of different factors contributed to the resistance reaching the scale it did. Denmark has a long history of social democratic rule. This in itself is not a good thing, but it did provide a sort of political vacuum, a standstill that was ended when the liberals came into power along with the most racist political party this country has ever seen. For years now, they have cracked down on alternative subcultures and spaces, "civil rights," schools, welfare institutions, and immigrants and asylum seekers. This created a volatile social situation.

Ungdomshuset had been used by thousands of people over its twenty-four-year existence. My older sister helped squat houses in the '80s and was one of the people who received the keys to the building. I've spent many years of my life eating, socializing, and playing music there.

So the building has been important to a great many people—and even though many of them now work high-paying jobs or have moved on in their lives, they never forgot that part of their lives. This was the majority of protestors: people from around sixteen to their early forties who had a direct connection to the house or a political opposition to the eviction. Another segment of the defenders were there not so much to protect Ungdomshuset as to get back at the racist and intolerant state and police—and they fought tooth and nail, too.

Denmark has a few freetowns, such as Christiania; they aren't totally free, but they are self-controlled and self-organized. There is a connection between Christiania and Ungdomshuset, a sort of common counterculture. And even more people have a connection to Christiania than to Ungdomshuset, due to the fact that for many years marijuana was practically legal there. This is sad in that self-organization should be reason enough to form a con-

nection with the place, but it's better than nothing. The point is, there exists a popular understanding of and respect for places like Christiania and Ungdomshuset. Don't get me wrong—most people are raised to work, buy, and die here as well—but it's something.

People gained a lot of experience in the year leading up to the eviction. There was a series of pirate parties, in which abandoned buildings were squatted for a night to party in; every time, the police showed up after some hours and riots broke out. Many of the protests in the year leading up to the eviction had resulted in the same thing—so many people had learned, firsthand, a great deal about the slow and heavy arm of the law.

In the months leading up to the eviction, a festival was held that included skillshares such as how to build tripods and how to move cars into the road by "bouncing" them. I'm pretty sure it was an American that taught the workshop on tripods; one was used in a squatting action this past weekend, in fact. As for the cars, when people saw that the police just got out of their vans and bounced them back, they started setting them on fire too.

Since the eviction, there is a protest every week. Just this weekend, hundreds of people went to stop the annual Nazi protest for Rudolf Hess, and hundreds more squatted a building two days in a row. The fight has become a battle of resources, and the police are having a really hard time. Some days ago the spokesmen of the police unions said that they are having serious problems maintaining a constant state of readiness. Cops are having their days off revoked, and there are strict laws against that. They are also having problems keeping up with the massive workforce needed to control the weekly protests and the late-night actions organized by text messaging.

The paper ran an article the other day based on a police investigation, stating that the movement for a new Ungdomshuset and the anti-authoritarian counterculture has exploded since the eviction—so now it is thousands of people, whereas the police originally had believed that the movement would die out in a few months.

APPENDIX: Implications for US Anarchists

Could anything like the defense of Ungdomshuset ever happen here? Why do people overseas get to have all the fun?

The answer is too complex to discuss in these pages—one might start by comparing the continuity of social movements in Europe to the disconnection between generations in the USA, not to mention the relative harshness of police repression. Despite these differences, we can still draw some conclusions from our Danish comrades' experiences.

Cultivate Confrontational Subcultures

Those who see the radicalization that occurred in Denmark over the past couple years as a good thing must acknowledge the role subculture played in setting the stage. It would be impossible to imagine the eviction riots without the preceding decades of Danish squatting, punk rock, hip hop, and youth culture. The conventional critique of radical subcultures is that they isolate dissent, but in this case they seem to have provided fertile soil for it to germinate, ultimately catalyzing an upheaval that extended beyond their frontiers. Perhaps this was possible because the subcultures in question draw the resources that sustain them from their confrontations with capitalism, rather than from their participation in it—there's a big difference between do-it-yourself punk shows in squatted buildings and would-be rock stars playing in for-profit clubs.

An idle critic might charge that by defining the terms of the struggle, the subcultures of the participants ended up limiting the scope of the uprising. This may be so, but people who have not had the empowering experience of using direct action in a specific struggle are unlikely to attempt to use it to change the whole of society all at once. Limited conflicts like this one enable people to develop a sense of their own power so they will eventually be ready to fight for more ambitious goals.

Maintain Institutions

The Ungdomshuset story also shows the potential power of sustained radical projects in which people can develop

common reference points and trust. Long-running autonomous spaces such as Ungdomshuset can offer positive examples of what we're fighting for; many people find these more motivating than purely oppositional struggles. Between increasing reliance on the internet and a penchant for one-off events, US anarchists often underestimate the importance of having consistent physical spaces to gather in; when such spaces embody generations of radical history, they can be incredibly focusing and inspiring.

Direct Action and Diversity of Tactics

The defenders of Ungdomshuset did an excellent job of maintaining a broad array of options for those who wanted to join in. There were nonviolent marches, decentralized militant actions, and multiple organizing groups, and by and large these complemented each other. This meant that people from many generations and walks of life were able to participate without getting distracted by conflicts over tactics.

The success they had in delaying the eviction and forcing the mayor to invite them to the negotiating table shows once again that direct action is the most efficient and effective way to exert leverage on governments and other oppressive forces. By standing up for themselves, the occupants gave their claims to Jagtvej 69 a legitimacy they would never otherwise have had in the public eye. Had they politely asked to keep the building, they would have been politely refused; had they inquired of the general public whether it was OK to defend it with militant tactics, they would have been urged to submit to the rule of law, however unjust. Only by presenting militant defense of the building as a foregone conclusion were they able to compel others to take them seriously. In doing so, they bought themselves more time to make their case to the world, and forced the bureaucrats to figure the tremendous costs of a violent eviction into the city budget. This had the effect of winning public support for a peaceable, just solution to the conflict, rather than scaring away potential supporters the way hard-line pacifists allege militant tactics always do.

Seeking leverage on governments doesn't necessarily legitimize government itself—so long as such leverage is obtained by direct action and would-be leaders are not permitted to hijack it, this is simply a survival strategy in a world in which governments still hold a lot of power. We can halt the destructive effects of hierarchical power only to the extent to which we are able to manifest a horizontal counter-power; the more we do so, the more freedom we win for ourselves and others. If the riots in Copenhagen have not yet resulted in the squatting movement obtaining another building, they certainly provide a deterrent for other European governments considering whether to evict social centers.

In the end, the police announced that they were totally overextended and exhausted—not from any one conflict, but from maintaining a perpetual state of alert—and the mayor offered to open negotiations about turning over another building to the squatting movement. That is to say—even in one of the wealthiest capitalist countries, a direct-action-based social movement that plays its cards right can win a war of attrition against the forces of repression and compel the state to literally cede territory.

Act Locally

The battle for Ungdomshuset offers a localized example of the kind of mass confrontations usually associated with summit protests, yet it lacked many of the shortcomings critics cite in the latter. Summit protests often seem to occur in a vacuum, drawing people from disconnected communities to participate in a spectacle that doesn't directly contribute to ongoing local efforts; in contrast, most of those who threw rocks and set fires in Copenhagen were building relationships that will continue for years to come, and contributing to an ongoing project that was not over when the smoke cleared. It is impossible to separate events like the G8 protests in Germany from local struggles such as the defense of Ungdomshuset. Individual mass mobilizations are only possible because of the skills and motivations people develop in continuous local struggles, and only make sense in the broader context they offer.

Organize Globally

The organizers astutely used international support for Ungdomshuset to create a situation that radicalized local participants. By inviting anarchists from all around the

world for the march on December 16, they succeeded in setting a tone for pitched confrontation that carried over to the eviction the following spring*—even though fewer internationals were present then to swell the numbers of avowed anarchists. Just as the role Ungdomshuset itself played in igniting widespread social struggle shows that the cultivation of subculture can sometimes catalyze resistance, this demonstrates that radicals can sometimes create an environment conducive to generalized revolt, despite being quarantined in the “radical ghetto.” This is the most worthwhile role for mass mobilizations that draw anarchists from far and wide: they should demonstrate what is possible in such a way that locals will try out those possibilities on their home turf.

North American anarchists should study how to do this ourselves. Not every engagement with the powers that be will set off a chain reaction like the one in Denmark last year—but each one is a lit match tossed out into the world, and some of them are bound to start fires.

* The strategy of raising expectations with a series of escalating actions has been used effectively in the United States as well—for example, in 2005, in the buildup to the anti-G8 solidarity march in the Bay Area.



EDITOR'S POSTSCRIPT

The second time I visited Ungdomshuset, back in 1999, we arrived early, long before the show was to begin. My friend and I sat in the candlelit bar, listening uncomprehendingly to the squatters' weekly meeting. At one point, the grizzled veteran nearest us noticed that the candle beside him had burned down to the mouth of the glass bottle that held it. We watched as he absentmindedly took a new candle and held the base of it over the sputtering flame until the wax was soft. Then he turned it around, lit the wick with the last dim flame of the old candle, and pushed the softened end of the new candle into the mouth of the bottle.

It was a simple, distracted gesture, but the two of us watched in awe. We didn't speak of it at the time, but years later we discovered that both of us had experienced it as a profound image of renewal.

Ungdomshuset is dust now, a vacant lot. From its ashes can rise equally amazing autonomous spaces and social struggles and adventure stories—even here on the other side of the Atlantic, dear reader, if you so desire.





dinner party at Ungdomshus, 10.25.06



kitchen, 10.21.06



backyard, K-town festival, 6.22.06



housecleaning, 10.14.06



packed show, 11.2.06



in-house pirate radio, 1.23.07



bike wars at K-town festival, 6.22.06



support demonstration, 9.23.06



barricade, 9.24.06



police attack, 9.24.06



streetfighting, 9.24.06



support demonstration, 12.14.06

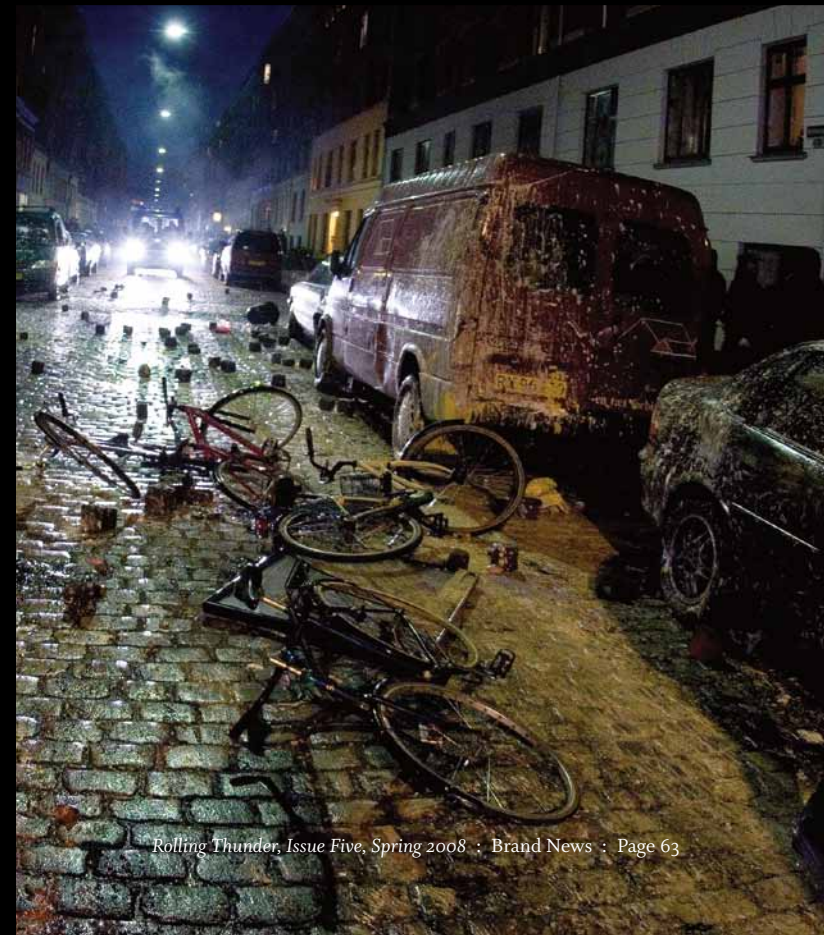


militant march, 12.16.06



< anti-eviction riots, March 2007 >

confrontation, 12.16.06





Once a year, the self-styled rulers of Germany, Italy, France, Britain, Russia, Japan, Canada, and the US meet to strategize and pose for the cameras. In 2007, the summit was in a tiny town on the German coast, surrounded by miles of fortifications, soldiers, and police—all the same, tens of thousands of anarchists and other troublemakers showed up from around the world to shatter the illusion of consensus.

Can't Stop the Chaos

Autonomous Resistance to the 2007 G8 in Germany

by Alex Trocchi and Onto,
with accounts from various anonymists



ground zero, 5.22.07



Hamburg, May 28: Preludes to Summits

Finally, something was happening.

After linking arms in flanks for five hours straight in a huge, permitted march, we were getting antsy. This was the first major demonstration in the buildup to the G8 summit in Heiligendamm, and everyone wanted to start it off right. The city of Hamburg needed to send a message to the world that they had the “violent demonstrators” under control. The protesters wanted to tear the city apart, to show the G8 leaders that they were not welcome and that anyone who tries to host them will have to pay. With a thousand black-clad anarchists in the front and thousands of others behind, the tension was thick. Screaming “fight the system, fight the state, fight capitalism, fight G8,” the demonstrators were not willing to compromise their vision or momentum. But who would provoke who first? Would the cops use the water cannons? Would the anarchists break through their lines and go off the script?

For two years the German autonomous movement and the Dissent Network in particular organized from the USA to Turkey for one week of action. The stakes had never been higher: the “War on Terror” had cast a deathly pall over the worldwide struggle against capitalism and the state, but at the 2007 G8, anarchists and autonomists hoped to seize the stage of history by scoring a decisive victory against capital.

The modern incarnation of the Autonom* in Germany

*“Autonom*en” is the German word for participants in autonomous movements, including Autonomous Marxists (see this issue’s glossary of terms) and anarchists; one can trace the European roots of these movements back to Italy in the 1970s (see this issue’s reviews).

is distinctly anarchist, mostly young, and quite, quite punk. Even though the movement had been in disarray over the preceding years, the arrival of the G8, combined with the police raids in early May on anti-G8 centers of activity, united the usually divided and overly self-critical autonomist movement. To the chagrin of the police, the raids also backfired in the popular press, and most of the media, and even much of the public, came over to the side of the dissidents. Furthermore, in “Red” Hamburg, the home of insurrections, pirates, and the world-renowned anti-fascist football league St. Pauli, it is hard to distinguish locals from the Black Bloc in the streets.

Move swiftly. Stop. Fight a bit. Grab something. Then run. Turn around. Watch out for the Snatch Squad. Which ones are they? Wearing all black with red diamonds on their back. Damn, there they are. They’re gonna try and grab us. Move! But who are those pigs? Don’t worry, it’s just the green team. Green team? Yeah, green uniforms, they’re like the national guard. They won’t arrest you, they’ll just tussle a bit. And them? Who? The darker green and dark blue. Oh them, well, they’re here to stop you. Be careful—Shhhhhhh. What? Be quiet, they’re looking for us. OK, hold it... hold it... NOW!

The police were nervous, and rightfully so. For months, cars belonging to German officials related to the G8 had been burned in the streets. As the mobilization got going, internationals were streaming into the well-run convergence center in Hamburg, the two-decade-running squat Rote Flora. The police wanted nothing more than to release their inner fascists and ruthlessly clear the streets of all protesters. But due to factors such as public opinion and

their brutality backfiring on them in the courts, the police could not simply beat protesters without pretext. Instead, they could only vent their frustration with an anal-retentive attention to detail about the smallest of the rules regarding banner size, demonstrators masking up, and so on: like a hybrid of the S.S. and school-crossing guards, they stopped demonstrations for up to thirty minutes or more for the most minor infractions of their rules.

This causes almost any march in Germany, including the march in Hamburg, to be an exercise in frustration, a chess game in which both sides try to bend, but not break, the rules through a strict process of negotiation—that is, at least until breaking the rules is advantageous. While marching, German anarchists more or less engage the police in careful negotiations until the permitted demonstration gets as close to the desired location as possible—such as a financial district, a fascist demonstration, or in this case the EU-ASEM Summit meeting in the town hall—and then all bets are off. After that, they often charge police lines, attempting to escape off the official route as a bloc or break into small affinity groups to build barricades and attack police cars—which is precisely what the march in Hamburg did.

As the melee between protestors and cops spread down the street, people started to hop a small fence into the parking lot of the soccer stadium. Soccer in Hamburg is a big deal; St. Pauli, the local team, is world-renowned for drawing some of the most anti-fascist hooligans in the world. I looked around and saw that we were in an enclosed space with few exits. It seemed only a matter of time before the police trapped us in this parking lot and beat us until we could be mass-arrested—so I hopped the fence into the stadium.

I’m short, so the climb was a little difficult, and I fell ungracefully over the fence—but when I looked up I found myself in a German teen anarchist’s dream-come-true: I’d escaped a police riot into the caring arms of the St. Pauli soccer team! Imagine running around Seattle during the WTO protests, air full of tear gas and the anguish of protestors being beaten by police, and opening a door to find yourself safely inside Rage Against the Machine’s practice studio.

The team was finishing up a daily soccer practice when they were interrupted by my hooded, masked fall from the heavens. We looked at each other in silence before I asked... “ummm, can I stay here for a bit?”

“Of course—would you like something to eat?” They introduced themselves to me and told me to make myself at home. So I took off my mask and chowed down on their vegetable platters.

At the end of the march, Black Bloc affinity groups rambaged throughout the town, fighting police and wrecking cars; when the police chased everyone back to the convergence center at Rote Flora, even the locals began fighting back against the hated riot police. A giant banner reading “Total Freedom”—as opposed to any supposed freedom or democracy the State can offer—had sailed above the march. At the end, there were eighty-five arrests, but the rest of us were totally free.

They’ve surrounded the Rote Flora. What? The convergence center, you know, that huge squat. Are they going in? Not likely, I think they’ll get a beating if they try. Barricades are going up, let’s get behind them. The water cannons are coming out. Well, move. Down this alley! OK. Wait, are we all together? Close, too close. I know. We were gonna go back and get you. What? That’s

insane, they would've grabbed you too. Hey look, they're sending in more. Did they declare a state of emergency? I heard that too. Shit, there's waves and waves of them. Back to the Flora? No, it's not safe. OK, then disappear. Thousands of us in the march. Hundreds rampaging in the streets. About eighty-five arrested. Not bad for a start. No, not bad at all.

At one point in Hamburg, a police officer who had taken off his helmet and armor was caught alone outside his van as the riots drew close. In a moment reminiscent of the murder of Carlo Giuliani by a police officer at the G8 in Genoa, the officer drew his gun—but just as he raised it in the air, the back window of the van behind him exploded and he retreated. Projectiles save lives.

Rostock, June 2: Nocturnes for Capital

In 1998, at the very beginning of the so-called “anti-globalization” movement, the G8 met in Birmingham only to find themselves surrounded by 70,000 activists organized by various NGOs and a raging Reclaim the Streets party downtown. In fear, they fled Birmingham to a more tranquil manor. In 2001, the NGOs under the umbrella of the Genoa Social Forum organized a march straight to the forbidden Red Zone where the summit was taking place, and the whole city hosting that year's G8 was consumed in flames.

But the powers that be learn from their mistakes; unable to beat the demonstrators, they joined them instead, to lead them astray. In Scotland in 2005, the bizarre ménage à trois of Bono, Tony Blair, and “anti-globalization” NGOs created the “Make Poverty History” march. In this guise, they tricked the vast majority of protesters into showing up in white—the color of surrender!—and marching in a parade through the half-empty downtown of Edinburgh, far from the summit. The theme of the parade was begging the G8 leaders to take action on their behalf, the opposite of direct action. This government-organized farce was the symbolic inversion of their defeats in Birmingham and Genoa.

A mere two years later, it was no longer “Make Poverty History,” but “Make Capitalism History”—and the team colors had changed to from white to black. The march in Rostock was organized by a broad alliance of groups ranging from the Interventionist Left to ATTAC, anarchists and reformists united. In stark contrast to the “Make Poverty History” march that attempted to provide a safe and legal alternative to direct action, “Make Capitalism History” explicitly endorsed blockading the G8. The fact that popular sentiment among the protesters was in favor of direct action was a triumph of organization and outreach by the Dissent Network, and a reflection of the delegitimization of the G8 in popular imagination.

Like some strange suburban guerrilla army, the bloc gathered itself in the trees in front of the shopping center. At first, it was so small I could barely find it. After a few minutes, as I found one friend after another after another, it became clear there were thousands of us. We put on our masks—a mundane act elsewhere, but a tremendous step in Germany. In Scotland, all the white clothes had reminded me of the Scottish sheep our good shepherd, Capital, was fattening for slaughter. From the moment our black masks went up in Germany, we were not sheep but a pack of wolves.

Pointless marches are still fundamentally pointless even if they endorse direct action and encourage their entourage to stop marching and start blockading the G8. Unlike the march to the Red Zone in Genoa, this was not a march, but instead a march to an anti-capitalist rock concert featuring musicians such as Tom Morello and Die Toten Hosen. The Nazis had been planning their own “anti-G8” rally in Schwerin, but the police canceled both the Nazi event and the anti-fascist counter-protest at the last minute—so most of the Black Bloc ended up in the middle of the Rostock march.

Neither the police nor the Black Bloc seemed to be expecting anything to happen at this march, as most people had thought the street battle was going to be either later during the G8 itself or against Nazis in Schwerin. That gave the day a genuine element of surprise. Unlike Hamburg, where the police “kettled” the demonstration and contained it right up to the last minute, in this demonstration the police kept a safe distance from the march, instead massing on the streets paralleling the demonstration.

The march ends, and my elation drops into disappointment as, yet again, nothing has happened. My arms are locked with the members of my affinity group, ranging from an incredibly lanky and calm North American man to a small yet fierce Bulgarian woman. All armed with black flags, we're at least making good pictures for the spectacle. In a second, everything changes. A line of cops charges the Bloc, batons swinging. The lines in front of us turn and run, nearly trampling us. If there's one thing German anarchists are good at, it's running from cops. Our black flags are useless in the face of the cop onslaught, and a few of us throw them at the cops. Separated from the rest of the affinity group, myself and my remaining partner join the fray. More well-prepared than myself, some clever anarchists begin using chisels to tear up the paving stones. It's not what's beneath the paving stones that counts; sometimes, it's the paving stones themselves.

At the end of the demonstration, the Bloc found itself running more or less without incident into the middle of the “Make Capitalism History” concert and merging with the crowd. What precisely happened next is unclear, but an altercation broke out with one of the small squadrons of Rostock cops that were being sent in at seemingly random intervals to maintain order. The tactic of keeping the main forces hidden on the side streets served the purpose of protecting downtown Rostock from being destroyed, but failed utterly in controlling the Bloc.



Every time a squadron of Polizei were sent in, little clusters of black would form and move towards the squadron, like the attraction of iron filings to a magnet. When the squadron attempted to arrest someone or attack the crowd, the clusters of the Black Bloc would rain cobblestones and empty glass bottles upon the cops. The cops then blindly rushed into the crowd, resulting in the Bloc dispersing rapidly, a reversal of their earlier magnetic attraction to the cops. Then the bloc would slowly reform to rain projectiles onto the cops until they retreated, unable to weather such a torrent of rocks and empty beer bottles. After all, the riot was at a rock concert!

Scattered, the Bloc slowly regroups at the kiosk to prepare for a second charge. My partner is exhausted, but we rush forward with the Bloc, excited by the chance to try yet another attack. Around me, I hear the sounds of windows smashing. Then, someone—a civil cop, I think—screams “Police!” The crowd panics, and in the chaos we lose each other. I look desperately for my partner. No luck. I begin pelting the cops with glass bottles, in attempt to drive them back so we can rejoin the rest of the Bloc. Gotta love German beer, or at least the bottles.

Did the crowd reject the Black Bloc, pushing them out and sacrificing them to the cops? While some pacifists tried to “de-escalate” the situation by raising their hands in front of the cops, for the most part the crowd was angered by the police and merged with the Black Bloc. As the bands played on, one singer got up and said over the microphone “This is not the spirit of Scotland, this is the spirit of Genoa!”—a statement of somewhat dubious value out of context, but clearly the speaker thought this “Spirit of Genoa” was a good thing and intended to express support for those fighting the cops. Cars were overturned and set afire, cops retreated, water cannons came out, and the bands played on as the crowd repulsed line after line of police charges—this was no Bono playing to complacent crowds at Live8. This was the redemptive spirit of Genoa—the spirit of resistance in the face of state violence, spreading like a virus through a crowd everyone had expected would just listen peacefully to the bands. The battle in Rostock was a victory like the inaugural protest against the G8 in Birmingham, and the spell that had been cast in Scotland to assimilate and pacify the “anti-globalization” movement was broken.



I step around a corner and see a line of cops standing guard next to the broken windows—so I hurl a glass bottle into the face of the closest officer. My bottle leaves my hand a few seconds too late, as the cops are already beginning a charge—although I do hear the satisfying shatter of the bottle against his helmet. Panicking, I turn to run, but a baton hits the nape of my neck and I fall to the asphalt.

Batons are beating my back and legs, gloved hands twisting my fingers and joints. I wrest my joints and hands free again and again, resolving to stay put as the cops pull my head up by my hair to take my picture. After some indeterminate amount of time, I see rocks and bottles soaring overhead. Black out. Darkness. Light. Then the impossible: there are no cops on top of me! The crowd has forced them to retreat! I stand up and run at breakneck speed away from the police and into the crowd, aiming for the only safe place within reach: the deck of the Greenpeace ship parked near the waterfront. Where's my partner? Was she arrested? Hurt? Due to my reckless charge? I feel my soul collapse. Those who are not behind bars have to live with the consequences of their actions, and for the first time in my life I wish I had been caught.

Heiligendamm, June 6-7: Blockades Without End

After Genoa, the next G8 summit was moved to the literal summit of a mountain in Evian, far from the urban terrain protesters have been accustomed to since the Paris Commune. This tactic of placing the meeting in a rural location inspired a new counter-tactic: spreading the blockades across miles and miles of difficult rural terrain. The summit site was hopelessly walled off, so the idea was to block the roads leading to and from it, so reporters and other sycophants couldn't reach the gates.

Anarchy always has at least two faces: one of chaos and one of self-organization. If the streets of Hamburg and Rostock exemplified the beautiful chaos of our movement, the self-organization of Camp Reddelich showed the other. Transforming an empty field of grass next to a slaughterhouse into a thriving village in less than a week, anarchists of every stripe proved that they are capable of running their own lives without governments or capitalists, police or prisons. Antifascist, Queer, Yellow, and Internationalist barrios sprouted organically as if from the earth. Kitchens dotted the fields along with security towers, tool-making workshops, Indymedia centers, training tents, info-booths, trauma tents, anti-sexist spaces, and thousands of other tents, all providing the physical and emotional spaces for people to organize, strategize, evaluate, share, dance, and live free. This autonomous zone, mirrored by two other rural camps and multiple urban convergence centers across Germany, was the birthplace of a million secret plans.

Rural blockades require putting protesters in the countryside, so protest camps developed as a necessary prerequisite for large-scale rural direct action. In a step above the single camp at Stirling during the 2005 G8, hearkening back to





the multiple camps at the 2003 G8 in Lausanne and Annemasse, the Dissent Network and the Interventionist Left set up three different camps. The first, Camp Rostock, was nearest to the city and held innumerable communists and NGO organizations—not to mention quite a few punks too drunk to get to other camps and a few clever anarchists who wanted some cover. The second, Camp Reddelich, was the closest to the “Red Zone,” and accordingly held almost entirely anarchists. The third, Camp Wichmannsdorf, was the domain of the more traditionally non-violent anti-nuclear blockaders—though in Germany, the line between the Black Bloc and non-violent civil disobedience against nuclear weapons is thin.

Raids were a constant worry at the camp and defensive measures were prepared in case of attack: barricades of scrap wood and metal, trenches to stop police vehicles, piles of bottles and rocks. The alarm was sounded one night at 3:30 a.m. when six vans pulled up to the front entrance and police in riot gear stepped out. The night watch rang the alarm and within three minutes a large black bloc had formed at the front gate. The vans left as quickly as they’d arrived and the camp returned to sleep.

The camps were all incredibly well-functioning, with security shifts on watch-towers, self-organized canteens feeding thousands, anarchist-run bars (not serving the day before the blockades!), tents to deal with mainstream press, mobile Indymedia centers on wheels, endless conspiratorial meetings—and even showers! There was only one component missing: in the aftermath of Rostock, the alliance between the Interventionist Left and the autonomous movement started fraying, and the Dissent Network—perhaps having last minute qualms as the day of action approached—did not convene a public meeting about plans.

From the helicopters’ perspective, we must have looked quite threatening. Groups of eight to twelve all over the camp were huddling in circles, poring endlessly over topographical maps and transportation routes. Whispers circulated in thirty languages from barrio to barrio about which intersections to target, how to get there, when to move on, whether to join the official blockades or form a suicide bloc to charge the gates. The bars and kitchens swarmed with international anti-capitalists debating past summit strategies, victories and failures, similarities to the present and new challenges. How would the sixteen thousand cops respond to a direct attack on the fence? To an attack on the police themselves? Which roads are still open? How can we get there? How will we hold them? Block G8 had a plan, but the insurrectionary anarchists didn’t—or if any of them did, at least no one would discuss it publicly. Paranoia filled the air and meetings got more and more clandestine, finally to a point at which the decentralization of knowledge was almost debilitating. Fuck it, we have to try something.

Earlier rural blockades in both Evian and Gleneagles had failed because they didn’t last more than a few hours and so could not “shut down” the summit. As one popular poster in Germany put it, *Bewegen, Blockieren, Bleiben*—“Move. Block. Remain.” That critical “remain” had been left out of previous summit attempts. The strategic change was not to blockade as either mobile blocs or small groups jumping in and out of the road, as at previous summits, but to mass as many people as possible in the roads near the main entrances to Heiligendamm to blockade them in a non-violent manner, staying until the police literally dragged people off. While previous blockades had aimed for small numbers and offered virtually no training, the “Block G8” campaign returned to the mass non-violence civil disobedience that was so crucial to success in Seattle but curiously and detrimentally absent at almost all subsequent summit protests. While the pacifist nature of this approach caused many of the “more-militant-than-thou” anarchists to mock it, the simplicity and accessibility of this approach enabled thousands of untrained Germans to join in the blockades.

Due to their long history of anti-nuclear Castor blockades, the German autonomous movement—unlike autonomous movements in places like Greece and the US—is experienced both at throwing rocks and erecting peaceful blockades. Internationals were bewildered as the Autonomen changed tactics from throwing rocks to sitting in streets for the day of blockades. When Block G8 moved into action on Wednesday, the cops more or less permitted it happen, much to the surprise of all—as they had quashed

all demonstrations in the area after the riot in Rostock. Perhaps now that the G8 had officially begun, the police had to prove Germany was a civilized country without a near-fascist police force. Combined with Rostock, it was like a left punch of Black Bloc aggression followed by a right hook of colorful and effective blockades.

It wasn’t until I saw the multi-colored array of 5000 people marching in the bright green fields under a soft blue sky with helicopters above and police below that it hit me: we shouldn’t have underestimated the official blockades. Although the international anarchists and autonomists had decided against forming a militant presence at these blockades due to pressure from Block G8 organizers to remain nonviolent, there were still a number of us in black ready to throw down if necessary. As we tore through fields evading police lines, you could feel the growing excitement and power of the crowd. Breaking up into different columns to get past the police, we succeeded again and again in reaching the streets. Finally we saw it, the fence, with six layers of cops protecting it. Many hopped onto the main street and laid down immediately. The autonomous bloc started tearing down a barbed wire fence next to a forest that would serve as our escape route if necessary. The official organizers were scared and tried to dissuade us, while the media captured their sexy images. The clowns played their games, the cops stood their ground, and everyone just sat there, waiting, for days.

Since the Block G8 campaign organized openly, it’s possible that the police knew the locations of the blockades and

funneled all important delegates down another road, letting the protesters blockade the “main gates” to Heiligendamm. This raises the disturbing possibility that the G8 leaders are happy to allow the spectacle of a blockade to happen so long as it remains colorful, non-violent, and does not interrupt their actual operations. While the Block G8 plan and non-violence guidelines were mostly respected on Wednesday, on Thursday all bets were off.

Protesters swept across the fields of Heiligendamm and tried to blockade nearly every road. The day started off with a nearly comic attempt to repeat the “Suicide March” Black Bloc that was so successful at Gleneagles during the 2005 G8. Only a few hundred people, the Bloc barely got out of Camp Reddelich before being assaulted by cops and fleeing back in; in retaliation, the cops surrounded the entrance to the camp, preventing the 6 a.m. Dissent Bloc from leaving. At the same time, mostly German groups struck with a series of decentralized blockades on major roads, achieving varying degrees of success. The paranoia



At the West Gate a car carrying Russian delegates attempted to pass protesters. It was stopped and the wheels were deflated and the exhaust pipe broken. Activists then opened the trunk and removed the belongings of the delegates, just as the G8 removes the freedom of those it claims to represent. Once the trunk was opened the car drove into people, resulting in its windows being smashed.

and tight-lipped nature of the German autonomous movement left many of the internationals at the camp isolated, frustrated, and surrounded by cops, with only the all-knowing and all-seeing “Infopoint” to help them—although the Indymedia dispatch line ended up being invaluable useful for those who knew about it.

As the police left the front of the camps, the internationals formed a “rolling blockades” march that left camp at 9 a.m. In two hours they reached the gates of Heiligendamm itself, blockading the roads and using the “five fingers make a fist” strategy when confronted by the police: breaking into smaller groups and reforming on the other side of police lines. At one point, in a moment of long-overdue poetic justice, the Russian delegates were blocked by Eastern Europeans who smashed their car! By the end of the day, the blockades had so disrupted the summit that the police began clearing them with unusual ferocity, using water

cannons to shoot water mixed with tear gas. Some blockaders refused to leave and continued to resist, turning Block G8 blockades into autonomous blockades. In the end, what started as colorful blockades of clowns and pacifists gained the air of a battlefield, and what had seemed certain defeat became apparent victory.

Berlin, June 8: Anticlimax

Our hopes weren't dashed yet. The next morning our rural fun was to begin. We started early, around 3 a.m. First decision: suicide march or autonomous blockade? We chose the latter and moved slowly into position. Cars were dropping off packs of people by the woods. Affinity groups disappeared into the forest as endless lines of cop vans appeared. It seemed like the setting for a Wild West shootout, with both sides building up their arsenals and waiting for the other to move first. Seventy-five of us made it safely inside, transformed into a black mob, and moved like a guerrilla army through the brush, dodging under tree cover when helicopters swooped by. Camouflage would have been better than black—but hey, we're city folks; black's our forte.

With saws and combustibles in hand, ready to light up the morning with a spectacular blockade, we called a last minute meeting. Speaking in four languages through our masks in the black forests of northern Germany, we called it off. It was a trap. Other blockades on the same road happened and all were arrested immediately with no effect. Disappointed yet feeling good about our judgment, we dispersed into our casual clothes and headed for Berlin, where the final show was about to begin.

Some of the internationals were frustrated with the entire “Plan A” of the blockades. Coming out of a year-long analysis of previous mass mobilizations, Genoa in particular, various insurrectionists decided that it was time to take the initiative and try something new. Instead of following the lead of the traditional Left, using its large marches and demonstrations as cover for breaking windows and burning cars, they decided to see if they could launch a strategic attack by themselves, one that would violate the traditional set-piece roles of mass mobilizations. With the help of some of the German Autonomen, a secretive “Plan B” was organized in case the blockades failed. While the blockades appeared successful, on the final day of action a banner appeared on the two decrepit cement towers overlooking Camp Reddelich: “Plan B: Burn Berlin!”

Plan B resembled the idea behind the Seattle Black Bloc, when an autonomous bloc took advantage of police being distracted by blockades to wreck the shopping district—but instead of happening outside the summit, it was to take place in the nearest large city. Tactically, it was attractive, since on the day when a thousand Berlin police would be distracted by dealing with the blockades a Black Bloc could more easily strike the heart of financial capital in Berlin. However, only a few hundred people showed up, surrounded by riot police and infiltrated with undercover civil cops. A piece of paper went from hand to hand notifying protest-

ers they should move to Rosenthal Place to begin a riot, but by the time the crowd got there the police were already there. Strangely enough, there were almost no Germans at the Reclaim the Streets, and it ended without more incident than a few destroyed cars.

While the Berlin police may not have known about Plan B, many anarchists did not either. Perhaps the vast decentralized infrastructure of three separate camps made communication impossible; it takes more than a good idea to get people involved. Also, there was a real lack of support from many Berlin autonomists, who originally seemed to pledge their support. This might be understandable: their primary social center, Kopi, is threatened with eviction, and a major riot in Berlin would have brought harsh repression upon them. It would have been far better for all involved if locals had been more upfront about their doubts instead of simply not showing up.

The idea of separating aggressive demonstrators from pacifists by giving each their “own” day of action divides the movement tactically and temporally, which plays perfectly into the hands of the police. It's far better to divide spatially if numbers allow, but to act all at once on the same day. Dividing the movement spatially over Rostock, Berlin, Hamburg, and Heiligendamm definitely stretched the police to their breaking point, but made co-ordination difficult at best. In hindsight, doing anything new and dangerous requires not only an adequate assessment of your numbers and strength but also truly believing it will work: Plan B failed on account of a crisis of faith.

We sat in the darkness, Berlin far from in flames and only the ghosts of our dreams to haunt us. Slightly drunk, a comrade from Greece muttered, “In Greece, you are welcome in my house. In Greece, all of us will make bottles together, and throw them at the fascists, and...” He was almost choking. He turned to me and said, “Now is time for that most sad of moments, the emptying of the molotovs.”

Tentative Conclusions

When revolutionary movements take the historical stage, as the “movement of movements” did at the end of the last century, there inevitably follows an equal and opposite wave of counter-revolution. As the curtain falls upon the reaction to “anti-globalization” known as the “War on Terror,” it becomes ever more urgent for a new rupture to re-orient the world for another revolutionary moment. Today, the crises of migration, climate change, and the failure of global capital are far more immediate than the bankrupt narrative of terror. Despite the hype of the Dissent Network, the 2007 G8 was not the rupture we were waiting for—but it was a strategic realignment of the global movement, positioning us to strike and tear the seams of history apart to create that much-needed rupture. As any martial artist can tell you, the positioning for the strike is as important as the strike itself.

Movements decline, dissolving into fragments and micro-parties, failing to grasp the imaginations of even their own most dedicated adherents. Movements rise, consolidating



new assemblages, spreading hope to even the most forlorn hearts. After Seattle, there was a rapid if unarticulated consolidation across completely unexpected boundaries, leading to the christening of the “movement of movements.” Through avenues such as the radical “fringe” of the social forums and endless gatherings, a coherent critique of capitalism, most vocal in the Global South, began slowly but surely penetrating the movements in the West and North. After September 11, 2001, the movement fractured: the “center,” organized labor and NGOs, fled back to the welcoming arms of the State—or, in parts of the Global South, actually took over the State apparatus. This left only a rag-tag bunch of anti-capitalists throwing themselves from defeat to defeat in the streets, reaching a nadir in the United States with the FTAA protests in Miami 2003. After September 11, suddenly everyone in the streets at anti-globalization mobilizations was “against capitalism”—not because of the growth or radicalization of the movement, but because its collapse had left what was once its periphery as its center.

But the anarchist critique of global capitalism incubated in those summits spread to many people outside the anti-globalization movement, and what was a defeat in the streets became a victory in the battle of ideas. Starting at Evian, moving through Gleneagles, and reaching its apex at Heiligendamm, the true miracle of post-Genoa G8 protests is that what appeared to be the dying gasp of the movement in Europe has effectively reconstituted a growing movement of movements with anti-capitalism as its center. Due to the work of the Interventionist Left, most NGOs of note endorsed blockading the G8—something still unimaginable in the US and Britain. Unlike the 2005 G8, reformist NGOs and political parties that tried to organize “alternative summits” and “rock concerts to fight poverty” met with low attendance, for the “hip” thing to do was direct action. The enemy—global capitalism—was identified far more clearly than in Seattle or Genoa. Thousands of people participated in their first direct action in the streets of Rostock and fields of Heiligendamm. The climate is changing: it’s becoming anti-capitalist.

One question for the new manifestation of the movement of movements is how to deal with those other “anti-capitalists,” the resurgent fascists—who took advantage of the G8 to articulate their own warped “Third Position” against capitalism, marching against the G8 in Berlin and Lueneberg. Luckily, the fascists were marginalized by the movement of movements, whose blockading and street fighting stole the show. The distinction between the movement of movements and the fascists in Germany is that the movement of movements is fundamentally invested in open space, while the fascists want to reconstitute a closed world based on mythical ethnicities. It may be the battle between these two forces that takes the stage once the G8 is in the grave.

Blockades may seem to be a contradictory tactic for those invested in open space, but there is a logic to this approach. Humans are creatures of habit, socially imprisoned by millennia-old closed systems of despair and discipline. To even begin to hear the voices of our desires, which are otherwise muted by the hustle of everyday life under capital-

ism, we need open space. Here lies the paradox: today, the only way to create open spaces is through acts of closing, acts that blockade the circuits of capitalism. By blockading the flow of traffic, guilt, property, greed—whatever flows enable the growth of capital at the expense of the living—we create space for the living to flourish. These blockades may shut down roads or railways, but they open up space for new types of social relationships. By blockading the summit, our desire for safety is magically superseded, and our other desires flow naturally into the gap to become an unexpected reality. In a world enclosed, opening space this way allows us to shed our skins as workers, as students, as women, as men, as Germans, as members of this faction or that, and experience ourselves as part of something greater. These moments of freedom burn themselves into our memories, and it is our quest for such moments that causes us to keep coming back, summit after summit, regardless of the odds.

This is the secret of the rock thrown at the cop—and yes, the Black Bloc did throw the first stone! It is only through such a moment of negation, through the blockading of the police beneath a hail of stones, that we could create an open space, one that reflects the magnitude of what is at stake in these summits. Had the marches passed in peace, it would have been the tragic peace of the graveyard—far better for us to throw our cobblestones. If trees and polar bears and the human beings marginalized in the ghettos of the global capitalism could, they would be going after the police with a lot more than stones. It doesn’t hurt to bring the violence that lies beneath the veneer of capital in Western countries up to the surface. The real question can no longer go unspoken: “What is the appropriate response to a world of capitalist violence?”

All anarchists are comrades in a new sort of international brigade, and we must set our sights beyond battles like the one in Rostock. The networking that happens before the blockade, before the battle with the cops, lays the foundation for all our future blockades and battles and gives us our ultimate chance for decisive victory over capital. The real international summit was not at Heiligendamm—that was just a PR stunt for a few would-be leaders, and the fact that they needed 16,000 mercenaries to protect them from the rest of us reveals the worthlessness of power. The real international summit took place in the convergence centers and camps where thousands of brave, unshaven, and driven people whose names will never appear in history books organized their own daily lives, found unexpected friendships, hatched hopelessly idealistic conspiracies, and took to the streets and fields together. Regardless of the outcome of any particular demonstration, our international brigade will return home to the snows of Siberia and the strip-malls of America to email newfound friends and share stories with those who could not go. The international brigades grow, the network beneath the network, the hidden roots that will blossom into the open space our world so desperately needs: a world outside the death-grip of the G8, a world we have glimpsed in the convergence centers, the camps, and—in our better moments—ourselves.

What would you do for \$1,000?

Would you take an experimental antidepressant and have your blood drawn every 20 minutes all day long for three days? Would you ride a bicycle underwater in a pressurized chamber with a catheter going from your arm to your heart? Would you let someone take several samples of tissue from your lung? Take a drug that could make your spleen explode?

Welcome to our world.

Blood Money

REPORT FROM
SUBJECT #119



Here I am in the belly of the pharmaceutical industrial machine—Study 943. I'm in a dorm room with ten bunk beds—lights out at 11pm, up at 5:30 a.m. for vitals. The rest of the female subjects are in here too, all using the internet on their laptops or talking on their cell phones. We are a mix of college students, mothers, grandmothers, social workers, cashiers, nurses, and unemployed. We don't talk to each other much.

Upon our arrival, we put our bags on a table to be searched for contraband and stood in line to receive a bracelet with a barcode that has our schedules for blood draws and dosing. Once we walked through those doors, we ceased to be individuals and became Human Subjects. Inside, it's like a combination of school, summer camp, prison, and a hospital. We are not allowed to leave the building or eat any outside food or drink during our "confinement" period. There is a lounge with a pile of dusty board games and a fleet of recliners. There is a dining room where we are dosed with whatever drug is being tested, after which our mouths are searched with a flashlight. Every room is equipped with a television and a red trashcan for bloody gauze. Computers are stolen, fights break out over the television, and sometimes someone sells bootleg DVDs in the corner.

For the first half of the day, blood draws are twenty minutes apart, so we can't really do much but read or watch television—no lying down or crossing your legs until after lunch. We are required to be at the blood draw station at least two minutes before our designated draw time. If we are late for a draw, our pay is docked \$50. The blood draw room is spectacularly Orwellian. A row of phlebotomists sit at five stations ready to draw your blood. When your number is called, you sit down at the station listed on your schedule and the phlebotomist scans your barcode bracelet—beep—then scans barcodes on the empty tubes—beep—and when it is the exact minute listed on your schedule, takes your blood: "Thank you." The room is filled with this sound—beep, beep... "Thank you." Off you go to stand in the hallway with the other subjects with your barcode-adorned arm in the air until the bleeding stops. We are advised to "please get your arm under control before entering the common areas." A few minutes later you are back in the line waiting to enter the blood draw room.

The veteran medical study subjects have become experts at blood draws and share tips with the new subjects: here is the best way to hold your arm to reduce bruising and bleeding, here is how much water you should drink before you take the meds, and don't switch arms during draws if you can help it.

Imagine: Forty people walking around pressing gauze to their outstretched arms, stray bloody pieces of gauze lining the hallways. Forty people suppressing nausea and dizziness, thinking silently—\$1000. \$1000. \$1000.

Nothing makes the workings of capitalism clearer than literally selling your body for cash. Blood, urine, shit, saliva, tissue—you name it, we've sold it. After working a slew of meaningless jobs for much less money, I do appreciate the honesty of the transaction. Some researchers, perhaps new at the game, will ask what made me want to participate in their study. Oh, I just liked the idea of contributing some of my rectal tissue to science, you know? Or else they are surprised when the subjects know each other—"What is it with you people?" They don't understand that we are a class, a network. This is our job, and we know all the tricks. When they ask how much coffee we drink a week, when we go to sleep at night, how anxious we are—we share the right answers.

Being a human subject has made me doubt the accuracy of scientific studies even more. Here's the big secret: we cheat. We throw out the meat in our sandwiches, don't swallow our pills, put our motion sensors on friends so we can stay up late, and hide our needle-bruised arms beneath long sleeves so we can do several studies at once. Like most employees, we generally do everything we can to ensure that our work has a minimal impact on our outside lives.

However, working as a medical study subject is different from more traditional types of work, whether one is a study subject at a private clinic, a university, or a contract research organization like the one described above. Each job is temporary and could be cancelled at any moment, the days and hours are irregular, we don't have consistent co-workers, and we have a great deal of mental freedom. The people supervising us, the phlebotomists and nurses, are more like our coworkers than our bosses. Phlebotomists, who earn between \$9.85 and \$12.25 an hour as independent contractors, are paid significantly less than the study subjects from whom they draw blood. At the facility where I do studies, both phlebotomists and nurses often supplement their incomes by working as study subjects on their days off. As a study subject, I have commiserated with many phlebotomists over the long hours, understaffing, and general disorganization of working at a contract research organization.

I've had a lot of conversations with other medical study subjects about the conditions of our work, and inevitably someone will say, "I guess I shouldn't complain since I'm getting paid for doing nothing." It's interesting to me that so many people—even people who have been doing studies for years—don't consider this work. This uncertainty is shared by researchers. There are countless articles in medical journals discussing whether subjects should be paid according to a market theory (based on supply and demand, money is used as an incentive to participate in risky studies), reimbursement theory (subjects are paid for meals, travel, and/or time away from work, but do not make a profit as they are not "working") or wage-payment (subjects are paid standardized low hourly wages for their "unskilled labor.")

For me, participating in studies is work in its purest form: I give you control over my body for a set period of time, and in exchange you give me money. During a study, so much of our lives are controlled by the researchers: when we sleep and wake up, when and what we eat, if we smoke, what drugs we take, if we can exercise—all this is decided by someone else.

When I first started doing overnight medical studies, I imagined it would be some sort of retreat—a quiet place where I could get a lot of writing done. Though we do have a certain degree of mental freedom during the day, between the frequent blood draws, the absence of breakfast (if in a "fasted" study), the noise from the televisions, and the lack of sleep, I find it extremely difficult to focus on anything that requires analysis—for example, writing an article such as this. Thus, while some people do work for school or their other jobs, most tend to spend their time watching television or on the internet.

It's true that sometimes it doesn't feel like work. You can wear a bathrobe all day if you want, you are free to read, watch movies, or write (if you can) between blood draws, and there is no boss peering over your shoulder telling you to work faster or smile more. Still, despite these freedoms, the fact remains that we are selling our bodies for cash. Perhaps we are less likely to view our work as "real" because we are using our bodies passively; we are rarely required to do anything but be a receptacle for medications and a storehouse of valuable bodily fluids.

Between the blood loss, experimental medications, the overcooked unhealthy food, lack of exercise, and the psychological effects of staying inside a building for several days or weeks, being in a medical study is hard on your body and your mind. Participating in a pain or stress study can be particularly upsetting. One friend was in a study where he was paid according to how long he was able to withstand various types of pain such as putting his hand on a hot pad or holding it in ice water. The longer he was in pain, the more money he made. Another friend was shown disturbing, violent images without warning while having an MRI, causing him anxiety that lasted the rest of the day. A study in which I was subjected to a stressful mock interview and made to do math aloud while having my blood drawn triggered my depression. Sometimes I think there are rich people behind a one-way mirror at these studies, drinking champagne and eating foie gras and laughing at us. "How much would we have to pay healthy people to take toxic experimental HIV drugs for two weeks?" It's like a reality T.V. show—America's Funniest Poor People.

Through my three years of being a medical study subject, my relationship to my body has changed. I often find myself thinking of my body as a machine that must be kept in working order. If I get a minor cold that I can't hide, I can't work until it's gone.

I've developed a very blasé attitude towards needles and blood draws—my blood is now a commodity. One day, after having my blood drawn in an otherwise unremarkable

Precarity:

a condition of existence without predictability or security, affecting material or psychological welfare. The term has been specifically applied to either intermittent work or, more generally, a confluence of intermittent work and precarious existence.

study, I was overcome with an intense feeling of possessiveness towards the tube of my blood sitting on the counter. That's my blood, I wanted to say to the researcher. Why isn't it in my body? I want it back!

I like to think of medical studies as a sped up version of traditional work. You work a small fraction of the time but experience the same amount of wear on your body and mind. While the work "lifespan" of a worker in a standard job a generation ago extended to age 65, a medical study subject's work options become drastically limited as they age and become less healthy. Of course, there is no retirement plan for medical study subjects.



The word that is coming into popular usage to describe this type of temporary, flexible work is *precarity*. Precarity, a neologism derived from the Latin verb *precor* (to entreat, pray for, wish for), offers a conceptual framework connecting the lack of security in our jobs, welfare, and residency caused by neoliberalism. The term precarity was first used by Leonce Crenier, an anarcho-communist turned Catholic monk, and later used in the early 1950's by Dorothy Day, the founder of the Catholic Worker movement. There are, of course, different kinds of precarities in this framework. The word can be used to describe a tremendous variety of experience, with *precarities** enjoying varying access to resources, privilege, and power—something many European radicals see as both a strength and a weakness.

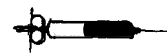
First, precarity can be used to describe the loss or decline of social safety nets that were previously taken for granted, such as pensions, minimum wage laws, healthcare benefits, food stamps, housing, and the general social welfare system. Precarity can also be used to identify the "casualization" of work: employers in the service sector demand that employees be more "flexible," doing nighttime work, working

* *Precariat* is a play on the words *precarious* and *proletariat*, and is used to connect as a class people who do precarious work, such as freelancers, self-employed people, temporary workers, and illegal workers.



characterized much of the “feminine” labor in capitalist countries for centuries.*

On a final note about precarity, many anarchists in the US raise the question whether precarity is a useful framework for this context. Many radicals argue that precarity is clearly present in the United States, but that “precarious conditions” are not a recent phenomenon and have actually been on the rise since at least the economic downturn of the early 1970s. Also, the dismantling of social safety nets in Europe referred to by “precarity” has been less marked here, simply because much of the social welfare that Europeans enjoyed never existed here in the first place. Nevertheless, the job losses brought about by free trade agreements, the Democrats’ 1996 welfare reform, the proposed privatization of social security, the decline of union membership, the rise of the service sector economy, and the repression, persecution, and deportation of undocumented migrant workers all point to “precarity” as a very real phenomenon in the United States. Whether or not usage of the term itself grows here, U.S. anarchists would do well to engage with precarity within a comprehensive framework, understanding such conditions as interconnected and interdependent.



part-time (and thus being denied benefits), and accepting less predictable schedules. Finally, precarity has also come into popular use as a way to talk about the fears, anxieties, dangers, and legal limbo that millions of migrant workers face throughout Europe and the rest of the world. We can see this playing out right now in the US, as the government is increasingly pressuring employers to fire undocumented workers and this pressure is transferred in turn to immigrant families.

It has largely been anarcho- and autonomist-feminist groups in Europe that have popularized this term and are developing forms of struggle to engage with these “new” conditions. Groups like Precarias a la Deriva, the EuroMAY-DAY network, and others have used theater, building occupations, and creative media disruption to challenge Europe’s stale Left and inject this analysis into the anti-capitalist and “antiglobalization” movements of recent years. Much of the activity of these groups revolves around an urgent question: In an economy in which workplaces are increasingly casual, part-time, unpredictable, and decentralized, how and where does effective class struggle take place? It is not surprising that feminists are playing such an important role in this development, considering that the kinds of work and living conditions referred to by the discourse on precarity have

Like many people working precarious jobs, medical study subjects have no stability or accountability from our employers. Though we are explicitly risking our health with every job, we have no health insurance. In fact, to be admitted into a study, we often must sign consent forms stipulating that if we are injured, the facility is not required to pay for our medical care.

While some studies are done at a large research facility like the one I described, in many studies you never meet your coworkers. Even if you do have a chance to work alongside other study subjects, your camaraderie rarely lasts longer than the duration of the study. A new set of workers complete every job.

The only recourse study subjects have currently is contacting the Institutional Review Board (IRB) that approves and monitors the study. IRBs are required for any study on human subjects that receives funding from the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Every university has its own IRB or IRBs, and contract research organizations use an independent IRB.

* It would be worthwhile for someone to explore the connections between working as a medical study subject and working as a sex worker. Both types of work are viewed as illegitimate, passive, and of the body.

IRBs were created as a response to public outcry over the dark history of unethical, dangerous medical studies. The most well known example is the medical experiments done by Nazis on prisoners of war and civilians of occupied countries during World War II. As a result of the Nuremberg trials, a code of ethics, titled the Nuremberg Code, was developed which contained the idea that informed consent is essential when testing on human subjects.

While Nazis doctors were on trial in Nuremberg, an egregious human experiment was taking place in the U.S.—the Tuskegee Syphilis Study. In this study conducted by the U.S. Public Health Service, 399 poor and mostly illiterate African-American men in rural Alabama were denied treatment for syphilis so that researchers could watch the progression of the disease. The study subjects were not told they had syphilis and underwent countless dangerous and non-therapeutic “treatments” over the course of the study, resulting in the deaths of many of the participants. This experiment lasted from 1932 until 1972.

In the wake of the Nuremberg Trials and the Tuskegee Syphilis Study, several human studies codes of conduct were developed, leading to the establishment of IRBs in 1974. Each institution that conducts a study has an individual IRB with its own rules and regulations, including a standardized pay rate for studies depending on how many hours are worked and the procedures involved. All of the IRBs, however, are regulated by the federal Department of Health and Human Services.

IRBs limit the amount of money that an institution can pay study subjects based on a fear of coercion. The idea is that if too much money is offered, a study subject will be coerced into participating in the study and will be incapable of giving voluntary consent. For the same reason, some IRBs prohibit stating the exact monetary amount offered for the study in the advertisement. As well-intentioned as these regulations are, the people who make up IRBs fail to realize that the entire capitalist economy is based on coercion. Poor people are going to participate in medical studies to get quick, easy cash no matter how



much money is offered. Paying subjects less simply means that we are forced to sell our bodies more often, for less money. It also means we are more likely to surreptitiously do more studies at once, potentially skewing the study data.

As a medical study subject, I appreciate the existence of IRBs. Now, voluntary informed consent is required before entering a study, subjects’ pay must be prorated (so that one’s entire pay is not contingent upon completing the study), and it is much more difficult to conduct studies using prisoners as subjects. However, there are limits to what an IRB can control. An IRB only requires researchers to stay within the parameters set in the protocol. An IRB will not penalize researchers if you are injured during a blood draw, your check is mailed three weeks late, or if after you have driven a hundred miles and taken a week off at your other job you arrive to find the study cancelled.

Additionally, researchers can avoid the restrictions of IRBs by doing studies in countries where there is no similar oversight, such as giving experimental drugs to people in the Global South. In 1996, only 24 years since the Tuskegee Syphilis Study was exposed, Pfizer Inc., the world’s largest drug manufacturer, tested an unapproved experimental antibiotic on 200 children with meningitis in Nigeria, resulting in injuries and deaths.



Our demands as medical study subjects are really quite reasonable: compensation for screenings, compensation for transportation expenses if a study is cancelled without notice, healthier food, a more comprehensive informed consent process, higher pay for more invasive studies, more phlebotomists so blood draws are less hectic.

So what can we do? Though there are many frustrating aspects of being a precarious worker, we also benefit from the precarity. Each job is short, we can work whenever we like, and the employers don’t communicate with each other about study subjects. Even if it were available, the last thing I would want is a steady 40-hour-a-week job being a medical study subject with a contract and paid vacation days. The first question is how medical study subjects can organize together to improve our working conditions while maintaining and strengthening the underground networks we already have. The second and more difficult question is how we can make the work we do subversive.

Due to the precarity of medical study work, it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to organize while at the workplace. We have no regular coworkers, many different employers, and each job lasts a few months at the longest.

The pool of potential workers is almost



infinite, and people will travel across the country to do a lucrative study.*

One option would be to create regional worker centers specifically for medical study subjects that researchers would have to contact to find subjects. Some cities have centers like this for undocumented day laborers. The center would decide on certain minimum rates for studies using factors such as invasiveness, risk, length of confinement, and number of blood draws. The center would also fill the gap left by the IRB—employers who repeatedly cancelled studies at the last minute, did not adequately disclose risks, or did not pay study subjects on time, for example, would be prohibited from working with the center. This could also be a place for study subjects to share knowledge about employers and past studies, and learn more detailed information about the medications they are ingesting.

For this idea to work, there would have to be a very large number of people involved. As you can imagine, it is quite difficult to connect with other study subjects outside one's own circle of friends. Though I'm loathe to resort to the internet as a way to connect with fellow workers, beginning a listserv or blog where people can anonymously post information about studies would be a good starting place in this situation, especially among those career study subjects that live all over the country.†

It's important to keep in mind that we benefit from keeping our connections to each other and our cheating strategies underground. For many of us, doing medical studies is a primary source of income. I met someone today who had been doing studies for ten years—now that's a career! It would be vital that a study subject center kept its lists of members completely confidential, and that study subjects used discretion when sharing hustles.

It would also be worthwhile to build connections with nurses and phlebotomists. Phlebotomists work as independ-

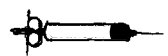
* For an account of successful research study subject organizing within a study, ratings of research facilities, and stories written by study subjects, see the 'zine anthology *Guinea Pig Zero* by Bob Helms

† The limitation here is that not everyone has access to the internet. However, in my experience, admission to many studies is conducted solely by email mailing lists, so it is safe to assume that most study subjects have regular internet access.

ent contractors, meaning their work is just as precarious as ours. They work long, grueling hours doing back-to-back blood draws on cranky, overtired study subjects for low pay. The grumblings I've heard from them about their employers make our complaints pale in comparison.

Finally, how can we subvert the work we do as study subjects? There are many reasons why we would want to do this. I've done very few studies where I felt good about the research I was contributing to. Most often, the work I've done as a study subject has been for large pharmaceutical corporations that are involved in ecological devastation and massive exploitation, such as dangerous and misleading clinical trials and denying cheap HIV medications to people in the Global South. Some studies, such as those for the Navy, aid the government in developing new war technologies. Additionally, there is a popular misconception that by participating as a human subject you are saving animals from testing. However, in many studies, human subjects are merely the next step after gruesome animal testing.

Medical study subjects must be conscious of the role we play in the perpetuation of these harms.‡ When we live in an area where there are many different kinds of studies available, we can afford to be a little choosy about who our employers are. We can decide never to participate in a study that involves animal testing, for example, and let researchers doing animal testing know why we won't work for them. For the times when we don't have this luxury, we should do everything we can to lessen our harmful impact. Some starting points might be: Make unpleasant information about the drugs we're testing available to the general public. Steal medical equipment—and organize health care collectives! Start critical dialogues with other study participants, nurses, phlebotomists, and researchers examining the collective effects of our individual contributions.



As medical study subjects, together we can escape the implications of *precor* in our precarious work—instead of asking, praying, and wishing for stability in our jobs from our bosses or the government, we can take and create the stability we crave by organizing together and subverting our work. The first step is to examine together the conditions and the meaning of our work. From there, we can organize to improve our working conditions. More importantly, through organizing together we can build connections with other precarious workers in our communities so that we can provide each other with the stability that capitalism will never provide us. Medical study subjects, link your bandaged arms!

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‡ For a great discussion of the results of unexamined participation in the production of terror and the abuses of human labor, see Jill Godmilow's film *What Farocki Taught* (1997) about the production of Napalm B by Dow Chemical Company for the Vietnam War.

Building Collectives in Anarchist Barcelona A Tale of Two Squats

This is about two Barcelona squats—
one ending, and one beginning—
and the collectives that run them.

Barcelona is a city wracked by a remarkably accelerated process of gentrification. It's like bombs are falling on the city every day, and wherever they land, immigrants, graffiti, and street corner conversations between old-time neighbors disappear, and tourists and expensive shops pop up out of thin air. The laws and the political situation also make squatting difficult, yet despite this Barcelona's famed squatting movement is still strong. In the end, a particular building occupation may not last a year. But the social relationships of the collectives responsible prove much more durable than the physical structures, and it is these that determine the survival or demise of the occupations and the movement as a whole.

In late March I was greeted at the squatted social center RuinAmalia with the warning that it could easily be evicted before the end of April—at one point the people running the library even started packing up their books. Around the same time, the group of squatters fixing up the newly occupied Antic Marti celebrated the news that the owner of the building was involved in legal proceedings that would take four years to resolve, during which time he could not

initiate an eviction process against them. Now, at the beginning of June, RuinAmalia is still hanging on and experiencing new life, and Antic Marti is a memory but the collective that squatted it has started a new project.

Eviction and Cohesion: Antic Marti

Antic Marti was located at Consejo de Ciento 38, in the Sants neighborhood of Barcelona. The building consisted of three stories of apartments on top of an abandoned restaurant. Eighteen people, mostly students, lived in the apartments, and the restaurant was to be turned into a social center. It only existed about two months before it got evicted, and during that time they were busy fixing it up. Throughout its vacancy the owner had periodically smashed up the building, attempting to undermine its structure in order to get permission to demolish and rebuild the property—so the squatters had a lot of work to do. They had high hopes for the place, and the corner restaurant would have made a great social center. The very night they received news that they had four years before an eviction proceeding could start, they dumpstered a big wedding cake. All the omens seemed good, and the optimism was infectious. On 7 May, at around 6:30 in the morning, several vans of the Mossos d'Escuadra (the Catalan national police) came to the house. The cops had their faces masked and

their names and numbers removed. They bashed down the door, pulled everyone out, and searched the place, copying computer files and cell phone logs. They also charged the squatters with “usurpation.” On dubious grounds, they used a criminal rather than civil eviction process, and also illegally entered the neighboring address—which was to be the social center—and evicted it as well. Workers sent by the owner smashed up the entire house to discourage future squatting, and then bricked over the front door.

The collective had to scramble to find other places to live, usually on the floors of friends’ rooms, often a different place every night. It didn’t help that it was exam time for most of them. Amidst these difficulties, the collective split into two groups because of differences of goals and commitment. Hopefully the new groups will share stronger bonds and affinities, though only time will tell. One of the two groups has started a new squat called La Farga, after the park of the same name that’s just across the street. Early on, the owners sent a group of burly workers to the address, who broke in, attacked them, and smashed up all their furniture. Now, both the squatters and the owner are filing charges against each other in the legal game of squatting and eviction. Fortunately, the squatters have some neighbors as witnesses. They’ve been talking with all the neighbors, and say almost everyone appreciates their presence. There’s also an abandoned lot in the back that they may be able to offer as a community garden to gain further neighborhood involvement. Three weeks into the occupation, they opened their doors for a communal meal and a meeting to discuss proposals on what to use the social center for.

Affinity and Coordination: The Squatter’s Assembly

Clearly, it’s easier to organize a social center—not to mention live—with people you have a lot in common with: hence the ease of smaller groups. There’s nothing wrong with a larger collective splitting into two smaller ones to squat two separate buildings. But what about matters that require the coordination of a greater number of people, such as resisting gentrification and the growing police repression throughout Barcelona as a whole? Meetings of the Barcelona squatters’ assembly have been getting smaller. This may have something to do with the fact that the squats involved are organized, quite reasonably, on an affinity group model, and that informal structure seems to have been subsumed uncritically into the organization of the assembly. However, this model is ill-suited for use within a diverse assembly to coordinate actions across an entire city; an organizational form capable of bridging differences where there are no affinities is necessary. The assembly is shrinking to the point of being a group of friends, and it has never had a concrete decision-making process. It coordinates important protests and other actions regularly, but given its limitations it seems unable to muster the resources needed to act out strategies to aid squatting or counter police repression and gentrification on a city-wide basis.

Perhaps it would help if more of the squatters involved

also had experience in their daily activity with a collective model that used conscious power-sharing and formal decision-making to achieve mutually satisfying cooperation between groups with varying politics and communication styles—such as exist even just within the squatters’ movement itself. On the neighborhood level, this would probably mean not only building amicable relationships with neighbors, but working in coordination with neighborhood organizations (such as those against gentrification) in a way that nourishes a plurality of differences without silencing any members or reducing action to the lowest common denominator. For autonomy-minded (dare I say “cowboy”?) anarchists, this requires a greater degree of cooperation and playing well with others than is common.

Conflict and Formality: RuinAmalia

RuinAmalia is located at 11 Reina Amalia in the Raval neighborhood, one of the few squatted social centers left in the center of Barcelona. It was squatted by a collective of six people in October 2004, though some flats had previously been squatted by neighbors, pensioners, immigrants or drug-users on an individual and clandestine basis. One neighbor used an entire floor to house dozens of racing pigeons, whose left-behinds the new squatters had to clean up—thus one of them wanted to call the new place “La Pluma.” Since 1993, the owners had been trying to declare the building an economic ruin in order to get permission from city council to demolish it and build a newer structure, for which the rents would be much higher; this would contribute to gentrification in Raval, which has slowed that process so far with its reputation as a rough neighborhood. For ten years, the owners had been evicting individual squatters quickly and easily, but when they found out the new squatters were organized and had support, they hesitated. The collective did not receive papers notifying them of civil proceedings for eviction until February 2007.

In March 2005, the collective opened up the courtyard attached to the property for use as a social center. Now, about ten people live collectively in the house, and about twenty people organize with the social center of RuinAmalia, which includes Kilombo—a well stocked radical library, a carpentry collective and workshop, RAM—a computer collective that runs a free internet lab, and la Oficina d’Okupacion—a squatters’ assisting office that provides legal, informational, and technical support to squatters and those interested in squatting. There is also a flamenco group that meets and makes music every Friday night, a bar (which has been used by prisoner support groups, for example, to raise money), and a music room.

The purpose of RuinAmalia, in the words of one of its founders, was to open a space to carry on political and cultural work in old Barcelona. The house, meanwhile, is an exercise in direct action, expropriating a vacant building to provide housing for people who thus can reduce their participation in capitalism. It is also an attempt at collective living, with the partially realized ideal of building a



day-to-day existence in which material and collective needs are shared, “a break with solitude.” Several of the folks who live there are immigrants; some of them are students, some are older; few have regular jobs—it helps not to have to pay rent. It is much more diverse than the exclusively punk youth squats of northern Europe.

RuinAmalia’s social center has expanded the infrastructure of the anticapitalist and anarchist movements in Barcelona. As a common physical space for the various events and organizations that make use of it, it is also a conduit for linking and uniting various social movements. The social center lacked structure at first, but each collective using the space had the autonomy to start its own projects, allowing them to build strength and thus organically create the need for coordination at a higher level. Unfortunately, they didn’t start meeting frequently as a social center and acting

as a coherent social force (organizing protests or educational actions in the neighborhood, for example) until the beginning of the eviction process. The social center enjoys strong participation from others in the movement, but not enough involvement with the neighborhood. Only a few of the Barcelona squats I’ve seen are deeply and mutually involved with their neighborhood, though this seems to be the desired ideal of most of them. Granted, it is extremely difficult. Squats are abnormal, and participating in them forces people to go against the aesthetic and routine in which capitalism socializes them. Many people have minimal relationships with their “normal” neighbors; entering into a relationship with people who expect not just a daily hello but rather mutual aid and a rethinking of the foundations of capitalist existence could be intimidating and possibly unattractive for neighbors even if they stand to gain

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from it. So even when a squat isn't dirty, disrespectful of its neighbors, or cliquish, it still faces an uphill battle.

Some squats have successfully integrated themselves into and invigorated the neighborhood struggles against gentrification, and these win the respect of their neighbors. But RuinAmalia has scarcely participated in the anti-gentrification movement in Raval in an organized way. The various collectives of the social center have only united to be able to organize common actions recently, and the house of RuinAmalia has faced other problems I'll describe below. This is not to say they have been unsuccessful in this important part of the squatting ideal; currently, they enjoy amicable relationships with nearly all their neighbors, and this is an accomplishment for a city where the media constantly demonize squatters. No one is afraid of them or hostile towards them anymore, and neighbors sometimes come into the social center to use the internet or listen to music. The folks of RuinAmalia have accomplished this by inviting the neighbors to events or to share concerns and complaints directly, by not holding loud shows that go late into the night, and by maintaining an aesthetic that is clean and welcoming (ahem, at least by squatter standards).

Naturally, the house of RuinAmalia has also experienced difficulties in meeting its ideals. Collective life, emotional openness and mutual aid are not as strong as some would like, and at least part of the problem stems from differing ideas about communication and decision-making. In the first instance, it is problematic that people in the collective have conflicting desires about how things should work, and it is probable that the differing ideas are not equally valid or effective. But as I don't have the answers of how to make a collective work, the best I can do is describe the conflict and the questions.

From one perspective, there is a failure to reach and respect open decisions. It seems to be characteristically Mediterranean that anarchist groups here use informal consensus without any clear process or even commonly articulated decisions, so that one day after a meeting there can be disagreement about what was agreed, if any decisions were reached at all. But beyond this there was a complaint that resonates with experiences I've had in the States: that the collective agreed to a set of goals and standards before starting the project, but within a month of beginning it several members proved to be more laidback and noncommittal. Later on, there was a conflict about how to make important decisions—for example, about whether a new person could live there: whether to do it openly and formally, as with a political collective, or informally as with a group of friends. Some saw the former method as necessary to allow everyone to participate in the decision, others saw it as authoritarian. The latter (informal) method was seen by some as preventing open communication and creating decision-making by popularity contest, while others saw it as more comfortable and organic. Another conflict involves the sharing of criticism—whether to try to live in peace if a criticism is not resolved, or to keep bringing it up until some resolution can be reached. This is directly affected

by whether the mechanisms for communication within the collective are functional, and whether people are more comfortable making criticisms in a formal space recognized by the group or in an informal space that may have more privacy or less pressure.

Another problem at RuinAmalia that also seems widespread throughout the anarchist movement is the conflict that arises when one person does most of the work keeping the collective together—whether that be cleaning the kitchen, shopping, or doing legal work to slow down the eviction. The person who takes more responsibility has more power, and the pattern seems to be that others accuse him or her of being authoritarian. The others in turn can be criticized as irresponsible, but they may genuinely have lower standards and feel that not as much work needs to be done—this highlights the importance of agreeing on common standards from the beginning. Then the method for resolving this crippling dynamic depends on the resolution of the conflict between formal and informal decision-making. The people with less power may dislike open, formal meetings because they feel the person with the most responsibility can dominate them; accordingly, they tend to discuss problems in a safe, comfortable, and closed setting, while hanging out with close friends within the collective. Within this setting, criticisms are formulated, as are preferences that become informal decisions, without being shared with the entire group—particularly the person those criticisms are aimed at.

This informally creates another site of power, and the conflict between these rival powers within the group discourages any resolution of the problem—largely because even if they can get over their egos to seek resolution, they seek it through contradictory means. The most likely result is that people will leave the collective, though the dynamic that caused the problem will probably recur when new people join. This self-destruct mechanism plays out too often in anarchist groups, and makes what should be an inspiring act of creation a stressful and disillusioning experience. When I first came to RuinAmalia and expressed appreciation for what was the best squat I'd seen yet, the conflict-weary inhabitants looked at me quizzically and gave tired laughs. *You want to write an article about this place? Go ahead.*

But to avoid unnecessary pessimism, I should end by agreeing with one of the people in the collective that despite these conflicts they have “done it quite well,” and despite the difficulties they enjoy a good quality of life. I still have not found a perfect collective and the same damn problems seem to crop up again and again, but this is no reason to become cynical about the anarchist project. We still have a long way to go to build healthy collectives, but sometimes even our failed attempts sustain lives that are emotionally and physically healthier than the alternative of nuclear families trapped in isolated dwellings and meaningless jobs. Either way, we shouldn't quit—we should neither give up on account of recurring problems nor become complacent with the progress we've made so far. As long as the struggle continues, we have time to learn.

EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

Starting with this report from Modesto, California, each issue of *Rolling Thunder* will spotlight one city or region of the United States, offering a history and analysis of contemporary radical activity in the area. We hope to circulate the conclusions anarchists are deriving from their efforts, while celebrating the potential of long-term, locally-based activity.

This particular report could be faulted for focusing entirely on the doings of one anarchist group, and for not answering the questions it poses. Anarchist projects in Modesto were most effective when they were consistent, but ultimately proved unsustainable in that they demanded too much from too small a circle of participants. Is this an inescapable catch-22?

Anarchists should be honest with themselves about what they hope to accomplish. By and large, it's a mistake to do one thing, hoping to accomplish another. For example, social programs such as Food Not Bombs can contribute to anticapitalist momentum, but there's no guarantee what form that will take; your Food Not Bombs might succeed at distributing food to hungry people, but if you see it as a means to recruit for streetfighting, you might consider it a failure even though it fulfills its stated purpose. You can't determine what others will take on, or need, or do; you can only shape your own activity to meet your needs while taking others' into account.

There's no way around it: long-term consistency and commitment are essential for building local infrastructures. It can take years to win the interest and trust of people who have seen radical projects come and go, or for whom anarchist alternatives have never been part of the social landscape. Especially in younger anarchist circles, organizers may have a totally different concept of longevity than the people they're trying to connect with: it may seem like an accomplishment for an infoshop to last for three or four years in a neighborhood some residents have lived in for thirty or forty years. You can't expect people to take you seriously, let alone throw their lot in with you, unless they have reason to believe you're going to be around in a decade or more.

At the same time, long-term projects must constantly be reassessed. If a project isn't producing the desired results, perhaps the format needs changing: maybe it's happening too often, or not often enough; maybe it's in the wrong location, or at the wrong time. If you're trying to organize a program that serves others' needs, start by asking what they want.

Above all, long-term projects must offer as much to the participants as they demand from them—otherwise they will inevitably collapse. A books-to-prisoners program might eventually wear out the few stalwarts invested in it; paired with a popular weekly potluck, on the other hand, it might become fun and easy, attracting new participants and inspiring further projects. It's simply not effective for anarchists to treat themselves as packhorses for the revolution—it's unsustainable, and it frightens away all but the most masochistic.

This is not to criticize the efforts of the Modesto anarchists. If every city the size of Modesto had seen as much activity over the past half decade, today's anarchist movement would be in a very different place. Above all, everyone who undertakes any experiment in anarchist organizing offers the rest of us a gift, so long as we take the trouble to learn from it.

Anarchy in the Filth Capital of California by Crudo

Brothels, Meth Labs, and Box Wine

In the second edition of *Cities Ranked and Rated*, Modesto, California came in first place as the worst city in the United States. The largest town in Stanislaus County, Modesto only boasts about 200,000 inhabitants.* It seems strange that such a relatively small city could achieve the position of the worst in the nation; however, Modesto has always had such a reputation. Founded by white colonists in 1870 on land where indigenous peoples like the Me-wuks and the Yokuts once lived, Modesto was known as the “Filth Capital of California” up until the 1930s for its high concentration of brothels, opium dens, and saloons. Modesto has since managed to enter the pop culture consciousness of America, thanks in part to George Lucas' (Modesto-born himself) depiction of it in the film *American Graffiti*, and the spectacle of the murders of Chandra Levy and Laci Peterson. Currently, Modesto is one of the nation's leaders in methamphetamine production and car thefts. While these things are as despicable to anarchists as they are to the police, this continuous stream of outlaw culture has given rebellious and radical ideas a sea to swim in.

Modesto is often pegged as conservative and right-wing, in terms of voting records and social atmosphere. In the 1980s, the local Klan conducted marches, open meetings, and rallies in the area, and had an established presence in various cities in the County. Operation Rescue and

* Stanislaus County really should be seen as whole, with Modesto as its center. Most smaller towns are next to, or basically part of Modesto, and most people either work in Modesto or spend a lot of time there.

other anti-abortion groups have a history of activity, which culminated in 1995 with an arson attack that destroyed a Planned Parenthood facility in town. This is not an area where you can pick out liberals by their bumper stickers or count the bikes outside the local health food co-op—there is no co-op. There are more Baptist Churches than health food stores; but all the same, there are visible class tensions and, in certain communities, widespread disgust for the forces of law and order.

Because of the importance of agriculture to the local economy, there is a constant need for immigrant labor, and significant racial and class divisions persist. These divisions are often perceived as being between “whites” and “Mexicans”: those who align with the settler culture against everyone who is brown. But while the local news media sensationalizes the threat of Latino gangs—the Norteños [Northerners] and the Sureños [Southerners]—the reality is that the underclass and insurgent population is comprised of a variety of races.

On the environmental front, pesticide spraying (either for crops or to stop West Nile Virus by killing the mosquitoes that carry it) and chemical contamination are causing more and more people—especially farm workers—to develop asthma, cancer, and other ailments. While farms are often touted as being better than the sprawl that is quickly replacing them, many of the farm owners in the area play a role similar to Southern plantations owners, exploiting both the largely migrant farm workers and the animals they own. The Modesto area is also home to large polluters like the Covanta plant, which burns trash from across the West Coast and pumps pollution including the cancer-causing agent dioxin back into the nearby working class Latino community. Urban sprawl is changing the landscape by gobbling up farmland as waves of newcomers from the Bay Area flood into the valley. This adds to the divide between the working class and communities of color in the West and South Sides of Modesto and the affluent, largely white communities living in the East and North areas of the city.

Modesto is a large city with a small town mentality. Racial divisions, evangelical Christianity, brutal police, and the power of the local property-holding elite all contribute to a reactionary and repressive

environment. But with all of this going on, there has to be some resistance, right? Since the 1960s, probably the most documented opposition to the current state of affairs came from the farm workers movement, headed by the United Farm Workers labor union—UFW. Peace and anti-war groups in Modesto were also active during the Vietnam era. However, during the 1980s and 1990s, it was reactionary and fascist forces such as the Klan and anti-abortion groups that grabbed headlines by taking action in town. It wasn't until the post-9/11 world that a new period of social struggle emerged in Modesto including anarchists, illegal immigrants, rent strikers, cop-killers, Wobblies, and a whole host of other outlaws.

Working Class Heroes Was Something to Be

Up until the early 2000s, there were no collectives, crews, or affinity groups doing anarchist projects except what came out of the local punk scene. In the late 1990s, probably the most influential Modesto-based anarcho-punk band was *Piss Off!*, who distributed free literature and utilized visual projections in their performances. *Piss Off!* influenced other bands, some of whom began tabling with anarchist literature and playing benefits for anarchist projects. The friendship networks and social atmosphere of the punk scene created an easy environment for radical ideas to spread organically; anarcho-punk exposed young people, many working or lower middle class, to anarchism.

As the Modesto punk scene was beginning to feel the tingling of anarchist sensibilities, other formations of young people were getting involved in various activist groups and causes. Some of these people were involved with local progressive anti-war groups, and many traveled to the protests in San Francisco during the buildup to the [most recent] Iraq war. Many young people were growing disillusioned with liberal activism; some met anarchist punks, and new connections were made. Out of this college activism, some small-scale actions, protests, and events grew: mainly animal rights protests, banner drops, anti-war protests, and outreach. A Food Not Bombs chapter was also formed by anarcho-punks and college

activists. However, by 2003, many of the older junior college students were poised to graduate and move to other places in search of higher education. The DAAA Collective formed in this vacuum.

“Community Foot Soldiers”: Enter the DAAA Collective

The Direct Action Anti-Authoritarians Collective existed from the summer of 2003 into late winter 2006. The collective maintained a core of four to eight people, depending on the period, with a larger group of supporters of varying levels of commitment. The collective was mostly male, with an equal balance of white folks and people of color. The group was almost always made up of young people; the oldest member was in his 30s. While the makeup of the group may have helped the participants avoid the pitfalls of predictable peace activism, this also meant that youth subculture colored its efforts to an extent that could be limiting or alienating.

The community organizing of the DAAA Collective could be divided into a few basic categories: ongoing projects, protests and actions, educational events, and solidarity work with other groups and individuals. It could be said that the DAAA Collective started from an activist* orientation, in that the group often participated in social struggles that made demands of the existing social order, worked on a variety of different issues, and hoped to gain the interest of more people so as to expand the organization. The group's conception of itself changed, however, towards the end of its existence.

The bulk of the energy of the DAAA Collective went into ongoing weekly or monthly projects. In the course of its existence the group organized Food Not Bombs (one in Modesto and one in nearby Ceres), clothing drives, Really Really Free Markets, Critical Mass bike rides, Copwatch, and also tabled regularly in downtown Modesto with free food, literature, and films, calling the event “Anarchist Café.” Some of these projects only lasted a few months, others longer. Some were consistent, others occurred on a more infrequent basis. Food Not Bombs

* This is a term that participants in the collective used to distinguish themselves from the rest of the working and exploited classes, on the presumption that they do not generally see themselves as “activist” or “political.”



was the only steady project that continued over the entire span of the group's existence, although it was relocated to various parks over the years.

When Food Not Bombs first began serving in Modesto, many of the college activists who started it saw it simply as a protest against the “war machine.” It was a “quiet statement” that the government was spending money on war while people were going hungry. When the DAAA Collective took over the project, the stance changed. While the DAAA group may have also seen the event as a protest, the central goal of their activities was to create community survival programs akin to those of the Black Panthers. They hoped that such programs would create a kind of “dual power,” in which people could depend* on these new programs rather than those of the state or capital. However, homeless people were clearly capable of dumpster diving and surviving on their own without the group's weekly meal. The goal that Food Not Bombs would become a survival program or an instrument of dual power was not achieved. It was, however, a fertile social environment that sometimes led to greater struggle.

While Food Not Bombs was arguably based in anarcho-charity, the activity did get people in the collective talking with homeless people, which helped many realize that homelessness stems from a wide range of causes including mental illness,

* Editors' note: Some might consider this a slanted portrayal of the concept of “dual power.” In the view of your humble editors, developing real networks of mutual aid fosters interdependence rather than dependence; in creating revolutionary collectivity, we produce horizontally structured counterpower rather than new centralized powers.

drug or alcohol problems (usually brought on by mental problems), job loss, rent increases, a desire to escape or travel, and the need to leave abusive relationships. At first, the homeless were hardly impressed with their new would-be radical reformers, interpreting everyone involved with Food Not Bombs as a college student or guilty do-gooder rich kid. Eventually, the collective's vocal opposition to police made many homeless people feel comfortable talking about the police harassment they experienced living on the streets, and after about a year of Food Not Bombs many homeless people began to develop personal connections with individuals in the group.

People within the DAAA Collective reasoned that homelessness was a consequence of the class system, not a problem of the government not being compassionate enough to consider the plight of the homeless. Despite this, the literature that the group put out simply pointed to the problems created by the city elite without emphasizing the need to destroy the elite itself—leaving the door open for a reformist interpretation.

Considering the amount of energy it consumed, Food Not Bombs was both good and bad for the overall growth of the collective. It enabled the participants to discover new ways to get food and clothing outside the exchange economy, which diminished their feeling of dependence on capital. This got people in the group thinking about how they could use those resources for other projects. It brought them into contact with many homeless people who, like them, loathed the police, the rich, the city elite, and the religious

institutions that sought to convert them. As with many projects that are rooted in social activity and interaction, the worth of the project ultimately rested in its ability to transcend the simple matter of sharing food and give rise to social struggle. In this way, Food Not Bombs was partially successful, in that it served as a launch pad for homeless and non-homeless action against the abuse directed at them by police.

However, Food Not Bombs in Modesto hinged on the efforts of a beleaguered few. Because not all collective members had access to reliable transportation, picking up or dumpstering the food, cooking, and driving to the “feed” was dependent on a very small number of people—the others involved simply wouldn't or couldn't take on the work. The seeds of tension and burnout were sowed very early. Several times throughout the collective's existence, there were calls to rotate tasks and redistribute the workload—not just for Food Not Bombs, but for various collective projects. These calls were presented at informal meetings and were generally forgotten about by the following week. Often this meant that the person or people who had the most invested in the project simply did the work.

Towards the end of the collective, some participants questioned whether the group should even continue a project that did little to combat homelessness other than give out a hot meal.† Some within the group responded that the activity was actually positive for the collective itself, rather than those who were being “served,”

† See “Against Anarcho-Charity” article in *Modesto Anarcho #2*.

because it provided a social activity that everyone could engage in and was vital to the cohesion of the group. While in some ways Food Not Bombs did create a positive environment for young people to come together, often cooking sessions degenerated into three or so people doing the work while ten or more people hung out outside. If FNB was an experiment in learning how to work collectively, it was a dismal failure.

In many respects, the other projects of the DAAA Collective mirrored the Food Not Bombs experience. Clothing drives were the first offshoot of Food Not Bombs, beginning in late 2003. A sub-collective of DAAA, called Mutual Aid, was responsible for a bi-monthly clothing drive that occurred on Modesto's West Side—a largely poor, multiracial area. At the time, no one within the group lived in this area, and it

The collective started organizing RRFMs again in late 2005, reaching a high point in December 2005 when one RRFM attracted around 400 people. This high turnout was caused largely by an article in the local newspaper that gave a phone number and address for the event. While it was exciting that the RRFM took over much of Wal-Greens parking lot and turned it into a large scale gift economy, the idea that the event could be organized and carried out by anyone did not take off. While massive fliering at the event let everyone know that the same event would happen again the following week, only about 40 or so people showed up and hardly anyone except people in DAAA brought items with them.

Seeing reports of RRFMs in New York and other places is interesting; anarchists in these areas seem to use them as forums to talk about other issues and create spaces

ter off expanding and working to defend these preexisting examples of working class mutual aid.

The last two long-running DAAA Collective projects occurred downtown: Anarchist Café and Copwatch. Anarchist Café was born out of a desire to stop police from kicking young people out of downtown, an area consisting of a blocked-off street outside city hall and the space in front of a local movie theater.* Police would roll through and tell young people hanging out that unless they were buying something they needed to leave, even if it was before their curfew hour. What started as simply handing out know-your-rights pamphlets to young people turned into weekly film showings of the Copwatch video *These Streets Are Watching*, complemented by the distribution of zines, fliers, patches, shirts, and free food. Police quickly caught

Sometimes the tabling gave rise to post-café actions, such as crews going out to wheatpaste posters. One night, fifteen kids marched to a nearby café to confront a man with a swastika tattoo.

While interest in Anarchist Café went up and down, some nights the group would make up to \$40 in donations and have dozens of people stop by. It was a great way to interact with people and talk about the collective's projects. The space also offered common ground for young people of various subcultures to hang out; bringing a boom box and switching from Refused to Dead Prez welcomed both hip hop kids and punks. The group's consistent presence downtown also gained esteem from some people who were initially turned off by the collective's politics. For instance, one young man hated the group because it was against the war, but as time went on, he came to respect both the anti-police sentiment and the group's support for (medical and other) marijuana. When police hassled participants, often others downtown would back them up. Longevity enabled the project to grow and remain effective, although it constantly had to be re-invented lest it simply degenerate into the same ten people hanging out together.

The police tried to stop Anarchist Café on several occasions. They tried to get the managers of several stores to kick the group out, which almost always failed and even gained the group the support of several bosses of downtown businesses. One ticket that was issued to "the leader" of the group—the person who talked to the police first—for tabling was dropped by the DA, and several attempts by police and security to kick the group out of the area were also thwarted. On two occasions, the police succeeded in shutting Anarchist Café down before the group could set up. This happened once after a discarded couch that was used by kids at A-Café was found with "Kill Cops" written on it, and again after an anti-Inauguration protest in early 2005 turned into a breakaway march. Police simply told the group that they weren't allowed to table after said incidents. In both cases, the group came back the next week or the next night and tabled with no problems.

The desires to resist harassment and monitor police interactions with young people produced a Copwatch program that

operated downtown during Anarchist Café. When police showed up to harass young people, members of the collective would talk with kids and give out fliers detailing their legal rights while interacting with the police. Copwatch did little to curb actual police actions against people, but it did foster a sense of power among youth in the downtown area. When police came through, kids would run up to Anarchist Café and ask someone in the group to grab the camera. DAAA Collective members also went to the police station and obtained copies of the police complaint form to give out; the police tried to stop this several times by moving the forms or denying requests for copies. The complaint process itself was rigged, anyway: it was still police who conducted the investigations of complaints made by citizens. If the Copwatch experiment did any good, it was in fostering an us vs. them mentality in youth vis-à-vis the police.

DAAA Collective projects were time-consuming, but were the most rewarding when they were done consistently and when they contributed to genuine relationships through face-to-face interactions. The collective was able to pull off all of these things in the course of each weekend by either all staying at one person's house or by squatting together. The amount of work that went into each weekend, however—doing Anarchist Café twice including Copwatch, Food Not Bombs once or twice, and other things—took a toll, and people either got burned out or felt that they were doing too much of the work. One might note a tension in that the projects that the DAAA Collective took on thrived on longevity, but depended on an apparently unsustainable model of activism. Despite the pitfalls, the various programs that the collective conducted created a large base of people who supported or at least respected the collective. In some ways, this was problematic, because it further distanced the "organizers" from the "people."

We're Gonna Learn You Somethin'

While the weekly Anarchist Cafés downtown were the primary spot for disseminating anarchist literature and propaganda, the group also organized quite a few educational and "outreach" events. Through-

out 2003 and 2004, the group hosted a series of film screenings and educational events, ranging from workshops on political prisoners to vegan potlucks. From 2004 to 2006, the group participated in the Earth Day celebrations in Modesto. Calling the yearly event "Earth First! Day," the group set up a table which included large amounts of literature, free food, film showings, and street theater. One year, the group made a urban sprawl trash monster, named Sprawly, which walked around the event insulting Democratic Party members, people involved in the city government, and people behind the booths of corporations and businesses. Another year during Earth First! Day, police harassed a friend of the collective for handing out fliers about an upcoming march against the police killing of her son, and the group responded by marching around the park, holding signs reading "Fuck the Police" and chanting against police harassment. For many within the group, it made more sense to get out into the community to take information directly to people than to waste resources and time organizing events only a small number would attend. To this end, the collective appeared at various events with literature, films, and other materials.

Out of the Dumpsters and into the Streets!

The first actions that the group organized developed from their experiences working with the local homeless community. In summer and fall of 2003, the group organized a homeless community forum to discuss conditions at the Gospel Mission and an event entitled Reclaim the Park. Reclaim the Park was born out of a desire to stop police harassment of homeless people at the park where Food Not Bombs served. Homeless people experience the police as a constant threat, a force that can take away their belongings, sleeping spots, and safety at any moment. Reclaim the Park was a transposition of the Reclaim the Streets approach into this context. Between 300 and 400 people showed up at the park and most everyone stayed for the entire day. It was one of the pinnacles of the collective's history and hardly anyone within the group had prior experience with activism or expected such a large turnout. Three meals were served, a free clothing



was picked because the group saw it as a "poor area" that would be receptive to free clothing. While the clothing drives did help a lot of people get free clothing, unlike Food Not Bombs they did not lead to other forms of more concrete struggle. After several months, the clothing drives stopped as attendance dropped.

In late winter of 2004, the collective organized its first Really Really Free Market. Under the banner "Coal for the Rich—Revolution for the Poor," the collective set up in a Wal-Greens parking lot. It was easy enough to organize, and thanks to donations from friends and thrift stores, not to mention dumpster diving, there was a lot of stuff. The first RRFM was a success in terms of public interest, and several people stopped by to donate items that they intended to take to thrift stores.

where the lure of free things is not the only drawing factor. While the DAAA Collective hoped to eventually use the RRFMs as a similar forum, the central goal was for it to be a place where anyone could bring anything and anyone could get something for free. The collective was more interested in it being an organ of community mutual aid than an excuse to spread anarchist ideas—which was what some of our other projects were more focused on. The group also wanted it to be organized by people outside of the collective, so it wasn't dependent upon anarchists to bring stuff. This didn't happen, but examples of gift economies do exist throughout the city—in alleys where people leave things for others to take, and behind various stores where people drop off stuff near dumpsters. Perhaps the group would have been bet-

on that people were using the city's power outlets to show films, and when the group returned one weekend they found that the power outlets had been screwed shut. After this, the group decided to continue the experiment of tabling in the downtown area and began to do shifts every Friday and Saturday night from 7 to 10:30 pm; the group quickly got a following of regulars. Weekly runs to the Krispy Crème donut dumpster earned the collective the name "the donut people" among the young kids who came for boxes of free food. The group also brought in performers such as Raum, an anarcho-jug band from Santa Cruz, and set up a patch-making station offering patch fabric, spray paint, and stencils.

* This is the same street where traveling IWW members would stop, hang out, and give talks almost a century ago.

The DAAA Collective sought to put anarchist politics on the streets, and indeed, that was where the Collective was best known. Anarchy cannot thrive confined to internet chat rooms and dusty conference halls—it has to be a vibrant working class movement posing an immediate threat to the rich, their infrastructure, and their ideology.



area was erected, and a lot of people simply hung out, listened to the radio, and talked with us. Throughout the day, people also signed a large sheet that was addressed to the Modesto Police, and people said a variety of things to the effect that they wanted to be left alone by the police.

Reclaim the Park actions were organized again in 2004 and 2005. In 2004, the basic idea was the same—that homeless people were harassed in the public parks and that it needed to stop—but the event was more extensive, including a film showing of *These Streets Are Watching*, a know-your-rights training, and, following lunch, a march through the streets to another park. The march was only about 25 people strong, but managed to block traffic for about 30 minutes and gain the support and participation of several homeless people. At the next park, another meal was shared, and there was another film showing about OCAP, a Canadian homeless and anti-poverty group.

In 2005, the group repeated the idea of Reclaim the Park, although this time expanding the reasons for the occupation of Tower Park beyond homelessness to “Another Modesto is Possible.” The group tried to reach out to local unions, community groups, and non-profits, but only one non-anarchist group actually made it out. Anarchist collectives from Fresno, the Bay Area, and elsewhere did show up, however. Again, people took to the streets, this time with about 40 people. Police stopped the group after about 10 minutes of marching to the other park, and ticketed three “leaders.” The police then left and the group continued to march in the street. In terms of community involvement, the last Reclaim the Park was basically a failure. Homeless attendance went down the last two years the event was organized, probably because of increased police presence at the 2004 and 2005 events following the marches. However, the

involvement of other anarchists made the Reclaim the Parks events a large success for the collective, bringing in new ideas and people. While the actions may not have been what the organizers were hoping for, they brought together anarchists in the valley and beyond.

The collective also organized several other marches. The first was a march and rally against the Bush Inauguration in January 2005, in which about 90 people took the streets of downtown Modesto until they were stopped by police. In spring 2006, the collective organized a rally to protest racist and Nazi graffiti that had been popping up in the local area; it ended with approximately fifty people marching around on city sidewalks and streets. In summer 2006, the collective teamed up with fellow local radicals in Aztlan Rising to organize an event protesting the anti-immigrant group, Save Our State, which was forming a chapter in Modesto. Both sides only managed to pull in about 35 people, but after the counter-demonstration the anti-immigrant group quickly disbanded. The action also opened up new channels between the anarchists in the DAAA Collective and those involved in Aztlan Rising. Aztlan Rising produced a DVD about the protests of May 1, 2006 that included an interview with someone from the DAAA Collective; DAAA Collective members showed people in Aztlan Rising various skills, including how to wheatpaste posters.

The DAAA Collective was able to organize these demonstrations in a city without a large liberal base. In most of them, the participants were predominantly young people, though not from any one subculture. The collective attended meetings of PFLAG and other groups and visited union halls to ask for solidarity at these demonstrations, but generally no leftists or liberals showed up. It’s worth noting that the protests the DAAA Collective organized generally did not increase the group’s

numbers. The protest actions that the group organized were largely symbolic, even if they involved marching through the street. While the group may have despised the liberals with their sign holding and candlelight vigils, the collective’s actions were simply a more militant version of the same approach.

Out of the Streets and into the Community

As time progressed, the collective saw that there were broader struggles going on around them that they could participate in or support. The first example of this came in 2004 when truckers in Stockton, Modesto, and the surrounding area joined the Industrial Workers of the World and began conducting wildcat strikes against various trucking companies. DAAA collective members showed up to the strike to hold picket signs with workers, and wrote a report of the strike, “Stockton IWW Truckers Strike Again,” reproducing it in zine form and posting it on the internet. The collective continued to attend various strikes in the area, bringing food, literature and walking on pickets.

Solidarity with people and communities resisting the police became a focal point. In 2005, after discovering a flier calling for a protest against the police murder of Sammy Galvan, the collective contacted the family organizing the event and began meeting with them. The collective helped the Galvan family by bringing people out for the demonstrations, posting flyers around town, and making banners and signs for the protest events. Anarchists with the collective also responded to the repression in the wake of Andres Raya shooting a police officer in 2005 [see *Rolling Thunder #1* for details]. Police raided homes without warrants, detained youth at gun point, harassed people who knew or were friends with Raya, and generally

turned Ceres and Modesto into a police state. Collective members attended community events to discuss possible actions against police brutality and terror; things culminated when the group joined other community members and activists in disrupting a “community forum” that was sponsored by the Ceres Police and Department of Justice in hopes of quelling anger about the police repression.

Members of the collective also assisted a farm labor community’s Copwatch program, documenting when the police showed up to raid homes or detain people. Once the Copwatch program started, police incursions into the area quickly decreased. The explosion of anger at the police in Ceres and Modesto was inspiring at this time. Around Ceres tags appeared that read, “13/14 = 187 on Pigs.” This was extremely significant: it meant gang truce for the sake of attacking the police. While police repression was horrible in Ceres, it provoked a healthy reframing of battle lines: from Mexican-Americans vs. Mexican and Latin American immigrants to proles vs. pigs.

In late 2005 and summer of 2006, the collective also participated in various community protests and actions against the Modesto Tallow Plant and the Covanta incinerator. The Tallow Plant was built in 1917 and served as a processing center for dead animals and fast-food deep-fat-frying oil. In essence, it was a place for industrial agriculture and capitalism to get rid of its dirty secrets—by turning them into pet food. The plant created a horrible smell, so bad local school kids practically two blocks away got nose bleeds and stomach aches. The plant was caught tossing trash into its processing—that is to say, into pet food—and operating without machinery on that would keep the smell down; Tallow itself was also caught lying to various government organizations, making fraudulent documents, and not paying taxes. For years, locals had demonstrated outside the plant, but in 2005, a new wave

of monthly protests began, calling for the plant to be shut down. The DAAA Collective made informational flyers, promoted the protests, and showed up with large banners reading: “NO COMPROMISE: CLOSE TALLOW!” Soon after, the plant shut down—due to both city government pressures to pay its bills and resistance from the community.

The collective was also involved in efforts to shut down the Covanta incinerator, which is located close to Modesto in nearby Patterson. The incinerator burns e-waste, carpeting, and trash, putting dioxin into the environment—a cancer-causing agent that has been demonstrated to increase sickness and asthma. Collective members attended anti-Covanta events organized by local groups, distributed anti-Covanta flyers, and joined other community members in blocking the access road to the Covanta plant during a Cesar Chavez Day march. The day ended with youthful protestors waving signs, anarchists masked up, and the Covanta welcome sign vandalized to read “Dioxin Kills!”

In addition to all this, the DAAA Collective also participated in much smaller community actions and protests around issues such as medicinal marijuana, labor struggles, and local protests against Wal-Mart. But the biggest surge of community action that the collective was involved in occurred on May Day 2006, the nationwide protest for immigrants’ rights. The group had attended various events during the buildup to the May Day walkout, but were shocked when on May 1 over 10,000 people flooded the streets of Modesto, shutting down downtown. Anarchists brought banners, buckets, and noisemakers to the march, and distributed posters and literature critiquing borders. Like the aftermath of the Andres Raya shootings, the May Day marches were important because they brought Sureños and Norteños together in a common project.

Participation in local struggles created strong connections between anarchists and

others organizing around different issues. Skills and ideas began to flow as anarchists got involved, albeit in small ways like making fliers, getting people out to events, and making banners for demonstrations. Anarchist participation in local social struggles created wider interest in anarchist ideas and tactics than if anarchists had been strictly organizing events themselves. It’s also worth noting that much of the most radical activity—wildcat strikes, environmental action, student walkouts—was initiated by people who were not “educated” by a radical minority.

We Hate Pigs—Pigs Hate Us

The DAAA Collective was not well-liked by the local police departments, and the FBI didn’t think too highly of the group either. Before the summer of 2004, no one in the group was aware that the government was paying attention them, but this changed when the collective began organizing a benefit for Jeff “Free” Luers. After an intense surveillance scare, the event was canceled. No one was hauled away to a grand jury or got their home raided, but Modesto was included in a list of possible target cities that might become staging grounds for “eco-terrorist” actions. This run-in with the feds scared the young group and made them wise up to the fact that the collective was being monitored.

After this incident, much of the interactions that the group had with police occurred during Anarchist Café and Copwatch; police got to know some of the members of the group by name. When walking around during events downtown, collective members made a point of moving together, making sure someone had a phone on them. Ceres police also knew the collective. In 2004, DAAA Collective members in Ceres organized a small-scale Ceres Reclaim the Parks, and police prepared with riot gear and round-the-clock surveillance for the onslaught of ten young kids—some as young as 12 years old. One

DAAA Collective member was identified by several police officers, and police officers asked after other members by name.

Occasional problems with the police continued until the end of the collective, although considering what other groups, individuals, and social movements go through at the hands of the police, the harassment the collective received was extremely mild. For instance, some people in Modesto who were organizing against police brutality had their houses staked out by police and their children threatened. The collective's experience with police does indicate that police were sharing and pooling information about the group. The head of homeland security in Stanislaus County once commented in the Modesto Bee that the greatest local threat to national security was "eco-terrorism," implying that police repression against radicals was far from over.

The DAAA Collective maintained public visibility, which enabled the police to keep up with its endeavors. When the group organized a demonstration, it would be on their website, flyers would be posed, and stories run in the newspaper. The group avoided needless problems with the police by studying their legal rights, looking up penal codes, and learning other legal mumbo jumbo. The group probably faced so little serious repression because it was largely focused on community organizing. However, if any serious clandestine activity had occurred, the police and FBI would have immediately scrutinized organizers in the group. Being a known face in the community is great, but when you're handing out *Frequently Asked Questions About the ELF* twice a week, don't be surprised if you develop a police following!

Aftermath

The DAAA Collective dissolved late in winter of 2006. The workload that required its continuation was unsustainable. Work within the collective was not distributed evenly; some people took on too much without any assistance, while others took on no work at all and still expected things to happen. Because of this, instead of building a group of seasoned radicals over years of struggle, many participants dropped out after a year or so, forfeiting the chance to develop experience and pass on lessons to others. This also contributed to the group

being unable to evaluate its projects critically and consider how to refine them. The lowest common denominator of anarchist ideas and tactics remained the baseline of the group; this is why projects like Food Not Bombs continued for years despite people within the group doubting whether it could fulfill the goals they actually wanted to accomplish.

Imbalanced distribution of tasks and responsibilities is a major problem within the current anarchist movement—just look at the high dropout rate. The DAAA Collective was no exception. The group tried to circumvent this by having no real formal structure: there were no founding documents, no platform or set ideology, no formal meetings. In theory, the DAAA Collective was a fluid organization based around whatever projects took its name. In practice, the collective had a website, a post office box, a phone number, and an email account that all needed to be checked regularly, and there were always action reports to write and reporters to talk to. The fact that only a few people ever did this meant that those people determined how the group was perceived by the public. In the end, when a few individuals walked away from the collective, it collapsed.

When the DAAA Collective dissolved, however, it was a breath of fresh air for many local anarchists. No longer was there a single organization that people had to align themselves with to get something done; soon, people were taking new initiatives. One of these was *Modesto Anarcho*, a locally-focused quarterly publication. The Modesto Anarcho Distro also started doing mail order and sending materials to prisoners, as well as tabling at events. The Wingnuts Liberation Project appeared, organizing film showings and workshops and creating zines addressing substance abuse and mental illness. Projects like Anarchist Café and Critical Mass were carried on both by people who had been involved in the DAAA Collective and people who had never been part of it.

The Struggle Continues

What aspects of the DAAA experience could be instructive for anarchists in similar cities around the United States? What distinguishes this particular experiment?

Above all, the group sought to give class struggle a public face, to put anarchist politics on the streets; indeed, it was in the streets that DAAA Collective was best known. This was the spirit that led the group to the front of the May Day march, yelling "Don't listen to the police—let's shut down city hall!" Anarchy cannot thrive confined to internet chat rooms and dusty conference halls—it has to be a vibrant working class movement posing an immediate threat to the rich, their infrastructure, and their ideology.

Accordingly, the Collective didn't shy away from being associated explicitly with anarchism. All too often, radicals have misgivings about presenting their ideas to people in fear that "regular folks won't understand." The DAAA Collective, on the other hand, hypothesized that if anything, "regular" people would be the ones most drawn to their politics. Anarchism at its best—for example, in the Mexican, Spanish, and Russian revolutions—has always represented the class of people with nothing to lose, the ones who possessed a thirst for the blood of their oppressors and a need for complete and total revolution.

Likewise, the DAAA Collective sought to participate in and organize within ongoing class- and community-based struggles. The group aimed to be an element within the wider working class—not to "lead" these struggles, but to maximize their potential for working class self-organization and direct action. At a time when many anarchists write off regular people as "the problem," the DAAA Collective saw those around them as possible fellow insurgents.

Now that the DAAA Collective has ceased to exist, Modesto anarchists are in the midst of a new experiment: not a new single organization, but an anarchist community that responds to the current context in a less centralized manner. Make no mistake, Modesto is not a Mecca for anarchist activity—but if people can make a dent and raise some hell in the filth capital of California, it can be done anywhere!

For more information, including copies of Modesto Anarcho:

Modesto Anarcho
PO Box 3027
Modesto, CA 95353
www.geocities.com/anarcho209

Wishful Thinking

you wake up each day
as new as anyone
there is no reason to assume
you would be supernaturally strong.
there is no reason to test your strength
through daily disrespect and neglect.
you don't need to be strong.
everyone supports you.

if you say ouch
we believe that you are hurt.
we wait to hear how we can help
to mend your pain.

you have chosen to be at a school,
at a workplace, in a community
that knows that you are priceless
that would never sacrifice your spirit
that knows it needs your brilliance to be whole

your very skin
is sacred
and everything beyond it
is a miracle that we revere

we mourn any violence that
has ever been enacted against you.
we will do what it takes
to make sure that it doesn't happen again.
to anyone.

when you speak
we listen.
we are so glad that you
are here, of all places.

other women
even strangers
reach out to you
when you seem afraid
and they stay
until peace comes

the sun
reminds everyone
how much they love you.

by Alexis Pauline Gumbs, UBUNTU

people are interested
in what you are wearing
simply
because it tells them
what paintings to make.

everyone has always told you
you can stay a child
until you are ready to move on

if you run across the street
naked at midnight
no one will think
you are asking
for anything.

you do so many things
because it feels good to move.
you have nothing to prove
to anyone.

white people cannot harm you.
they do not want to.
they do not do it by accident.

your smile makes people
glad to be alive

your body is not
a symbol of anything

everyone respects your work
and makes sure you are safe
while doing it

at any moment
you might relive
the joy of being embraced

no one will lie to you,
scream at you
or demand anything.

when you change your mind,
people will remember to change theirs.

your children are safe
no one will use them against you.

the university is a place where you
are reflected and embraced.
anyone who forgets how miraculous you are
need only open their eyes.

the universe conspires
to lift you
up.
on the news every night
people who look like you and
the people you love
are applauded
for their contribution to society.

the place where knowledge is
has no walls.

you are rewarded for the work you do
to keep it all together.

every song i've
ever heard on the radio
is in praise
of you.

the way you speak
is exactly right
for wherever you happen
to be.

there is no continent anywhere
where life counts as nothing.

there is no innocence that needs your guilt
to prove it.

there is no house
in your neighborhood
where you still hear screams
every time you go
past.

no news camera waits
to amplify your pain.

nobody wonders
whether you will make it.
everybody believes in you

when you have a child
no one finds it tragic.
no map records it as an instance of blight.

no one hopes you will give up
on your neighborhood
so they can buy it up cheap.

everyone asks you your name.
no one calls you out of it.

someone is thinking highly of you
right now.

being around you
makes people want to be
their kindest, most generous selves.

there is no law anywhere
that depends on your silence.

nobody bases their privilege
on their ability to desecrate you.

everyone will believe anything you say
because they have been telling you the truth
all along.

school is a place, like every other place.
no one here is out to get you.

worldwide, girls who look like you
are known for having great ideas.

3 in 3 women will fall in love with themselves
during their lifetime.

every minute in North Carolina
a woman embraces
another woman.

you know 8 people
who will help you move
to a new place
if you need to.

when you speak loudly
everyone is happy
because they wondered
what you were thinking about.

people give you gifts
and truly expect nothing
in return.

no one thinks you are
over-reacting.

everyone believes
that you should have all
the resources that you need,
because by being yourself
you make the world so much
brighter.

any creases on your face
are from laughter.

no one, anywhere, is locked in a cage.

you are completely used to knowing what you want.
following your dream is as easy as walking.

you are more than enough.

everyone is waiting
to see what great thing
you'll do next.

every institution wants to know
what you think, so they can find out
what they should really be doing,
or shut down.

strangers send you love letters
thanking you
for speaking your mind.

you wake up
new as anyone.



The organizing that coalesced to form the group UBUNTU came out of the emotionally charged response to the Duke Lacrosse team scandal. After team members hired sex workers for a lacrosse team “party” in March 2006, one of the women filed charges that she was raped and abused at the party. Three Duke lacrosse players were formally accused. Evidence of the team’s racism and misogyny circulated among students and Durham locals.

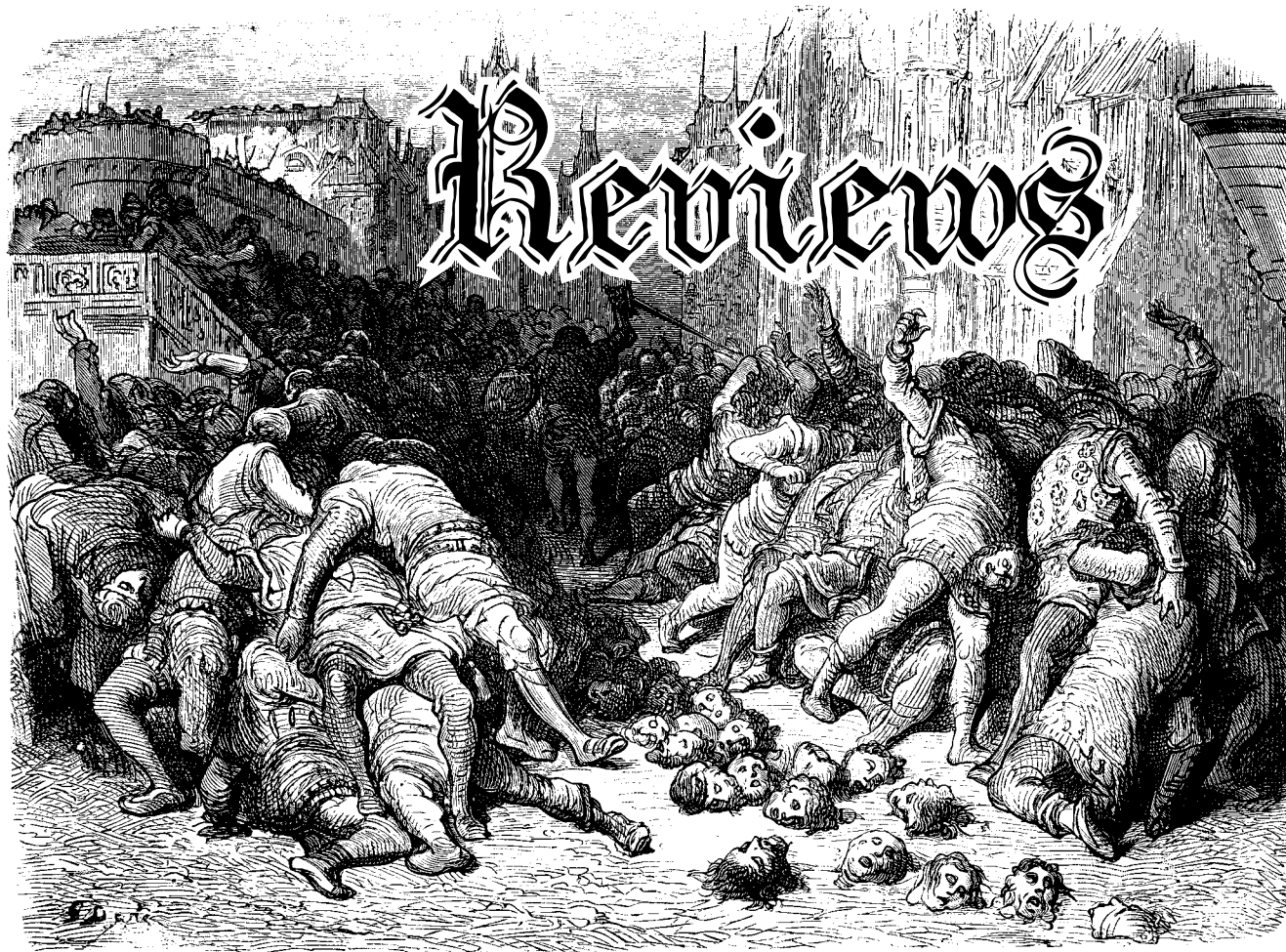
The details of what happened that night are gruesome. Unbelievable. Totally believable to anyone who has felt the brunt of racist or sexual violence.

Women, people of color, and their allies cried out in protest for this sister. Duke officials were silent. One anonymous, African-American, working-class sex worker was taking on this class of privileged white men and the elite university that cultivates them.

She was torn apart. Revictimized by the corporate media that dragged her name through the mud, by the judicial system that found those three rich boys (and their defense team, and the PR firm they hired) innocent and went on to disbar the district attorney who had pursued the charges, and by the complicity of the university that not only refused to reprimand this intolerable behavior, but in the aftermath actually awarded a settlement to the three “accused.”

In the wake of this mockery, UBUNTU began formulating a new vision for justice: “Led by women of color and survivors of sexual assault, UBUNTU is dedicated to creating a world without sexual violence. We are transforming the pain and rage of lived and relived victimization in our community into healing, connection, and leadership by embodying and demanding community accountability and creative social change. A sustaining transformative love is the center of our work and the model of our movement.”

contact UBUNTU: ubuntuNC@gmail.com



In addition to these books, we highly recommend Alexandre Skirda's incredibly comprehensive Nestor Makhno: Anarchy's Cossack, available from AK Press. Had we been aware of Skirda's book when the first issue of Rolling Thunder was published, we would certainly have included it in the recommended reading for that issue's retelling of Makhno's life, "Anarchy in the Ukraine: The Secret Lives of Cab Drivers."

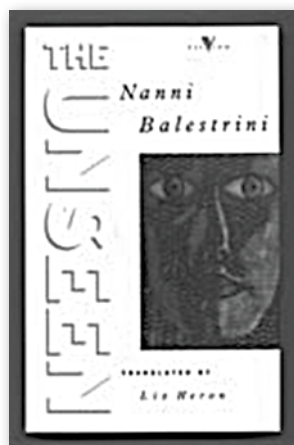
The Unseen

by Nanni Balestrini

Balestrini's thinly fictionalized tale of anticapitalist resistance and prison survival from the Italian Autonomia struggles of the 1970s will make exciting reading for just about any anarchist today. As is generally the case with accounts from earlier eras, it's surprising how familiar everything is: the ragged clothes, the discovery of collective power in small-scale actions such as school walkouts and pressuring landlords,

the reliance on low-intensity crime as an alternate means of survival, the escalation to streetfighting and direct action, the fragmentation of the movement over tactics and gender issues, the ultimate breakdown amid intense police repression and snitching.

The difference here seems to be a matter of scale: Autonomia took Italy seemingly to the brink of civil war, a more impressive trajectory than anarchists in the United States have accomplished in generations. It might be instructive, then, to look at what worked for the Italians in broadening their resistance. One can hardly draw useful strategic conclusions from reading a single work of fiction, but there are few enough resources available in English from the perspective of participants in Autonomia that this is as good a starting place as any.



There are a lot of work-related conflicts in this book—workers on strike, workers destroying materials in their workplaces or confronting scabs—but there are just as many passages in which the insurgents take on the system at the point of consumption: mass walkouts at shopping centers, squatting actions, arsons targeting bars utilized by drug dealers. Seizing the means of day-to-day survival is a primary goal for the radicals; this means tactics such as shoplifting and fare evasion, but in forms that promote collective activity. Likewise, the fostering of a culture of resistance, in which people develop needs no state agency or marketplace commodity can satisfy, is essential in every step of the struggle: the social networks, social centers, and social events provide the lifeblood for every effort inside or outside the workplace. Reading

this, one can't help but wish the scam-centered subculture that flourished in the US at the turn of the century (as detailed in zines such as *Scam* and *Evasion*) had developed into a full-scale social movement, rather than rupturing between accusations of privileged adventurism from one side and temptations towards consumerist individualism on the other.

All the meetings and riots and counter-culture—that's the exciting, inspiring part. The other half of the book consists of the sobering years the protagonist and some of his comrades spend in prison afterwards, forgotten by the rest of the world, locked in increasingly debilitating and futile battles with the prison administration. This is the inevitable price of raising the stakes in revolutionary struggle: the closer you come to overthrowing the power structure, the worse the consequences of failure.

At first glance, the text of *The Unseen* may look intimidating—the entire story is told without a single punctuation mark, with concrete blocks of text in place of paragraphs—but it reads surprisingly smoothly, and this unusual convention assists the author in achieving a persuasively artless confessional tone. This is all the more impressive in that this is a translation; apparently Italian translates into English better than French! As the English translation was published by Verso, a major corporate imprint, you should be able to find this at a library somewhere, despite its being out of print.

Dear Comrades

Readers' Letters to *Lotta Continua*
edited by Margaret Kunzle,
translated by Pete Anderson

Pluto Press, 1980

Italy in the late 1970s saw intense and often violent class struggle across the country, particularly in auto factories and amongst youth. With the economy in crisis, millions participated in mass strikes, factory occupations, squatting, riots, and student walk-outs—a near revolution of even greater intensity than the most heralded events of 1968 in France. In feminist collectives and factory strike committees, squatted

In October, 1977, a student named Walter Rossi was shot by fascists in Rome. During the protest demonstrations the next day in Turin, a well-known fascist hangout called the "Blue Angel" bar was attacked and set on fire. Roberto Crescenzo, a 19-year-old with no political convictions who happened to be there, was fatally burned. This letter appeared in *Dear Comrades* shortly afterwards.

Dear comrades,

I'm a 12-year-old anarchist girl. It may seem odd that I already have a political belief at my age, but when they killed comrade Lorosso in Bologna it opened my eyes and I tried to find out as much as I could about the world around me and I understood that the only solution was to reject this state and to build something that will (at last) be just!

Now comrade Walter is dead too and I cried with anger for him and because we're powerless (I and other young

people) against this shit state which is busy, between debates, supporting fascist violence and ignoring the bodies of the murdered comrades.

I also want to reply to comrade Ciro to tell him that probably whoever threw the Molotov cocktail into the "Blue Angel" bar in Turin is sorry for the death of an innocent boy, and my anger at this act is immense, but I myself, after having seen the pool of blood under Walter's body, might have acted in the same way. The armed struggle is an important fact which I think should be used in extreme cases with some understanding of what the consequences of such violent acts may be. I don't approve either, but frankly, after what happened in Rome, I'd have liked to burn down everything. The fascists are bastards and I hate them as much as you do, but we must be careful not to play into their hands.

I'd like some answers. Please publish my letter. Greetings with a clenched fist.

—Comrade Amanda (A)

apartment buildings and behind barricades, a revolt was fought and lost. This was the time of the "historic compromise" between the ruling Christian Democrats and the Communist Party, and in these struggles it became clear that the left wing of capital—dominated by trade unions and the Communist Party—was just as clearly the enemy as the right. Very little history of these conflagrations and the people involved has been written in or translated into English. For those interested in a theoretical history of Autonomia, Steve Wright's *Storming Heaven* is the most complete book available in English, but the book that captures the revolt most passionately is *Dear Comrades*.

Dear Comrades is a collection of letters written to the radical Italian paper *Lotta Continua* (Continuous Struggle) in 1977 from people all over Italy who participated in the movement. I have never found another book that puts together the first-person writings of militant factory workers, teenage anarchists, college students, and feminist groups, de-

bating tactics, the meaning of communist struggle, and women's liberation with such love and fierceness. While this book is now out of print, it can be found fairly easily used or through inter-library loan.

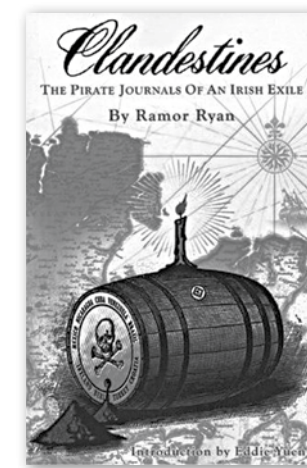
Clandestines

The Pirate Journals of an Irish Exile
by Ramor Ryan

www.akpress.org

Ramor Ryan's *Clandestines*—a modern adventure chronicle of those who have

fought, or are fighting now, against injustice and oppression—is inspirational with examples of compassion and solidarity. From Europe to the Middle East and across the seas to Latin America, the Irish anarchist tells stories of his travels: the people he riots with, drinks with, makes love with, everyone. I consider *Clandestines* a must-read, no matter what one's po-



litical identity may be; as while one relates to the books' characters the realization is born that a revolutionary exists in us all.

Being of Irish heritage, I especially was drawn into the chapter titled "The Making of a Rebel," regarding the tragic Graveyard Massacre in Belfast in 1988 at the funeral of three IRA Volunteers murdered in Gibraltar by British Special Air Service (SAS) soldiers, when the Volunteers were gunned down in cold blood. Ryan's account of the cowardly attack on the grieving families of the three IRA soldiers and other mourners by a member of the Ulster Defense Association (UDA) with gun and grenades ranks among the best accounts of the Bloody Sunday tragedy I have ever read. Through Ryan's description of the attack on those attending the funerals of the deceased Volunteers and the aftermath, the reader feels like they were actually there, experiencing outrage, fear, and determination.

Ryan's *Clandestines* is one of those rare books a reader hates to put down before finishing, which is the highest compliment paid to any author. As you read each chapter, you find yourself drawn into the events Ryan is writing about, and caring about the characters he introduces to the reader, real people living through extraordinary circumstances; one wonders about their welfare after finishing this book, wishing them well. The only thing I did not like about this amazing journey through events of the past several decades is that each chapter, after drawing the reader into it, ends leaving one yearning for more, exhibiting Ramor Ryan's skill as a writer.

Summing up my thoughts regarding *Clandestines* would be the words, "Well done, lad!" I would hope my free anarchist brothers and sisters will share any future works by Ramor Ryan.

Review by Harold H. Thompson, an anarchist prisoner serving life-plus sentences in Tennessee after a series of farcical trials. He is well known for his work as a "jailhouse lawyer" and copes with prison by fighting for his fellow prisoners in the courts for some semblance of real justice.

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A Problem of Memory

Stories to End the Racial Nightmare
by Taylor Sparrow

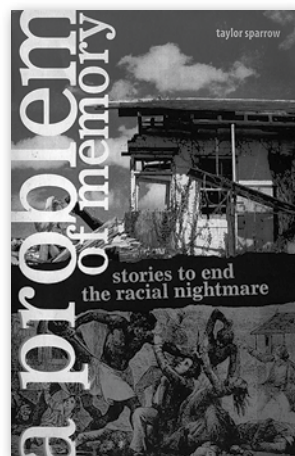
www.eberhardtpress.org

Down here in New Orleans, *A Problem with Memory* is never in at the Iron Rail Library. It's being sold and passed around to every radical educator in town because it's basically the *Days of War, Nights of Love* of radical race history. A collection of short stories, history, personal experiences, and poetry, the book gives you enough dots to connect to create a detailed picture of race politics in amerikkka.

No easy task. The key to this book is that it is both expansive and readable. The author volunteered at Douglass High School in New Orleans just before Hurricane Katrina. His experiences with radical educators mix with the difficult task of understanding why racism works (for the powerful elite) and how this came to be. This union creates a powerful documentary of race and class in America.

Taylor writes of the *need* for history as a way to understand race and resistance. He covers the subject extensively, from the imposition of the British Empire in Ireland and North America to the Haitian Revolution, from US Slavery ("to the vast majority of white people, slavery was neither moral, nor immoral—it was profitable") to John Brown and Ella Baker. If you're well-read on race history in the US, you'll have heard many of these accounts before. There are, however, some details and gems, especially in the first-person interviews Taylor conducts. The stories pour out effusively. It's not a textbook covering the entire history of slavery, but instead focuses on several key stories that underlie the crux of the problems.

It's a fast read and, thankfully, ends with some real solid projects and perspectives from longtime educators. Dorise Blackmon, a teacher for over twenty years, relates, "Every day I wake up and think, 'What am I going to tell these kids about this fucked up system we're living in?'... Every day I think about abolishing this oppressive government." There are con-



versations with others who teach algebra and writing classes to build the skills of undereducated, poor black youth.

Interviews with these students also intersperse the writing—though it must be noted you won't find much criticism of these projects. The book explains why "the current system succeeds at creating a failure class... literally wasting millions of young lives in

an ever-increasing police/prison state." *Problem of Memory* offers a challenge for us all to confront the racial nightmare by taking the offer of history: "the offer of history is to create it... history can't wait. Either you accept the offer to weave yourself a new world, or you accept being offered up to the machine that devours you."

Papillon

by Henri Charrière

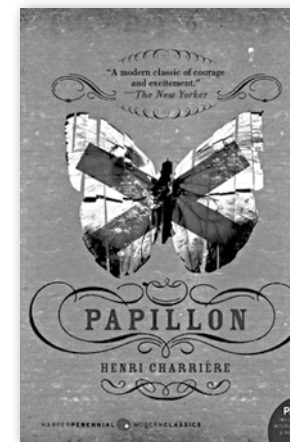
This is the story of Papillon, the street name of Henri Charrière, one of the most popular, daring, and brilliant prison escapees in French history. An autobiography, this book conveys the feeling that Papillon, himself, is sitting at your kitchen table delivering up an unbelievably real story. The tale takes the reader from Charrière's murder trial in Paris to the brutally repressive and deadly penal institutions of French Guiana in South America,* through his first daring escape—or *cavale*—by boat across the open sea to Colombia, and further to the "no man's land" where tribes of Guajira natives still resisted the encroachment of colonialism and civilization. Papillon spends years of his life

* Studying the colonization of the Galapagos Islands, your devoted editors were struck by the number of successful strikes, revolts, and riots that occurred in the prisons and labor camps there, interrupting the processes of settlement and development. Could it be that the flora and fauna of those fabled isles only survived because of these upheavals? When the history of the world's few remaining green spaces is written, let the bulk of the credit for their preservation go not to wealthy environmentalists but to the workers and inmates who refused, for reasons of their own, to be complicit in their destruction.

in a never-ending cycle of imprisonment, attempted escape, and capture—with the occasional successful *cavale* thrown in. On the way Papillon is assisted by other prisoners, an autonomous leper colony, a radical priest, sympathetic prison guards, crafty nuns, Chinese laborers, a good-natured pirate, indigenous tribes, a facially-tattooed bush hunter, a black pig that understands Chinese and can sense the location of dangerous quicksand, and a large amount of cash tucked away in a metal tube hidden in his lower intestine for almost fifteen years.

Convicted at the age of twenty-five for a crime he did not commit and sentenced to life in prison with hard labor, Papillon never accepted his lot or lost his determination to escape. Whether within the prison colony or while on *cavale*, nearly every decision—from acquiring food to taking a job to the conversations and bribes he made—was a strategic step to position him one step closer to freedom. Nevertheless, he never once committed an unnecessary act of violence or put his own interests ahead of other prisoners trying to escape. Though he achieved temporary periods of freedom, it ultimately took Charrière eight different escape attempts to achieve permanent freedom. These involved treacherous voyages at sea, armed conflict with guards, staging a large-scale prison revolt, blowing up an entire prison wall so as to be carried out to a taxi by another prisoner (because his feet were still broken from a previous escape attempt), and dozens of other crazy schemes and mistakes. Peppered throughout the story are the successes, failures, and tragedies experienced by Charrière's comrades and co-conspirators—one of whom died from three years of solitary confinement after being framed for stealing a single bicycle in Paris. With very little overt social critique necessary, this autobiography is a clear, loud, anguished scream against the absurdity and arbitrary cruelty of bourgeois law and order.

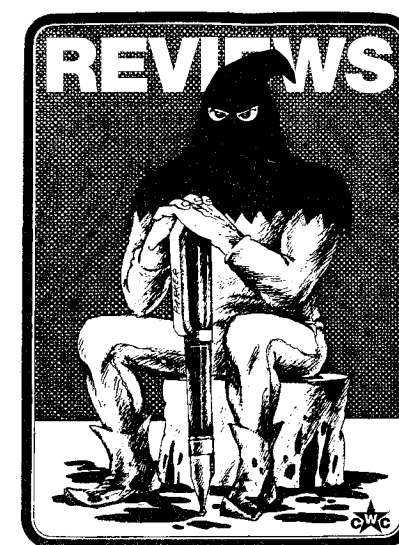
Papillon can be read in many ways: as a compelling adventure story, as a primary



source on the connections between racist colonialism, forced labor, and the early prison-industrial complex, or as a point of reference offering insights relevant to current individual and collective struggles for freedom. It was inspiring to note that Charrière was of similar age to most of my comrades when he undertook his first escape attempt, and used the immense

creativity and hope of his youth to great advantage. He developed the patience to pace for 16 hours a day to stay in shape during a 730-day solitary confinement, the urgency never to stay in one prison very long, and the spontaneity to throw himself into shark-infested waters seventy miles from the mainland with only two sewn-together bags of coconuts for a boat. These are all qualities we would do well to bring to our own projects and organizing.

The book is not without shortcomings. While the stories inside hardly suffer for it, Charrière himself seems to be simply a prison reformist and does not present a particularly deep critique of the system that subjected him to so much misery. Though it never assumes a self-congratulatory tone, this autobiography also makes it sound as if the protagonist can do no wrong. Nearly every misfortune is the result of bad luck rather than Charrière's own poor planning, every interaction he has is completely noble and honorable, and everyone, including the prison wardens, seems to love him. Even the explanation for his desire to escape—to become a "decent member" of society—seems a little far-fetched, given his later career as a Venezuelan bank robber (nothing to be ashamed of!). All that being said, none of these criticisms take away from the core value of *Papillon* as the incredible memoir of a man bent upon achieving his liberation at any price. This book begs the question: if one small-time French thief can thwart all the judicial systems of the world by hiding on a tiny island surrounded by quicksand, the entrance to which can only be found by speaking Chinese to a small guide-pig, what is there that we cannot do?



Transgression, Incoherence, Irrationality, Attack:

Bukaka Spat Here & The Art of Destruction

by Alexander Brener and Barbara Schurz

Vargas Organization and Blossom vs. Fruit SAMIZDAT, respectively

In the final pages of *Bukaka Spat Here*, terrorists smash planes into the Pentagon and World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. It is a rare passage in which the violence and absurdity of reality exceeds the violence and absurdity of the storyline. Bukaka, the protagonist of this Rabelaisian burlesque, quotes Foucault to explain why the inevitable counterattack of Empire is doomed to fail, foretelling the outcome of the Iraq occupation years in advance:

"There is no single locus of great refusal, no soul of revolt, source of all rebellions, or pure law of the revolutionary. Instead there is a plurality of resistances, each of them a special case . . ."

On September 11, 2001, I was in high school when the news came in about the World Trade Center. I knew my partner's school had gotten out and that he would be at home unchaperoned, so I skipped class and hurried through the woods to his house. We got it on in the living room

* *Bukaka Spat Here* was published in 2002.

as the whole world crashed and burned outside. At one point he grabbed me and I slammed my face into his head, breaking my nose against his forehead. There was blood all over his face and my face, all over our necks and in our mouths. He started licking the blood off my face, off my forehead and neck, out of my nose and mouth. I thought it was the hottest thing that ever happened. We kept at it for hours until his parents got home. In my sexual education class, all of this would have been described as deviant and dangerous—teen sex, irresponsible exchange of bodily fluids, violence that would have horrified our elders. For me it was a way out, an attack on a world that couldn't crash fast enough as far as we were concerned, a moment of snatching back our bodies and the violence that surrounded us and employing them—as the only weapons at our disposal—to crash everything faster.

Liberation, when we're lucky enough to experience it, rarely resembles the spotless utopias we paint to appeal to those we perceive as desiring white picket fences. Think of all the obsessions and desires we hide from even our closest companions: "I could never tell them *that*." If freedom is to be big enough to hold all the perversions, compulsions, and dirty secrets that are inextricable parts of us, it's bound to include some debauchery and darkness. The sexual kink explored in queer communities is only the tip of the iceberg.

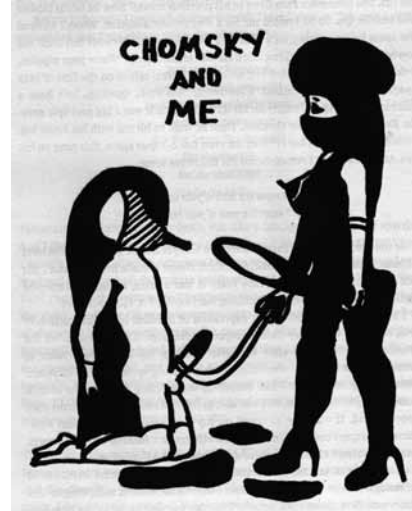
Studying these compulsions and dirty secrets, one might hypothesize that much of human behavior is determined by subterranean forces. If this is true, those who wish to transform human life must engage with those forces, figuring them into their equations rather than simply trying to reprogram human beings as if we were rational machines.

Protestant morality dictates that there is vice and virtue—vice being everything subterranean, seductive, and irrational, and virtue the restrictions imposed by the superego. According to this storyline, the more we repress ourselves, the better. But what if this is simply impossible, as the whoring of televangelists suggests? What if we can never escape our subterranean selves, and denying them simply divests us of self-awareness? The best thing, then, would be to cultivate the *right* vices: vices that get you into interesting

predicaments, vices that provide fertile ground for new developments, vices that are, in essence, virtues.

This makes an argument for vice and irrationality according to the values of virtue and rationality, but to really get to the bottom of things, so to speak, we have to reverse perspective and look at things from *below*, from within the sectors of society and ourselves that are despised and forbidden. From this vantage point, revolution means dissolving the category of vice, but not by absorbing vice into virtue so much as *by making everything into vice*. What is more irresistible and ineradicable than vice, anyway?

If we should cultivate fearsome, powerful vices, vices that can tear us—willing or not, right or wrong—out of our complacency, then likewise as readers we should seek out the most problematic texts, the



ones we can't easily agree with or digest, the ones we would most like to avoid: texts that, as Brener and Schurz demand in their manifesto, "Anti-Technologies of Resistance," deny their readers any aesthetic or ethical satisfaction."

Enter *Bukaka Spat Here*, perhaps the most provocative and problematic anarchist text of the century thus far. This slim novel details the life of one Bukaka—ostensibly a Burundian revolutionary but unmistakably a symbol of the Return of the Repressed as capital's worst nightmare—as she crisscrosses the globe, fucking, fighting, and

* "6. REFUSAL OF ANY AESTHETIC AND ETHICAL SATISFACTION. No satisfaction, not for yourself, not for others... No consumption and pleasure of success... I confess that this idea is not clear in the end even to myself: What does no satisfaction mean? . . ."

spitting on everything in her path. Bukaka describes herself in typical heady prose:

My belly is like a heavy clockwork bomb. My fingers are like Cuban cigars in the hand of Che Guevara... My urine erodes bourgeois platinum and gold. My spittle kills pit bulls and hippopotamuses.

This bombastic energy bears the reader along—although combined with the absence of linear plot development, it can get overwhelming. In addition to recounting her exploits and misadventures in tones alternately breathless and deadpan, Bukaka holds forth on a variety of subjects, proclaiming manifestos, quoting post-structuralists, reinterpreting history, and declaiming crude poetry:

Everywhere lethal injection!
Everywhere electric chair!
Everywhere just disinfection!
And fucking Tony Blair!

The storyline and content are international in scope, evincing the authors' own rootless cosmopolitanism. Bukaka makes no distinction between the greatest historical events and the most obscure, nor between true stories, satirical exaggerations, and utter fabrications:

First of all I met the Wombles. At that time the Wombles attacked airlines around the world and exploded planes. As well they demolished cars and other technologies based on the use of oil. In this way they tried to stop the greenhouse effect. When I met them they were building a new bomb for an action in New York's World Trade Center. As soon as I entered their headquarters near London Bridge there was an unexpected explosion. All Wombles died. Luckily I lost just my little toe on the right foot. OH, MAMBA! Poor Wombles!

Those who are familiar with the actual WOMBLES will recognize this as an absurd extrapolation of their fairly standard anarchist organizing efforts in the UK. In one sense, such fantastic reinterpretations of real people and organizations serve to make them interesting again; but this can also have the effect of revealing their dullness and insufficiency. What would it take, really, for the WOMBLES to have a chance in hell of stopping global warming?

In the same vein, Bukaka dallies with a series of paramours including Noam Chomsky, whose linguistic theory Bukaka finds hopelessly reactionary but whose

"thin pale legs" she adores, noxious pop director Quentin Tarantino ("he looked like a Nazi officer on the first of May 1945, totally demoralized"), and Carlo Giuliani, the young man murdered by police in Genoa during the 2001 G8 protests.

There's just enough theory mixed in with all this to keep the graduate students paying attention. Bukaka weighs in on Spinoza's concept of democracy, whether property destruction or fighting the police is most strategic, the role of the media in the Palestinian situation, and the account of the body as machine advanced by Deleuze and Guattari. Of course, you have to wade through bunkum and balderdash to get to this stuff, but if Hardt and Negri spiced up their books with nonsense in a similar fashion, they might make for easier reading.

The whimsical style, offensive sex and scatology, and polymorphous protagonist—in the course of the story, she becomes a zeppelin-headed flying machine, an actual fly, and a single tooth—will remind some readers of Kathy Acker. Other passages recall William Burroughs:

International girls, semi-dressed in Milanese rags and carefully shaved at all the right places search for free tables in restaurants full of rich boyish brainwashed Americans. Senile Belgian pensioners with huge brown spots on their wrinkled backs look for Gaudi's architectural masterpieces with a sclerotic smile on their faces. Pale and fat new Russians in boots, purchased five minutes ago, dash into shops to find a shirt fitting these boots.

As derivative as a professor of English Literature might consider this text, anarchist readers may well experience it as the only *original* composition to have come out of the milieu in a generation, entirely apart from whether or not they think it has any value. This attests to the conservatism of anarchist publishing generally.

Some readers will interpret *Bukaka Spat Here* in the context of the authors' careers as anti-artists. Brener is a Russian performance artist of some repute, known for challenging Yeltsin to a boxing match in Red Square during the Chechen war and spraypainting a big green dollar sign on a painting by Malevich in Holland in 1997. In the latter case, after spending some time in prison on hunger strike, he argued to the court that, as he and Malevich were both Russian artists, his action should be viewed

as a kind of dialogue and the Dutch authorities should keep out of it. Schurz is from Austria, which in the 1960s was famous in the art world for Viennese Actionism, a confrontational movement that attacked the role of art as commodity in bourgeois society via transgressive and frequently violent means. Although Brener and Schurz would almost certainly object to the comparison, one could consider their writing a sort of literary equivalent to the actual interventions they carry out in this tradition.

The elephant in the corner, of course, and the frame through which the North American reader is bound to approach this book, is race. What the fuck are these privileged Europeans doing, writing from the perspective of an African woman? Clearly, Bukaka is intended as a cartoonish archetype: a protagonist who represents everything excluded, including the parts of the readers that do not identify with dominant culture. But there's a fine line between harnessing the power of brazen offense—turning disgust with the body into a weapon against those who would make the body disgusting—and reinforcing racism and colonialism by telling a story about someone else's body. Do Brener and Schurz use the black female body because white colonialism has made them feel entitled to, making it into a weapon with its hypertrophied sexuality and oozing fluids? Or are they boldly attacking their reader's discomforts and the stultifying stagnation and timidity of a hopelessly assimilated identity politics?

In the US anarchist context, many will experience this book as racist and sexist, tasteless blaxploitation thinly disguised by pseudo-militant sloganeering—the kind of representation of the Other that silences. Perhaps it's telling, after all, that Bukaka is portrayed with a huge white dildo between her legs. So long as access to the means of expression is limited to the white and powerful, patriarchy and colonialism always get the last laugh.

Yet it could also be said that, as a protagonist, Bukaka satirizes the desire of white radicals to identify with the most oppressed subjects, taking the white radical tendency to speak for the oppressed to such an extreme that it can be recognized for what it is. In this reading, by releasing themselves from internal censorship, the authors have channeled the unconscious yearnings of white radicals for the enti-



tlement they consider the oppressed to possess. We may squirm, we may try to look away or distance ourselves by sitting in judgment, but the more we do the more we implicate ourselves.

Once we open the Pandora's box of identity politics, question after difficult question tumbles out. Apart from race, is the hyperbolic depiction of Bukaka's female sexuality acceptable, since Schurz is a woman? What if Brener wrote some of those passages, would that make any difference? And what about the irony of North Americans judging the propriety of an Eastern European's writing? Brener is a Jew born in Kazakhstan, the former Soviet republic moronically satirized in the Hollywood movie *Borat*; in an earlier text, "Third World Artist," he argued that voices like his are not supposed to be heard at all. Indeed, he's not likely to join US performance artists like Chris Burden in a lucrative professorship any time soon.

Some might argue that this is simply a matter of cultural differences, of Europeans not bringing the same taboos to race and gender. But Brener and Schurz are provocateurs, deliberately starting trouble wherever and however they can. So the final question brings us back to where we began: what is the social value of such provocation? And how do we deal with accountability and boundaries in the course of exploring transgression for its own sake?

Although *Bukaka Spat Here* is practically unavailable in North America, your staunch editors will oblige the curious reader with a copy—send stamps to Rolling Thunder, P.O. Box 494, Chapel Hill, NC 27514, or email rollingthunder@crimethinc.com.

“I promise to be sober-minded and cunning, resourceful and dangerous. I promise to act in such ways that you cannot sink me or surround me with silence. I promise to work against you smartly and cautiously, to be attentive and cool-hearted, in order to hit you slightly and strongly, where I can, as long as I have enough strength, even if there is no future in it.”

—Alexander Brener, “Third World Artist”

Appendix: *The Art of Destruction*

Attack is a tough and beautiful concept. A human being risks his entire existence in an antagonistic confrontation with society. To the aroma that exudes from that person at that time the word ‘dignity’ can be applied.

If *Bukaka Spat Here* saw Brener and Schurz hijack the formula offered by novelists like Kathy Acker, *The Art of Destruction* is their take on insurrectionist theory à la Alfredo Bonanno, the Italian anarchist and sometime jailbird. As such, it’s a bit-terer pill, more polemical in tone. Where *Bukaka Spat Here* found the authors in a playful mood, cheerfully disposed even towards their enemies—what fun to hate them and wish for their destruction!—*The Art of Destruction* is more grim. Here, anti-art rhetoric is developed into a call for the literal destruction of artists, to put paid to their complicity in capitalism, hierarchy, and mediocrity.* Such tirades can be tiresome—at worst, those who don’t already agree don’t bother with them,

* Compare this with the chapter “Death to Art!” in Allan Antliff’s new book *Anarchy and Art*, in which he suggests that the anti-art rhetoric of the Dadaist generation foreshadowed the actual annihilation of individual artists and freedom of expression generally by the Bolshevik regime.

and the reiterations of spite only try the patience of sympathetic readers.

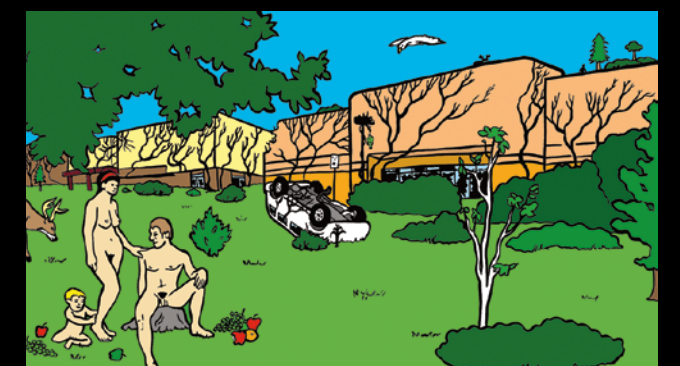
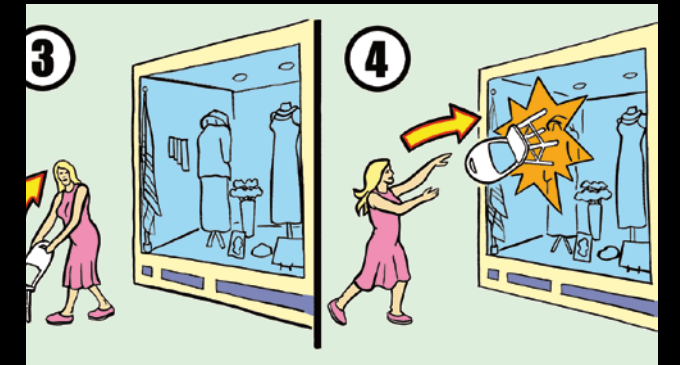
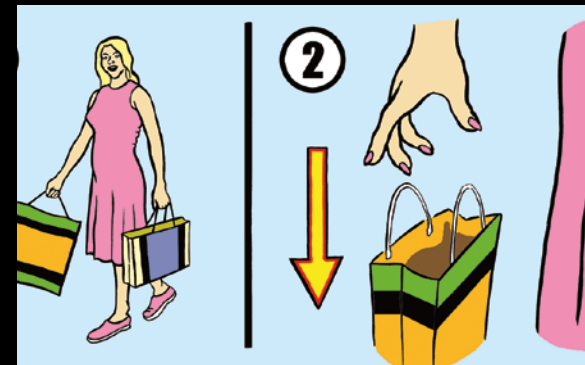
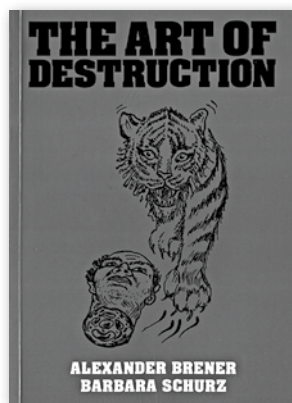
The Art of Destruction is saved by snatches of the same eccentricity that made their earlier novel so lively: a vignette in which art critics visit the retired Idi Amin Dada, an interlude with a young woman in a bathroom at a bar, the occasional unexpected reference to porcupines. In this regard, the further over the top the diatribes go, the more bearable they become. Another thing that sets *The Art of Destruction* apart from other such screeds is its continuous references to artists and critics none of us at *Rolling Thunder* have ever heard of—just as you, dear reader, may not have heard of Alfredo Bonanno or Kathy Acker.

The high point of the book is easily their encounter with US primitivist theoretician John Zerzan, whom the authors seek out at a speaking engagement in Istanbul. On paper Zerzan might appear to have much in common with Bukaka’s opposition to language, technology, and civilization, but in person they discover him to be an entirely domesticated creature, propounding

his formulas in the same tame language and academic setting as any institutional leftist. Anarchy is not created by theory alone, but out of desire and fighting spirit. A person can perpetuate the most stagnant stratification and defeat while speaking quite eloquently of anarchy, freedom, and the eradication of limits.

Surprisingly, the insurrectionist imperatives that can appear so quixotic in other settings seem most sensible in the context of the art world. The emphasis on constant conflict, on action over strategy, riots over campaigns, irrationality over rationality, and spontaneity over goal-orientation might seem like a risky proposition to those who hope to take on the powers that be and win. On the other hand, such principles seem totally reasonable as a way to cash in the always-deferred promises of urgency, passion, and romance with which Art has maintained our attention for so many generations.

As for how it reflects on insurrectionist theory that it is so easy to transpose it from the streets into the gallery—that’s a matter for another inquiry.



Anyone with spray paint
can write literature.

Anyone with a cobblestone
can write history.

