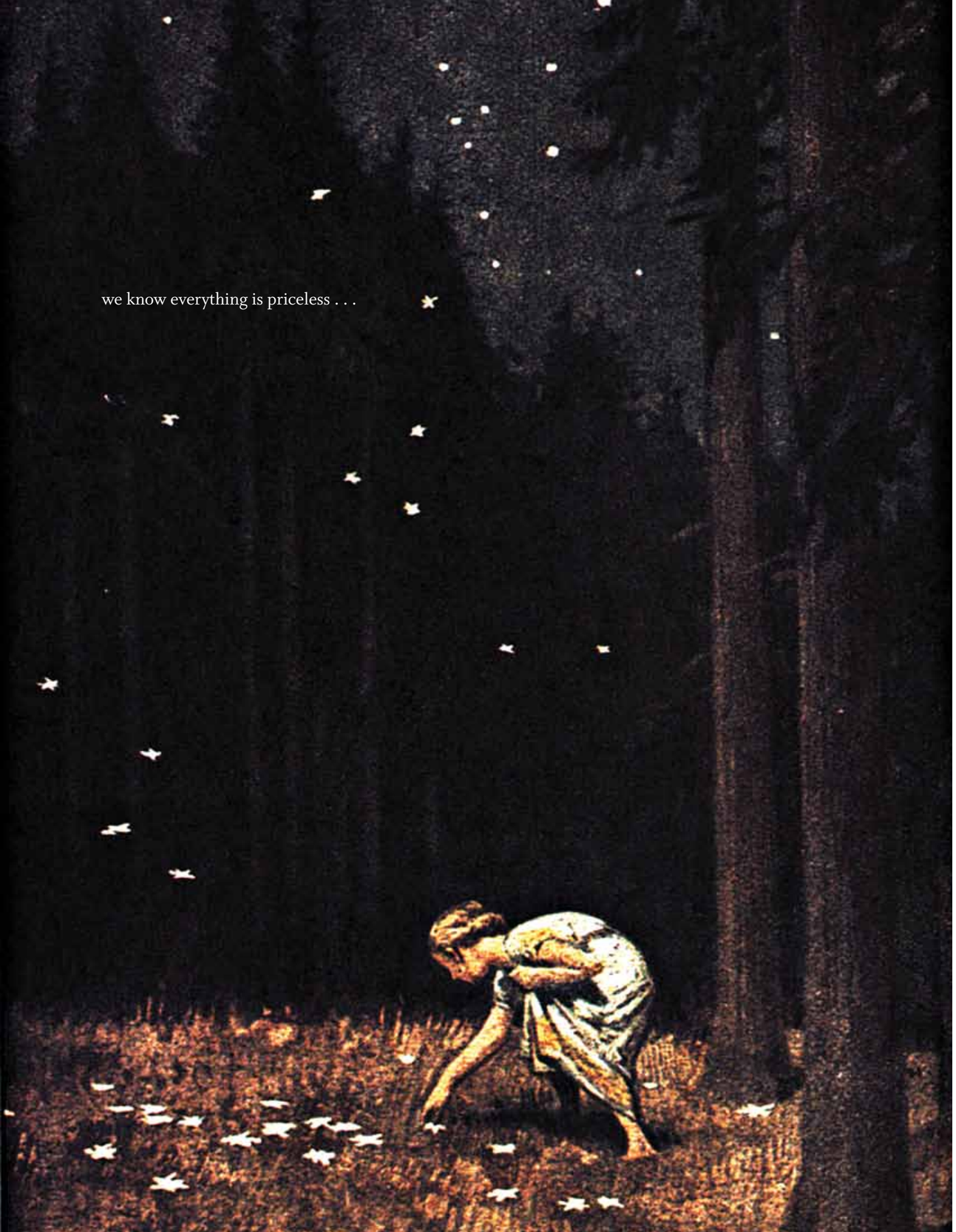
Rolling Thunder

ISSUE NUMBER SIX / FALL TWO-THOUSAND EIGHT / A CAPER OF THE CRIMETHINC. EX-WORKERS' COLLECTIVE

an anarchist journal of dangerous living

We are not delicate, not
China that belongs in the cabinet
But experimental material
To be shot into space
Perish in flames
And discover new passages
Out
of
this
world.

"Whoever does not seek the unforeseen sees nothing,
for the known way is an impasse."
–*Heraclitus*



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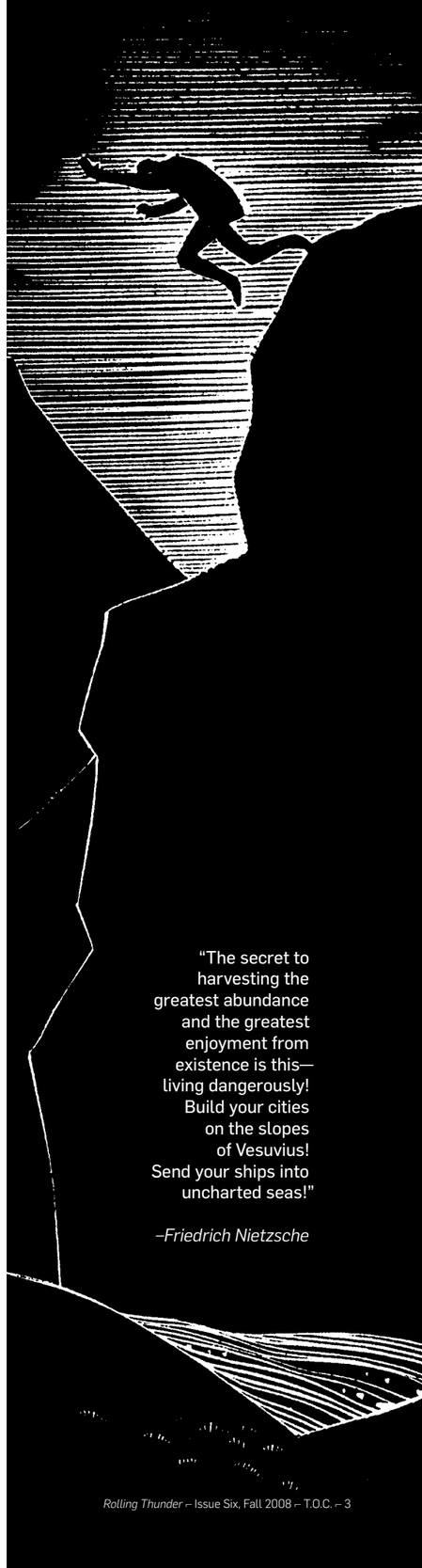

"The secret to harvesting the greatest abundance and the greatest enjoyment from existence is this—living dangerously! Build your cities on the slopes of Vesuvius! Send your ships into uncharted seas!"

–Friedrich Nietzsche

EXPERIMENTAL MATERIAL

True to form, we completed this issue in the midst of the demonstrations at this year's Democratic National Convention in Denver, at which anarchists are attempting to reinvent mass mobilizations. Every day endless meetings, false alarms, tense standoffs, narrow escapes; every night, while the others sleep or carouse, endless editing and deliberation. Next issue we'll be able to report on all this in depth; for now, the following anecdote must suffice.

A couple hundred people have gathered in a park downtown: some for dinner with Food Not Bombs, some just hanging out, and some in tentative response to a call for a black bloc issued a month earlier but never adequately organized. Armored police are positioned in groups of a dozen all around the park and the surrounding streets, outnumbering the young people sitting around with black sweatshirts in their laps. A vehicle was supposed to deliver banners, but word comes in that the driver has been detained and the car impounded; there don't seem to be any scouts or communications networks ready. Rumors circulate about some other convergence point. A full hour passes without anyone taking any initiative; even the police seem to lose interest.

Finally, when most people have drifted away and it seems certain that nothing is going to happen, a few people—perhaps ten or fifteen—pull up their hoods and masks and hesitantly begin chanting: "A! Anti! Anticapitalista!" A little air horn gives a feeble toot. They begin walking in a tight little knot.

Who are these lunatics? What are they thinking, masking up and linking arms with hundreds of riot police surrounding them and undercovers at their elbows? This is not the Seattle WTO protests, when the few cops on duty had their hands full dealing with a hundred thousand protesters; these kids are the only ones doing anything this evening, and the whole city is militarized. What can they possibly hope to accomplish?

But others join them. Soon there are a few dozen, in varying degrees of black attire, and then several dozen more. The chant picks up momentum, but this just makes the whole enterprise seem more suicidal. They make it as far as the road, and the nearest squadron of police forms a line blocking their path. There's nothing for it, the die is cast: they march, awkward and ill-prepared, straight into a shower of pepper spray.

Coughing and choking, the crowd stumbles back to the grass. This should be the end of it, but the numbers keep growing as curious onlookers push forward for a better view. Suddenly someone is shouting out a count, and others join in: "One! *Two!*" This is yet another mistake—you're supposed to count down, so everyone knows when the count will end—but on "THREE!" perhaps thirty people are running over the grass away from the police, and everyone falls in behind them. In a few seconds hundreds of people are sprinting across the park to the intersection at the far side, at which police have not yet massed.

The crowd pours into the street. The obligatory ROAD CLOSED sign appears and is dragged into the intersection. The energy in the air is electric now, in contrast to the malaise and uncertainty of a mere ten minutes ago. As soon as the stragglers catch up, the crowd lurches forward, turning the wrong way at the corner, and heads off away from the nearby shopping district. They make it exactly a block and a half before another wall of police forms in front of them; a few seconds later another police line traps them from the back. The nimble ones slip out the edges, but the rest—perhaps a hundred—are penned in. The police shut down several blocks, lining the streets with riot cops, bike cops, mounted cops, paddy wagons, and armored cars, and commence beating and shooting pepper balls at the detainees before arresting them.

The story should end there, but it goes on. An hour later several hundred more people, most of whom were not involved in the march or even at the park, have gathered at the intersection where the ROAD CLOSED sign appeared. A crowd of African-American youth are chanting "FUCK THE POLICE!" at one side while a mass of street kids and middle class citizens stare down the police lines and shout denunciations. Spray paint adorns the walls: POLICE STATE. FUCK A PIG. A helicopter circles overhead, scanning the crowd with its spotlight, but this just riles everyone up more; the atmosphere is getting increasingly volatile. People of all walks of life are showing up to ask what's happening; strangers who never would have spoken otherwise are debating anarchism, police brutality, and what to do next. Nearby bars have closed their doors and business is disrupted throughout the district. Democratic Party delegates are unable to pass through the area; some are trapped in the parking garage of their hotel. This goes on for hours and appears all over the news.

Later, when the participants assess the march, some rate it a successful disaster: from a tactical standpoint it was a catastrophe, but it somehow created an environment in which the dissent submerged in downtown Denver boiled to the surface. If everyone had been sensible and simply dispersed in the park, nothing out of the ordinary would have happened. Instead, a very small number of people succeeded in shifting the options that confronted everyone else around them—and faced with new choices, many people acted differently than they would have otherwise. Had the initial group been more numerous or better prepared, the transformation might have been correspondingly more dramatic.

In taking on the powers that be, we don't need to be prepared to win a war with them—we don't even necessarily need to make all the right decisions or formulate the most airtight plans. We just have to change the context in which others make decisions, to precipitate situations with unforeseen conclusions—so that what a few initiate, many may continue.

Anarchists are specially equipped for this kind of experimentation because we have nothing at stake in the preservation of the current order. In the words of economists and gentrifiers, we are risk tolerant: having little to lose, we can afford to throw ourselves into the unknown and see what happens. Those who must succeed in everything they undertake have to be careful and conservative; nothing new or exciting ever comes from them. Perhaps ninety-nine percent of our projects are dismal failures, but whenever we achieve a breakthrough, it's historic.

Our successes can be dangerous—when you try something and it works, it's easy to get trapped in attempts to repeat it. How many new models have we invented over the past decade, really? At our best, we treat ourselves as experimental material, thrusting ourselves into uncharted territory and returning with new innovations. This issue explores some recent attempts to develop alternatives to the standard anarchist approaches we inherited from our forebears. Some of these alternatives have become standard themselves, like the SHAC model; others, such as the approach pioneered by the Swedes who built a social center from the ground up in despair of ever being able to defend a squat, have yet to be tested outside a single community.

Through everything, we should constantly be honing our skills to support each other. Living dangerously can take a lot of different forms, and taking risks all the time can be exhausting even apart from the batons, pepper balls, and prison terms. We need to do a lot more to care for one another than just linking arms when it's time to charge the police. It's not easy being experimental material.

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Body text set in **Whitman**, titles and captions set in Flama, combined with images by the Paul E. Maul Artists Group.

Back cover art taken from Seth Tobocman's
You Don't Have to Fuck People Over to Survive.

Glossary of Terms
take six

Asymmetrical Warfare ›
In 2006, three detainees hanged themselves at the prison camp on the shore of Guantánamo Bay. Their suicide notes were not released to the public. All three had participated in hunger strikes and had been force-fed by camp authorities; deadpan as always, the US military announced that their corpses were being treated "with the utmost respect." Despite their lawyers' insistence to the contrary, Camp Commander Harry Harris told the BBC World News that he did not believe the men had killed themselves out of despair: "They are smart, they are creative, they are committed," he said. "They have no regard for life, either ours or their own. I believe this was not an act of desperation, but an act of asymmetrical warfare waged against us."

City ›
A three-dimensional bar graph displaying the property values in an urban area

Criminal Justice ›
Judges are so corrupt these days that no amount of money could sway them from delivering unjust verdicts

Disincentive ›
"Abolish the commodity society!" our would-be revolutionists exhort. "Abolish the society, commodity!" the economy mocks back. "Or try—and if you fail, headstrong little product, we'll cut your market value 50%!"

Distraction ›
In summer of 1797, the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge experienced a vision in which the entirety of the poem *Kubla Khan*, consisting of some two or three hundred lines, appeared to him fully formed. Upon waking, he immediately sought pen and paper and managed to jot down fifty-four lines of it before he was interrupted. As Coleridge himself later related,

> At this moment he was unfortunately called out by a person on business from Porlock, and detained by him above an hour, and on his return to his room, found, to his no small surprise and mortification, that though he still retained some vague and dim recollection of the general purport of the vision, yet, with the exception of some eight or ten scattered lines and images, all the rest had passed away like the images on the surface of a stream into which a stone has been cast, but, alas! without the after restoration of the latter!

And so the poem, which even in its unfinished state is arguably among the best compositions in the English language, was lost forever.

Nowadays, the people from Porlock don't have to come by in person to detain you about their Business. They can call you on the phone, send you a fax or email, text message or instant message you, page you, address you over an intercom or loudspeaker, bark at you out of one of the television sets that hang in airports and gas stations, waylay you via a billboard or radio commercial, even send you a singing telegram. Small wonder if poetry is in decline—Porlock has us surrounded to such an extent that we can hardly conceive our *Kubla Khans*, let alone write them down.

Do ›
Just as one tends to project the attributes of one's acquaintances onto abstract characterizations of "the" people, it is common to generalize one's own activity as universal. "Do it yourself" means repair your own gutters or xerox your own 'zine, depending on whom you ask. When the singer of a Swedish metal band screams "Do it!" he's announcing a guitar harmony in minor thirds, while Jerry Rubin once used the same phrase to call for the opposite of what Nike meant by "Just Do It." "We did Quebec City last April and we're doing Cancún next fall" implies something entirely different coming from a bourgeois tourist than from a summit-hopping activist. When a frat boy says "I'd do her," he indicates that he can only see members of the so-called opposite sex as placeholders in a sexual competition with his brothers. When Lenin asks *What Is to Be Done?* you know the answer is bound to be bad news.

Likewise, which people one is speaking to—or which parts of those people—plays a fundamental role in determining the meaning and consequences of an exhortation. INDULGE YOUR DESIRES comes across very differently on a billboard advertising SUVs than it does spray painted across the broken windows of an SUV dealer. It follows—note well, theorists!—that what you say is not nearly as important as how and where you say it.

Double Bind ›
If we didn't steal from our bosses, we couldn't afford to pay our landlords

Entrapment ›
When federal agents, being too incompetent to catch anyone actually involved in criminal activity, need something to show for all their efforts, they seduce unwary victims into compromising situations and arrest them (see *supporteric.org*). Technically, this is illegal—but like anarchists, federal agents don't trouble themselves about such trifles when there's a job to do.

Fashion ›
Mass chasing class, class escaping mass (see *Style*); it's different every season, but it's always the same

Gluttony ›
In a scarcity-based economy, the only thing worse than having nothing is having something, for one must rush to devour or secure it before others can wrest it away; always consuming and hoarding, one develops nasty habits, and eventually cannot share even when it is necessary for survival (*see figure i.*)

Hypocrisy ›
Your average good citizen accepts that laws are necessary to keep people in line, while circumventing the ones that are inconvenient for him whenever he can. Everyone thinks he is the exception to the rule, but no one's ready to take exception to being ruled!

Indoctrination ›
Don't sell bread; share yeast

Proxy War ›
In a civil war, rival factions often seek assistance from foreign governments; the latter, of course, have agendas of their own, and what might have appeared a simple local conflict becomes a tangled international intrigue.

Once upon a time, when the governments of different nations generally perceived themselves to have distinct interests, open warfare was relatively common. As individual nations consolidated themselves into blocs held in check by other blocs (see *Mutually Assured Destruction*), proxy war increasingly replaced open conflict. The Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, for example, was largely fought by proxy on battlefields such as Korea, Cuba, Vietnam, Chile, and Nicaragua. Afghanistan was one of the last of these, and subsequent hostilities between the mujahideen and their one-time sponsors illustrate the hazards of proxy warfare.

One cannot understand the history of resistance without taking into account how many movements and organizations have received foreign aid. For example, after the reunification of East and West Germany in 1990, it came out that the Red Army Faction, West Germany's longest-running armed resistance group, had been funded, equipped, and sheltered by the notoriously repressive East German Stasi, despite the ostensibly conflicting agendas of the RAF and DDR. Likewise, the Serbian group Otpor, known for mobilizing grass-roots resistance to the regime of Slobodan Miloševic that culminated in the storming of the capital building and the offices of state television, received millions of dollars from organizations affiliated with the US government. The countless copycat groups that appeared afterwards across Eastern Europe—Georgia's Kmara, Russia's Oborona, Zubr in Belarus, Pora in the Ukraine—could be seen as youth movements struggling against repressive governments or as front groups for foreign powers, depending on one's vantage point. Even when they did represent genuine local movements, it was easy for their enemies to portray them as pawns of Western corporate interests.

figure i.

Since the end of the Cold War, international conflicts are no longer framed in binary terms; instead, they manifest themselves as a global majority attempting to rein in a "rogue state" such as Iraq or North Korea. Rather than

openly contending for ascendancy, governments are working together more and more to deepen and fortify the dominion of hierarchical power. Statist and state-sponsored revolutionary struggles are less common than they were forty years ago—in a globalized market, they're too messy and unpredictable to be worth the trouble. It follows that the revolutionaries of the future will probably have to do without government backing.

This is not necessarily for the worse. State sponsorship is at best a mixed blessing, even for those who don't oppose state power on principle. In the Spanish Civil War, a classic example of proxy war, the Soviet Union backed the communist elements of the Republican forces, while Hitler and Mussolini backed Franco; when Stalin had to appease Hitler to serve Soviet interests, he forced the Spanish communists to sabotage their own revolution, taking down the anarchists and the rest of the Republicans with them. Lacking sponsorship of their own, Spanish anarchists were at a tremendous disadvantage—not so much against the fascists as against their own supposed allies. When the lure of foreign funding no longer exists and all the governments of the world band together to put down uprisings, anarchists will come into our own as the only ones capable of revolutionary struggle.

figure ii.

Revenge ›
Nora Astorga was born into one of the richest ruling families of Nicaragua. Ambitious and gifted, she went to law school; exceptionally intelligent and extraordinarily beautiful, she was pressed with offers of positions in the leading export companies. Instead, she restricted her practice to defending those arrested by the Guardia Nacional of the Somoza dictatorship. The commander in chief of the Guardia Nacional was General Reynaldo Pérez Vega, a key CIA asset. In the prisons and among the resistance, he was known as El Perro, "the Dog": he visited arrested subversives in their cells, smeared their testicles with grease, and released his dogs on them. From time to time, passing Nora Astorga in the corridors of the courts, he murmured to her that if she really wanted to help her clients, she could visit him privately.

One afternoon, upon leaving court, she left word for him that she would be home that night, and if he would like to visit her perhaps he might have what he wished. He came, with his bodyguards, to her home in the center of the city. She opened the door to him herself, clad in a seductive dress, and ushered him into her sitting room where there were flowers and rum and glasses on the table. She laughed as the bodyguards peered suspiciously about the room. She poured him a drink, tasted it, and passed it, laughing, to him. She stood close to him and abruptly kissed him on the mouth. She murmured to him to come into her bedroom and leave the bodyguards outside. Closing her bedroom door behind her, she laughed once more and dropped her dress to the floor. He embraced her and she pressed up against him, pressing her laughter into his mouth, holding his head tight as the Sandinista slipped out of the closet and cut his throat.

Incredibly, she managed to leave through a window and escape from Managua. She could only leave her children sleeping in their beds. She managed to join the guerrillas in the hills. When, three years later, the Sandinistas entered Managua in triumph, she was made justice minister, and decreed the abolition of the death penalty.*

Revolutionary Struggle ›
A conflict pitting an enterprising minority against all who hold power, all who obey orders, all who do nothing, and all who wish to resist but don't know how to or else lack the courage (*see figure ii.*)

Revolutionary Subject ›
Talk long enough with someone whose thinking has been molded by Marxism, and you'll hear about an elusive personage known as the revolutionary subject: "But who are you proposing as the revolutionary subject, if not The Workers?" "Perhaps housewives are oppressed, but as they lack access to the means of production, they are not included in the revolutionary subject."

According to the Marxist tradition, the proletariat—those who have nothing to sell but their labor, who accept wage slavery for fear of starvation (see *Disincentive*)—will rise up, seize control of their workplaces, and use them to produce a paradise where all is held in common. As the 19th century recedes further and further into the smoke of failed revolutions, this story grows less and less convincing. A huge proportion of human beings have nothing to do with the means of production proper, and many of us have serious misgivings about whether capitalist technology can produce anything worth having in the first place. What are the kids who work part-time at the pretzel stall in the mall supposed to do with their workplace? Does a rainforest count as a means of production? Blithe assurances aside, how can we be sure this will put an end to patriarchy, white supremacy, animal exploitation, and global warming?

These are all non-issues for the traditional Marxist. The notion of the revolutionary subject is premised upon two "the"s: *the* revolution, and *the* subject that brings it about. As Marxism privileges economics over all other ways of interpreting the world, both revolution and revolutionaries must be economic in nature; any other considerations are bourgeois hogwash.†

Anarchists recognize more than one essential incarnation of hierarchy, and therefore more than one legitimate field for resistance. An anarchist conception of "revolutionary subject" would have to include all individuals and demographics to the extent to which they contest domination.‡ In contrast to Marxist dogma, let us propose that the determinant matter in this struggle is not access to the means of production but capacity to interrupt the processes by which hierarchy is maintained, which are as broadly distributed as hierarchy itself. Unemployed slum-dwellers can block highways that supply factories; survivors of domestic violence can maintain safe houses and confront perpetrators; vandals and hackers can seize walls and websites for communication; folk artists can undermine the processes of projection and identification that cause people to conflate their rulers' interests with their own. All of this counts towards revolution.

At worst, the notion of a single revolutionary subject fosters a determinism that objectifies human beings and revolutionary struggle while avoiding the complexities of reality. What are the workers doing? When will they finally be ready to revolt? What are we supposed to do in the meantime? Likewise, fixation on the working class can promote a sort of class-based identity politics—even though class is not a fixed identity, but a fluid relationship. Growing up poor doesn't give anyone the right to be Joseph Stalin. Anybody who wants to change the subject back to the proletariat once the issue of domination itself has been broached is not a comrade.

To sum up: ask not who is the revolutionary subject, dear readers, but how you can become one.

Socialist Realism ›
A contradiction in terms

Style ›
Among the upper ranks of the bourgeoisie, the police are rarely seen, but fashion carries a gun (see *Fashion*)

Uhtceara ›
The sadness or grief one feels in the hour before dawn [Old English]

* Let no one mistake this heartening anecdote for an endorsement of statist solutions. We won't know state torture and murder are gone for good until every last government has been overthrown.

† Speaking of bourgeois hogwash—at the risk of boring the fuck out of anyone without an academic interest in philosophy, let's compare the revolutionary subject to the subject of René Descartes' *cogito ergo sum*. Descartes unthinkingly premised his famous formulation on the grammatical rules of his language: a verb presupposes a subject—so if thinking is taking place, the great I of the philosopher must exist. It seems many Marxists do the same thing: "There's going to be a revolution—that much we know—ergo some class that exists today must be the ones who will make it, i.e., the Revolutionary Subject." A rival philosopher once countered Descartes' argumentation by asserting that some verbs demand no subjects: for example, "it's raining." Similarly, could we imagine a revolution that *makes revolutionaries* of the participants, rather than vice versa?

‡ Obviously, different classes tend to have different degrees of motivation to resist hierarchy, according to the privileges they receive in the current state of affairs. But let no one say it is ever actually in anyone's best interest to oppress others.

Term of the Issue:
Stockholm Syndrome

On August 23, 1973, Jan Olsson, a repeat offender on leave from prison, walked into *Kreditbanken* in central Stockholm and attempted a holdup. The police were called immediately, and two officers entered the building. Olsson opened fire, injuring one policeman; he ordered the other to sit in a chair and sing, and the cowed Swede attempted a rendition of "Lonesome Cowboy." Altogether, Olsson managed to take four hostages; he demanded that his friend Clark Olofsson be brought to the bank, along with three million Swedish Kronor, two guns and bulletproof vests, and a fast car.

The government acquiesced, bringing in Olofsson and promising a car to come; Olsson and Olofsson barricaded themselves and their hostages in the inner vault of the bank. In discussion with Swedish prime minister Olof Palme, Olsson said he would kill the hostages, backing up his threat by grabbing one in a stranglehold; she was heard screaming as he hung up. Despite this, another hostage, Kristin Enmark, said she felt safe with her kidnappers but feared the police might escalate the situation.

The following day Olof Palme received another call. This time it was Kristin Enmark, who said she was very displeased with his attitude and asked him to let the robbers and hostages leave.

Olsson threatened to kill the hostages if the government attempted a gas attack; Olofsson passed the hours pacing the vault, singing Roberta Flack's "Killing Me Softly." On the fifth day, the government hazarded a gas attack anyway, and Olsson and Olofsson surrendered without harming anyone.

Both Olsson and Olofsson were sentenced to extended prison terms. However, Olofsson successfully appealed his conviction on the grounds that he had only joined Olsson to keep the situation calm, and returned to his criminal career. He later met former hostage Kristin Enmark several times, and their families became friends.

Olsson spent several years in prison, where he received many admiring letters from women, one of whom he later became engaged to. Upon his release, he resumed illegal activity, eventually going underground to escape further prosecution.

He reappeared in 2006, traveling to Sweden from Thailand after almost a decade and a half on the run. He went to a Helsingborg police station to turn himself in, hoping to come clean and turn over a new leaf. The first police officer he spoke to, however, urged him to leave the premises: "Take off, Janne, you're wanted." Olsson refused to leave and insisted on making a full confession. Finally, an official sat down with him and brought up his file, only to discover that the prosecutor had dropped his charges.

Upon leaving the police station, Olsson proceeded immediately to the nearby tax office, where he filed his paperwork and arranged to begin receiving the pension due every Swedish senior citizen.

At first glance, this story is simply a charming idyll demonstrating the permissiveness of the Swedish welfare state. Can you imagine mere bank robbers getting a direct line to the President of the United States? But there's another layer: the expression "Stockholm Syndrome," coined by the psychiatrist who assisted police during the robbery, has entered common parlance to describe the phenomenon of hostages associating their own interests with those of their captors.

This phenomenon is already painfully familiar to many of us, as it is common among survivors to maintain loyalty even to loved ones who perpetrate physical and emotional abuse. One might say it is both to our credit and to our misfortune that human beings tend to develop emotional ties to those around us, however monstrous they are.

Alternately, one can see Stockholm Syndrome as evidence that people tend to identify with the most powerful individuals in a situation, even when the interests of those individuals run counter to their own. Perhaps they do this in order to avoid coming to terms with their subjection; perhaps there is something seductive about domination itself. In this view, the patriots and party faithful who idealize their rulers while the latter loot all their resources, decimate the natural environment, and provoke terrorist attacks against them offer an example of Stockholm Syndrome grown to epidemic proportions.

Perhaps the most famous poster child for Stockholm Syndrome was millionaire heiress Patty Hearst (*see figure iii.*), who was kidnapped by the Symbionese Liberation Army in February 1974 only to resurface in April as an active participant in an SLA bank robbery*. She participated in SLA activities until her arrest in September 1975, even after the police had murdered most of her compatriots; upon being booked into prison, she listed her occupation as "urban guerrilla." When her trial commenced the following year, her lawyer argued that she had been brainwashed and coerced, making the most of the recent entry of Stockholm Syndrome into the public imagination. President Jimmy Carter commuted her sentence after only three years, demonstrating that spoiled rich girls can get away with whatever they want—even attempting to overthrow the government. Patty now wins aristocratic kennel club competitions while her comrades from the SLA rot in prisons and coffins, thanks in part to her turning state's evidence against them.

Self-serving recantations notwithstanding, Hearst's conversion and Kristin Enmark's harsh words to the Swedish prime minister suggest a third interpretation of the cause of Stockholm Syndrome. Might it be that kidnappers, however domineering and dangerous, appear downright cuddly when contrasted against the impersonal brutality of the State? For the duration of their confinement, hostages experience reality from the vantage point of the hunted, rather than the hunters. In Hearst's case, that experience was compelling enough to last until the authorities forcefully relocated her to a space in which they could dictate reality entirely on their terms. So when was Hearst really brainwashed—when she was kidnapped by urban guerillas, or when the state kidnapped her back? Or, for that matter, when she was born and bred into a society in which it is taken for granted that some people are millionaire heiresses while millions of others inherit nothing but poverty and oppression?

figure iii.

* In return for her release, the SLA demanded that the Hearst family distribute $70 worth of food to every needy Californian, which would have cost an estimated $400 million. Hearst's miserly father distributed only a few million dollars worth of food in the Bay Area, and the SLA refused to release Hearst on the grounds that the food was of poor quality. In a recording subsequently released to the press, Hearst commented that her father could have done better. Be that as it may—while we can't countenance the SLA's wanton disregard for human life, let no one say armed struggle can't serve the needs of the working class!

LETTERS

A letter regarding the articles on prisoner support and the Green Scare in the fourth and fifth issues of Rolling Thunder:

Howdy, ex-worker comrades!

It's good to see someone take the time to publish information for people interested in doing prisoner support. Also, the "Green Scared?" article is a good source of reference for the goings-on surrounding Operation Backfire and the arrests since then. It's so informative that the Civil Liberties Defense Center* made the article into a pamphlet to hand out at their events in support of non-cooperating Green Scare arrestees.

There was something mentioned in your article about prisoner support that I feel needs far more emphasis, and that is letting the prisoners themselves have a say—I'd argue that they should have the MOST say—in what prisoner support groups do, and whom they support. I've seen other movements and groups grow this way inside prisons.

The thing to remember is that we, as a movement, do not have a wealth of resources. It makes sense to me that we could do a lot for a few prisoners, rather than try to do something for just about anyone. For instance, the prisoner support work that I'm currently undertaking is centered around the folks incarcerated in the Green Scare repression.

Believe me, other prisoners notice when someone gets regular mail, receives reading material, and writes a lot of letters. They'll also notice if someone has folks sending them enough funds to live comfortably. Prisoners often share resources with their friends, so it would be natural for a person on the inside to spread word about free resources, like books-to-prisoners projects. Just this type of word-of-mouth growth can escalate beyond a group's ability to keep up. There are a number of reasons why this is a good practice.

First of all, having prisoners make referrals would severely reduce, if not eliminate, the number of opportunistic stalkers, sex offenders, and other predators seeking out their next victims in our communities. It would also weed out the snitches and others who may have their own agendas. While I was incarcerated, I grew disgusted with the amount of space such despicable characters were given in anarchist publications. This is why I am very reluctant to work with "traditional" prisoner support groups like ABCs [Anarchist Black Cross collectives].

Also, having our incarcerated comrades initiate contact between other prisoners and outside resources will do a lot to ensure they get the respect they deserve for having principled ideas and taking action based upon them. Many prisoners will automatically give someone respect for fighting for what they feel is right. Others, however, look for victims everywhere and see anyone who doesn't fit into mainstream stereotypes as being both odd and weak. Conformity to social norms within the prison system is very heavily reinforced—by guards and administrations, by other prisoners, and by isolation from alternative sources of information. One of the most hideous aspects of prison life for me was how much the overexposure to mainstream media influenced my thoughts. Now that I'm out, it's very unusual for me to read, view, or listen to mass-market media. Back then, it was more than 90% of all I had access to.

However, having a lot of contact with comrades on the outside exposes prisoners to another pitfall, which is to become so wrapped up in correspondence and other communication with the "radical" communities on the outside, and so aware of repression in their daily lives, that the prisoner believes there to be a growing, thriving revolutionary movement out here, which they will be welcomed into upon their release. This is scary, because it is—for now—unrealistic. The antidote is to develop reality-based relationships with the prisoners†. Let them know the mundane aspects of your life in your interactions. It makes a huge difference when someone treats a prisoner like a person, and not some sort of icon, hero, or martyr. It also helps prisoners remember who they are, where their passions are, where their lives could grow upon their release. It's difficult not to feel like just a number attached to a conviction inside those cells.

Such personal involvement is what makes lending support to just anyone who requests it a bad idea. No one wants a sex offender to turn up at their door out of the blue upon their release. When our comrades initiate contact between a prisoner and their outside supporters, we can count on their good judgment in doing so. Also, it helps a whole lot to have someone inside who can hold fellow prisoners accountable for whatever misdeeds they may inflict upon the folks outside.

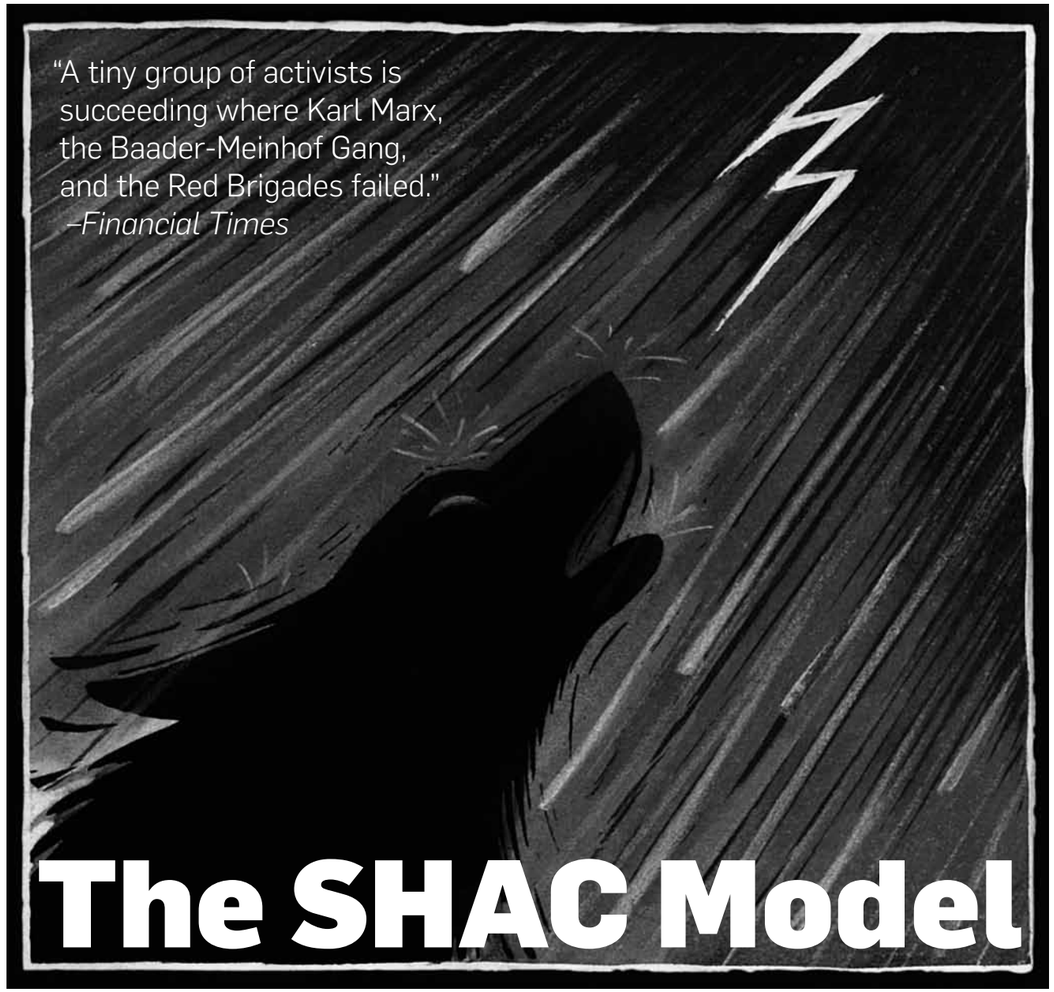
Prisoner support is getting to be a more important issue in our scenes as more people are locked up. This is only going to increase in the coming years. America is the most advanced police state on earth, with laws on the books that make almost any expression of dissent against government and corporate actions illegal. The hammer will fall on us eventually, no matter who wins the next Presidential selection farce. The issue should not be how to avoid our repression (wishful thinking is for the weak-willed), but how we will respond to it. Revolutions aren't won by cowards, and now is not the time to cower in fear.

Revoltingly yours,
Rob los Ricos

Rob los Ricos is a Tejano anarchist who spent seven years and ten days in prison for fighting against cops who were attacking a Reclaim the Streets festival in Eugene, Oregon. He is working on a series of zines about his prison experiences and plans to do a lot of traveling with a guitar and sleeping bag. He'd love for you to email him: roblosricos@riseup.net

* The Civil Liberties Defense Center [*www.cldc.org*] is a nonprofit organization focused on defending and upholding civil liberties through education, outreach, litigation, legal support, and assistance. The CLDC was instrumental in saving the non-cooperating Operation Backfire defendants from the life sentences threatened by federal prosecutors.

† Another antidote to unrealistic ideas about a thriving revolutionary movement would be to create one. Or several.



A Critical Assessment

Over the past decade, Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty—SHAC—has waged an international direct action campaign against Huntingdon Life Sciences, Europe's largest contract animal testing corporation. By targeting investors and business partners of HLS, SHAC repeatedly brought HLS to the brink of collapse, and it has taken direct assistance from the British government and an international counter-campaign of severe legal repression to keep the corporation afloat.

Recently, there has been talk of applying the SHAC model in other contexts, such as environmental defense and anti-war organizing. But what *is* the SHAC model, precisely? What are its strengths and limitations? Is it, in fact, an effective model? If so, for what?

The SHAC Story

Overseas Beginnings

The SHAC campaign originated in Britain, following a series of successful closures of laboratory animal breeders involving tactics from picketing to ALF raids and clashes with the police. Video footage shot covertly inside HLS in 1997 was aired on British television, showing staff shaking, punching, and shouting at beagles in an HLS lab. PETA stopped organizing protests against HLS after being threatened with legal action, and SHAC formed to take over the campaign in November 1999.

Huntingdon Life Sciences was a more formidable target than any individual animal breeder; the SHAC campaign constituted an escalation in animal rights activism in Britain. The idea was to focus specifically on the corporation's finances, utilizing the tactics that had closed small businesses to shut down an entire corporation. Activists set out to isolate HLS by harassing anyone involved with any corporation that did business with them. The role of SHAC as an organization was simply to distribute information about potential targets and report on actions as they occurred.

Activists giving HLS a run for their not-so-proverbial money.

In January 2000, British activists publicized a list of the largest shareholders in HLS, including those who held shares through third parties for anonymity—one of which was Britain's Labour Party. Following two weeks of pitched demonstrations, many shareholders sold their holdings; finally, 32 million shares were placed on the London Stock Exchange for one penny each and HLS stocks crashed. In the ensuing chaos, the Royal Bank of Scotland wrote off an £11.6 million loan in exchange for a payment of just £1 in order to distance itself from the company, and the British government arranged for the state-owned Bank of England to give them an account because no other bank would do business with them. The company's share price, worth around £300 in the 1990s, fell to £1.75 in January 2001, stabilizing at 3 pence by mid-2001.

On December 21, 2000, HLS was dropped from the New York Stock Exchange; three months later, it lost its place on the main platform of the London Stock Exchange as well. HLS was only saved from bankruptcy when its largest remaining shareholder, the American investment bank Stephens, gave the company a $15 million loan. This chapter of the story closed with HLS moving its financial center to the United States to take advantage of US laws allowing greater anonymity for shareholders.

In the USA

Meanwhile, in the United States, the anti-fur campaigns that had characterized much of 1990s animal rights organizing had plateaued; the tactics of civil disobedience developed in those campaigns had reached a point of diminishing returns, and many activists were casting around for new targets and strategies. One faction of the animal rights movement, exemplified by groups like Vegan Outreach and DC Compassion Over Killing*, moved on to promoting veganism. More militant activists sought other points of departure. Some, like Kevin Kjonaas, who went on to become president of SHAC USA, had been in Britain and witnessed the apex of the British SHAC campaign, just as anti-globalization activists visiting Britain in the 1990s had brought back heady tales of Reclaim the Streets actions.

The US SHAC campaign came out of conversations between animal rights activists in different parts of the country. While the vegan outreach campaign sought to appeal to the lowest common denominator in order to win over consumers, SHAC attracted militants who wanted to make the most efficient use of their individual efforts. Some reasoned that it was unlikely that the entire market base for animal products would be won over to veganism, especially insofar as people tend to be defensive about their lifestyle choices, but practically everyone could agree that punching puppies is inexcusable.

SHAC USA got started in January 2001, just as Stephens, Inc. saved HLS from bankruptcy. Stephens was based in Little Rock, Arkansas, so a number of activists moved there to organize. In April, 14 beagles were liberated from the new HLS lab in New Jersey [described in "Breaking into Hell"]; at the end of October, hundreds of people gathered in Little Rock for a weekend of demonstrations at Warren Stephens' home and the offices of Stephens, Inc. By the following spring, Stephens had ditched HLS, breaking off a five-year contract after only one year.

Unrivaled by any campaign of comparable scale and effectiveness, SHAC took off quickly in the US. Thanks in part to superior funding,† the propaganda was colorful and exciting, as were promotional videos that juxtaposed heart-wrenching clips of animal cruelty with inspiring demonstration footage to a pulse-racing soundtrack of techno music. The campaign offered participants a wide range of options, including civil disobedience, office disruptions, property destruction, call-ins, pranks, tabling, and home demonstrations. In contrast to the heyday of anti-globalization summit-hopping, targets were available all around the country, limited only by activists' imaginations and research. The intermediate goals of forcing specific investors and business partners to disconnect from HLS were often easily accomplished, providing immediate gratification to participants.

Whereas an individual might feel insignificant at an antiwar march of thousands, if she was one of a dozen people at a home demonstration that caused an investor to pull out, she could feel that she had personally accomplished something concrete. The SHAC campaign offered the kind of sustained low-intensity conflict through which people can become radicalized and develop a sense of collective power. Running in black blocs with friends, evading police after demonstrations, listening to inspirational speeches together, walking through offices yelling on bullhorns, reading other activists' reports online, the feeling of being on the winning side of an effective liberation struggle—all these contributed to the seemingly unstoppable momentum of the SHAC campaign.

* According to reports, the main organizers of this group have since joined HSUS. This is an example of the subtle conflicts and power dynamics that play out in the animal rights movement: SHAC organizers complain that HSUS absorbs committed activists by giving them paying jobs and forbidding them to collaborate with more militant activists.

† Unlike many social movements, the animal rights movement is supported by wealthy donors, and we can assume that some of them have contributed to SHAC.

GLOSSARY

Viewed from outside, the animal rights milieu can be confusing, even for other radicals. On one hand, the intense focus on this single issue can contribute to an insular mindset, if not outright myopia; on the other hand, there are countless animal liberation activists who see their efforts as part of a larger struggle against all forms of oppression. Those not familiar with the inner workings of the milieu often conflate the positions of opposing factions. At the risk of oversimplifying, it is possible to identify three distinct schools of thought:

Animal Welfare – The idea that animals should be treated with mercy and compassion, especially when they are used for human benefit such as food production. For example, some animal welfare advocates lobby the government for more humane slaughter laws.
Example: the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS)

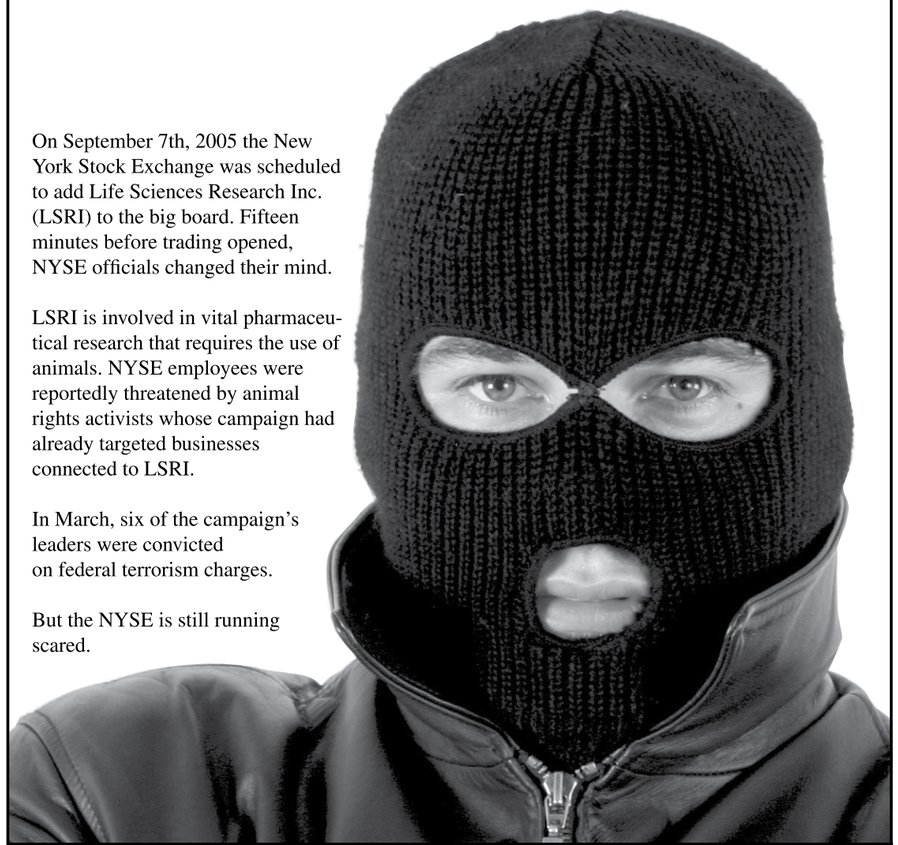
Animal Rights – The idea that animals have their own interests and deserve legislation to protect them. Those who believe in animal rights often maintain vegan diets and oppose the use of animals for entertainment, experimentation, food, or clothing. While they may participate in protests or civil disobedience, they also generally believe in working within the system, through lobbying, marketing, outreach, and use of the corporate media.
Example: People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA)

Animal Liberation – The idea that animals should not be domesticated or held in captivity. Since this is not possible within the logic of the current social and economic system, animal liberationists often tend towards anarchism, and may break laws in order to rescue animals or to preserve habitat.
*Example: the Animal Liberation Front (ALF)**

Many groups focused on animal welfare and animal rights have criticized those who engage in direct action, arguing that such actions hurt the image of animal advocates and alienate potential sympathizers. It's also possible to interpret this criticism as motivated by the economic inducement of building up a wealthy membership base and the fear of running afoul of government repression. In addition to denouncing direct action, prohibiting their employees from interacting with those who countenance it, and pulling out of conferences including more militant speakers, organizations such as HSUS have gone so far as to laud the FBI for cracking down on animal liberation efforts. As of this writing, HSUS has just ostentatiously offered a $2500 reward to anyone providing information leading to the conviction of persons involved with an arson alleged by the FBI to be the work of animal rights activists.

* Unlike HSUS and PETA, the ALF is not technically an organization, but rather a banner taken up by autonomous cells which do not necessarily have any connection to each other.

I Control Wall Street



Corporate propaganda run in the New York Times *portraying SHAC activists as leather-jacket clad hooligans.*

"Carr Securities began marketing the Huntingdon Life Sciences stock. The next day, the Manhasset Bay Yacht Club, to which certain Carr executives reportedly belong, was vandalized by animal rights activists. The extremists sent a claim of responsibility to the SHAC website, and three days after the incident, Carr terminated its business relationship with HLS."

– John Lewis, Deputy Assistant Director FBI Oversight on so-called "Eco-terrorism"

Action

Direct action against those doing business with HLS has taken many forms, occasionally escalating to arson and violence. In February 2001, HLS managing director Brian Cass was hospitalized after being attacked with axe handles at his home. That July, the Pirates for Animal Liberation sank the yacht of a Bank of New York executive, and the bank soon severed ties with the lab. A year later, smoke bombs were set off at the offices of Marsh Corp. in Seattle, causing the evacuation of the high rise and their disassociation from HLS. In fall of 2003, incendiary devices were left at Chiron and Shaklee corporations for their contracting with HLS. In 2005, Vancouver-based brokerage Canaccord Capital announced that it had dropped a client, Phytopharm PLC, in response to the ALF firebombing of a car belonging to a Canaccord executive; Phytopharm had been doing business with HLS. All this took place against a backdrop of constant smaller-scale actions.

In December 2006, HLS was prevented from being listed on the New York Stock Exchange, an unprecedented development that resulted in a full page ad in the *New York Times* portraying a masked, apparently leather-jacketed caricature of an activist declaring "I control Wall Street."* In 2007, eight companies dropped HLS, including their two biggest investors, AXA and Wachovia, following home demonstrations and ALF visits to executives' houses. In 2008, incendiary devices were left under Staples trucks and Staples outlets were vandalized. About 250 companies altogether have dropped in the course of the campaign, including Citibank, the world's largest financial institution; HSBC, the world's largest bank; Marsh, the world's largest insurance broker; and Bank of America.

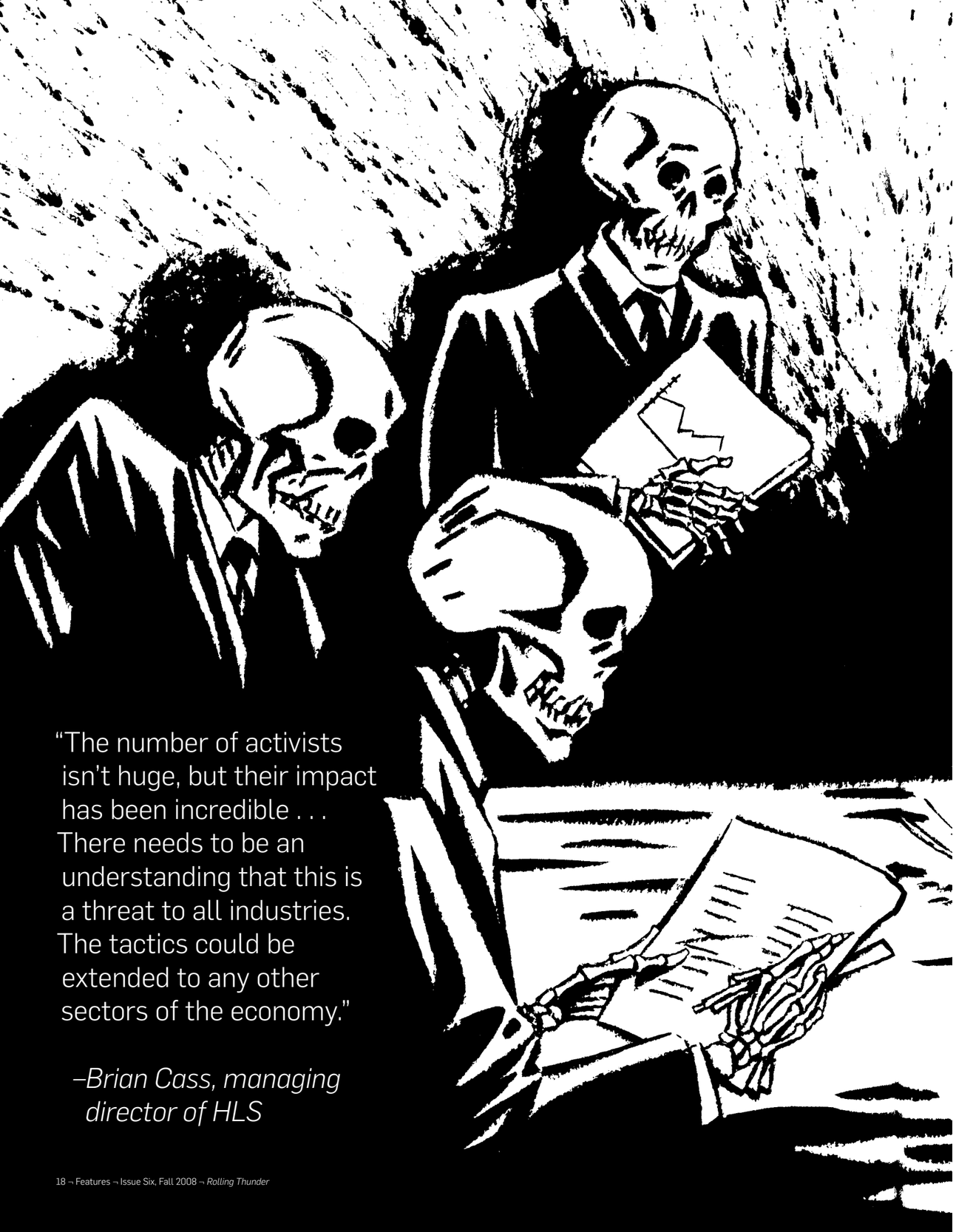
* This advertisement is all the more ironic in view of the role masked thugs in nations like Colombia continue to play in defending the interests of corporations who trade on Wall Street.

Maintaining Momentum

It's interesting to compare the arc of the SHAC campaign to that of the so-called anti-globalization movement. Both took off in Britain before catching on in the United States. SHAC was founded in England the same month as the historic WTO protests in Seattle; it got going in the US at the tail end of the anti-globalization surge, and maintained momentum after the anti-globalization movement collapsed in the wake of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

How was the SHAC campaign able to maintain momentum while practically every other direct action-based campaign foundered or was co-opted by liberals? Can we derive lessons about how to weather crises from its example?

SHAC activists differed from participants in most other social movements in that they neither perceived themselves to need positive press coverage nor regarded negative press coverage as a bad thing. Their goal was to terrify corporations out of doing business with HLS, not to win converts to the animal rights movement. The more fearsome and crazy they appeared in the media, the easier it was to intimidate potential investors and business partners. Activists in other circles feared that the terrorism scare would make it easy for the government to isolate them by portraying them as dangerous extremists; for SHAC, the more dangerous and extreme they appeared, the better.



"The number of activists isn't huge, but their impact has been incredible . . . There needs to be an understanding that this is a threat to all industries. The tactics could be extended to any other sectors of the economy."

–Brian Cass, managing director of HLS

All this came back to haunt them in the end, when the most influential organizers faced trial and it was easy for the prosecution to frame them as representatives of a frankly terroristic underground. In this regard, the greatest strengths of the SHAC campaign—the relationship between public and covert organizing, the fearsome reputation—also proved to be its Achilles heel. The lesson seems to be that this approach can be effective on a small scale, so long as organizers do not provoke a confrontation with forces much stronger than themselves.

In addition to the matter of press coverage, it may be instructive to look at the way SHAC organizers framed the issues. SHAC spokespeople never backed down from emphasizing the necessity of direct action for animal liberation, even when the rest of the nation was fixated on Al Qaeda; the historic mobilization in Little Rock took place only a month and a half after the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Regardless of what happened in New York or Afghanistan, they emphasized that there were animals suffering at that very moment, who could be spared if people took a few concrete steps. Had organizers in other circles been able to maintain this kind of focus and urgency, history might have taken a different turn at the beginning of this decade.

It's possible, also, that with other forms of organizing at a lower ebb, SHAC picked up more participants than it would have if other direct action campaigns had maintained momentum. In contrast to the massive symbolic actions of the antiwar movement, the SHAC campaign was a hotbed of experimentation, in which new tactics were constantly being tested. For direct action enthusiasts concerned with making the most of their efforts—or simply bored with being treated as a number in a crowd estimate—it must have been seductive by comparison.

Whatever the cause, the SHAC campaign was able to maintain momentum until federal repression finally began to take its toll. Unlike many campaigns, which have faded due to attrition or cooptation, it took the full power of the state to check its advance.

Repression

All the accomplishments of the SHAC campaign came at a price. The more businesses dropped relations with HLS, the more attention the campaign attracted from law enforcement agencies and right wing think tanks. SHAC organizers in general were not an easily intimidated breed; it was common for participants in the campaign to joke about all the lawsuits and injunctions they had racked up and how little it mattered if they were sued as they had no money anyway.

The US and British governments ratcheted up repression steadily over the years, placing activists under surveillance, hitting them with lawsuits, blocking their fundraising efforts, intimidating organizations like PETA out of interacting with them, passing new laws against demonstrations in residential neighborhoods, and shutting down their websites. This culminated in the US with the trial of the so-called SHAC 7: six organizers and the SHAC USA corporation itself.

On May 26, 2004, Lauren Gazzola, Jake Conroy, Josh Harper, Kevin Kjonaas, Andrew Stepanian, and Darius Fullmer were indicted on various federal charges for their alleged roles in the campaign. Teams of FBI agents in riot gear invaded their homes at dawn, threatening them and their pets with guns and handcuffing their relatives. The investigation leading up to the arrest was reportedly the FBI's largest investigation of 2003; court documents confirm that wiretap intercepts in the investigation outnumbered the intercepted communications of that year's second largest investigation 5 to 1.

The defendants were all charged with violating the Animal Enterprise Protection Act, a controversial law intended to punish anyone who disrupts a corporation that profits from animal exploitation; some were also charged with interstate stalking and other offenses. The defendants were never charged with engaging personally in any threatening acts; the government based its case on the notion that they should be held responsible for all the illegal actions taken to further the SHAC campaign, regardless of their involvement. They were found guilty on March 2, 2006, sentenced to prison terms ranging from one to six years, and ordered to pay tremendous quantities of money to HLS. As of this writing, the first of the defendants has been released from prison, while Andrew Stepanian has been unaccountably moved to total isolation in a Communications Management Unit, and their appeal is moving forward at a snail's pace.

The SHAC 7 trial was clearly intended to set a precedent for targeting public organizers of campaigns that include covert action; its repercussions were felt as far away as England. In 2005, the British government passed the "Serious Organized Crime and Police Act" specifically to protect animal research organizations. On May 1, 2007, after a series of raids involving 700 police officers in England, Holland, and Belgium, 32 people linked to SHAC were arrested, including Heather Nicholson and Greg and Natasha Avery, among the founders of SHAC in Britain. The trial will begin in September 2008; the Averys have already pled guilty.

The Future of SHAC

Despite all these setbacks, the SHAC campaign continues to this day, though it faces serious challenges in the United States. Some regional organizations are still active, and autonomous actions continue to occur, but there is no nationwide organizing body, no newsletter, no reliable website to publicize targets and action reports. Consequently, there is less strategic targeting, less outreach and networking, and a lack of national events. The upside is that it has become more difficult for companies to figure out who to subpoena or seek injunctions against—but that's a narrow silver lining.

This downturn can be attributed to government repression in general and the SHAC 7 trial specifically. Fear of legal repercussions has increased at the same time as key organizers have been taken out of action. With new local laws prohibiting residential picketing, and the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act of 2006 making interstate tertiary targeting illegal, many tactics that once involved little risk are no longer feasible. Now that more

public forms of organizing are being more aggressively punished, it seems possible that the next generation of animal liberation activists will focus more on clandestine tactics. One of the strongest features of the SHAC campaign was the combination of public and clandestine approaches, so this is not necessarily good news for the movement.

It's actually quite surprising that HLS is still in existence; half a decade ago, SHAC organizers must have been banking on already having won by this point. When Stephens, Inc. divested, their loans were all that kept HLS running; it was only the British government intervening again that enabled HLS to negotiate a refinancing and continue. Essentially, SHAC did win, only to have its victory stolen away. The same situation recurred when SHAC forced Marsh Inc. to break off ties, and HLS was faced with the prospect of operating without the insurance mandated by law. Again, the British government intervened, and HLS was given unprecedented coverage by the Department of Trade and Industry. Without this protection from the very pinnacle of power, HLS would be long gone—but that's precisely why governments exist: to protect corporations and preserve the smooth functioning of the capitalist economy. Perhaps it was naïve to believe that the governments of Britain and the USA would permit even the fiercest animal liberation campaign to run an influential corporation out of business.

One can't fight like there's no tomorrow indefinitely, and the repeated return of HLS from the dead must have been maddening for long-term SHAC organizers who staked everything again and again on one final push. Participants disagree as to how significant a factor burnout has been, but it would be foolish to rule it out. The SHAC campaign has been oriented towards full-time activism from the beginning, the mindset being that, as HLS employees work full time, their opponents must work at least that hard. Newsletter articles such as the "SHACtivist workout routine" indicate a high-pressure approach that probably correlates with a high rate of burnout. In any case, as difficult as it may be to distinguish the effects of burnout from those of fear, many activists have indeed dropped out of SHAC without moving on to other campaigns.

SHAC is currently quite active in mainland Europe and Latin America, and unrelenting in Britain. The British SHAC campaign may offer a better model for how to handle federal repression; from this vantage point, it appears that British activists were prepared in advance for it, had people ready to take over for central organizers, and were more open to new people getting involved. But Britain is more densely populated than much of the United States and has a richer history of animal rights organizing, so it is unfair to compare the two campaigns too closely.

Will SHAC ultimately succeed in shutting down HLS? It's still possible, though it looks less likely than it did a few years ago. Some still feel that the most important thing is to close HLS at all costs, to win an historic victory that will inspire activists and terrify executives for decades to come. Others think that, whether or not HLS shuts down, SHAC has served its purpose, demonstrating the strengths and limitations of a new model for anticapitalist organizing.

"We were aware of the activists, but I don't think we understood exactly to what lengths they would go."

-Warren Stevens, on dropping a $33 million loan to Huntingdon Life Sciences despite having vowed never to do so, following rioting at his offices in Little Rock and vandalism of his property

Hallmarks of the SHAC Model

When people think of SHAC, they picture demonstrations at the homes of employees and investors; some anarchists mean nothing more than this when they refer to the "SHAC model." But home demonstrations are merely incidental to the formula that has enabled SHAC to wreak such havoc upon HLS. To understand what made the campaign effective, we have to look at all its essential characteristics together.

SECONDARY AND TERTIARY TARGETING*

The SHAC campaign set about depriving HLS of its support structure. Just as a living organism depends on an entire ecosystem for the resources and relationships it needs to survive, a corporation cannot function without investors and business partners. In this regard, more so than any standard boycott, property destruction, or publicity campaign, SHAC confronted HLS on the terms most threatening to a corporation. Starbucks could easily afford a thousand times the cost of the windows smashed by the black bloc during the Seattle WTO protests, but if no one would replace those windows—or the windows had been broken at the houses of investors, so no one would invest in the corporation—it would be another story. SHAC organizers made a point of learning the inner workings of the capitalist economy, so they could strike most strategically.

Secondary and tertiary targeting works because the targets do not have a vested interest in continuing their involvement with the primary target. There are other places they can take their business, and they have no reason not to do so. This is a vital aspect of the SHAC model. If a business is cornered, they'll fight to the death, and nothing will matter in the conflict except the pure force each party is able to bring to bear on the other; this is not generally to the advantage of activists, as corporations can bring in the police and government. This is why, apart from the axe handle incident, so few efforts in the SHAC campaign have been directed at HLS itself. Somewhere between the primary target and the associated corporations that provide its support structure, there appears to be a fulcrum where action is most effective. It might seem strange to go after tertiary targets that have no connection to the primary target themselves, but countless HLS customers have dropped relations after a client of theirs was embarrassed.

* Secondary targeting means going after a person or entity who does business with the primary target of a campaign. Tertiary targeting means going after a person or entity who is connected to a secondary target.

SYMBIOTIC PUBLIC AND UNDERGROUND ORGANIZING

More than any other direct action campaign in recent history, the SHAC campaign achieved a perfect symbiosis of public organizing and underground action. To this end, the campaign was characterized by an extremely savvy use of technology and modern networking. The SHAC websites disseminated information about targets and provided a forum for action reports to raise morale and expectations, enabling anyone sympathetic to the goals of the campaign to play a part without drawing attention to themselves.

DIVERSITY OF TACTICS

Rather than pitting exponents of different tactics against each other, SHAC integrated all possible tactics into one campaign, in which each approach complemented the others. This meant that participants could choose from a practically limitless array of options, which opened the campaign to a wide range of people and averted needless conflicts.

CONCRETE TARGETS, CONCRETE MOTIVATIONS

The fact that there were specific animals suffering, whose lives could be saved by specific direct action, made the issues concrete and lent the campaign a sense of urgency that translated into a willingness on the part of participants to push themselves out of their comfort zones. Likewise, at every juncture in the SHAC campaign, there were intermediate goals that could easily be accomplished, so the monumental task of undermining an entire corporation never felt overwhelming.

This contrasts sharply with the way momentum in certain green anarchist circles died off after the turn of the century, when the goals and targets became too expansive and abstract. It had been easy for individuals to motivate themselves to defend specific trees and natural areas, but once the point for some participants was to "destroy civilization" and everything less was mere reformism, it was impossible to work out what constituted meaningful action.

Reflections on the SHAC Model

Advantages

When the model pioneered by SHAC is applied correctly, its advantages are obvious. It hits corporations where they are most vulnerable: corporations do not do what they do because of ethical commitments or in order to obtain a certain public image, but in single-minded pursuit of profit, and the SHAC model focuses exclusively on making corporate wrongdoings unprofitable. In terms of building and maintaining a long-running direct action campaign, the SHAC model offers direction and motivation for participants, providing a framework for concrete rather than symbolic actions. The SHAC model sidesteps conflicts over tactics, offering the opportunity for activists of a range of abilities and comfort levels to work together. In establishing a wide array of targets, it gives activists the opportunity to pick the time, place, and character of their actions, rather than constantly reacting to their opponents. Above all, the SHAC model is efficient: SHAC USA has never had more than a few hundred active participants at any given time.

In contrast to most current organizing strategies, the SHAC model is an offensive approach. It offers a means of attacking and defeating established capitalist projects—of taking the initiative rather than simply responding to the advance of corporate power. SHAC did not set out to block the construction of a new animal testing facility or the passage of new legislation, but to defeat and destroy an animal testing corporation that had existed for decades.

The SHAC model demands and fosters a culture that not only celebrates direct action but constantly engages in it, encouraging participants to push their own limits. This contrasts sharply with certain so-called insurrectionist circles, in which anarchists talk a lot about rioting and resistance without engaging in any day-to-day confrontations with the powers that be. Anti-globalization activists in Chicago sometimes asked SHAC organizers to lead chants at their protests, as the latter had a reputation for being boisterous and energetic: those who cut their teeth in the SHAC campaign, if they have not dropped out of direct action organizing entirely, are equipped to be effective in a wide range of contexts.

A subtler strength of the SHAC approach is that it draws on class tensions that are usually submerged in the United States. Activists from lower middle- and working-class backgrounds can find it gratifying to confront wealthy executives on their own turf. This also exposes single-issue activists to the interconnections of the ruling class. In visiting the houses of executives, one discovers that all the pharmaceutical and investment corporations are intertwined: they all own shares of each other's companies, sit on each other's boards, and live in identical suburban mansions in sprawling gated communities.

Finally, the SHAC model took advantage of opportunities offered by larger events and communities. Home demonstrations were often organized to take place after a conference or show; the ubiquity of potential targets meant there was always one close at hand. For several years running, SHAC demonstrations took place during the National Conference on Organized Resistance in Washington, DC, and they also occurred following anti-biotech protests in Philadelphia and Chicago. Though these sometimes provoked conflicts with other organizers, it only takes a couple dozen people to make an effective home demonstration, so it was always easy to pull one together.

SHAC itself tended to create and propagate a subculture of its own, complete with internal reference points and rituals. At conferences and major mobilizations activists compared notes about investors, local campaigns, and legal troubles. Sympathetic music scenes helped fund organizing and introduced new blood to the campaign. It would be difficult to imagine the SHAC campaign in the USA without the hardcore scene of the past two decades, which has consistently served as a social base for the militant animal rights movement. There are certainly drawbacks to identifying a campaign too closely with a specific youth-oriented subculture, but it is better to draw participants and momentum from at least one community than from none at all.

Spurious Charges

Some anarchists have thoughtlessly charged SHAC with reformism. This is absurd: SHAC's goal is not to change the way HLS conducts itself, but to shut it down. It is more precise to describe SHAC as an abolitionist campaign: not being able to bring about the end of animal exploitation in one fell blow, it seeks to accomplish the most ambitious but feasible step toward that end. Similarly, certain idle critics deride animal liberation efforts on the grounds that they are "activism," with the implication that this is a bad thing in and of itself. Those who adopt this position should go ahead and acknowledge that they are unmoved by the oppression of their fellow living creatures and see no value in attempting to put an end to it—that is to say, they are hardly anarchists.

Drawbacks and Limitations

Spurious critiques aside, the SHAC model has some real limitations, which deserve examination.

First, there are certain prerequisites without which it will fail. For example, the SHAC model cannot succeed outside a setting in which direct action is regularly applied. All the strategic thinking in the world is worthless if no one is actually willing to act. In the militant animal rights milieu, the issues at stake are felt to be concrete and poignant enough that participants are motivated to take risks on a regular basis; without this motivation, the SHAC campaign would not have gotten off the ground. Likewise, the SHAC model is powerless against a target that does not depend on secondary and tertiary targets, or has an endless supply of them to choose from. Above all, the secondary and tertiary targets must have somewhere else to take their business—the SHAC model relies on the rest of the capitalist market to offer better options. In this regard, while it is not reformist, neither does it provide a strategy for taking on capitalism itself.

Secondly, as effective as they might be in purely economic terms, secondary and tertiary targeting locate the site of confrontation far from the cause for which the participants are fighting. Generally speaking, the more abstract the object of a campaign feels, the worse for morale. Much of the vitality of eco-defense struggles in the 1980s and '90s came from the immediate, visceral connection forest defenders experienced with the land they were occupying; when environmental activism began shifting to more urban terrain a decade ago, it lost some of its impetus. It is perhaps specific to the SHAC campaign that participants have been able to maintain their outrage and audacity so far from the object of their concern; it is risky to assume this will always occur in other contexts.

Apart from these challenges, the SHAC model may be ineffective precisely because of its effectiveness. Is it realistic to set out to shut down powerful corporations, or will the government always intercede? It may be that in posing a threat to corporations in the economic terms they take most seriously, the SHAC model picks a fight it cannot win. Once the government is involved in a conflict, it takes more than a tight network of militants to win—it takes an entire large-scale social movement, and the SHAC model is not equipped to give rise to such a thing. In this regard, the SHAC model's greatest strength is also a fatal flaw.

Time will tell if HLS was too ambitious a target; the corporation might still collapse. Even so, it would probably be wise for the next ones who experiment with the model to set smaller goals, rather than even more ambitious ones, since the SHAC campaign itself has yet to succeed. Perhaps some unexplored middle ground awaits between shutting down individual fur stores and attempting to close Europe's largest animal testing corporation.

This is not to say that the SHAC model is useless if it does not result in the closure of the target. Sometimes it is worth fighting a losing battle so as to discourage an opponent from starting another battle; other times, even in losing one can gain valuable experience and allies. Ironically, the SHAC model may be more effective for recruiting people to anarchism and direct action organizing than for its professed goal—precisely because, in bypassing recruitment to focus on other goals, it attracts participants who are serious and committed.

But if the point is to bring more people into direct action organizing rather than simply to shut down a single corporation, there are significant drawbacks to the SHAC model, too—for example, the high stress levels and likelihood of burnout. In this regard, it is not necessarily an advantage that the SHAC model teaches activists to think in the same terms as capitalist economists—efficiency, finances, chain of command—rather than prioritizing the social skills necessary to build long-term communities of resistance.

Likewise, in focusing on secondary and tertiary targeting, the SHAC model emphasizes and rewards an aggressive attitude that is less advantageous in other situations. What are the long-term psychological effects on organizers who spend half a decade or more screaming over a bullhorn at employees in their homes? What kind of people are drawn to a campaign that consists primarily of making other people miserable? It cannot go unsaid that some anarchists have reported frustrating interactions with SHAC organizers.

Considering the model from an anarchist perspective—to what extent does the SHAC approach tend to consolidate or undermine hierarchies? The secure organizing necessary for clandestine direct action can promote a cliquishness than intensifies as repression increases, thus preventing a campaign from drawing in new participation when it needs it most. Informal hierarchies plague organizing of all kinds; in the case of the SHAC campaign, those who do the research often have

disproportionate influence over the direction of a campaign and end up making judgment calls with far-reaching effects. This is not necessarily a problem, but it is something to watch out for.

It could be argued that the single-issue focus and goal-oriented nature of the SHAC campaign deprioritizes addressing forms of hierarchy other than the oppression of animals. It is no secret that some SHAC organizing groups have been wracked by conflicts over gender dynamics* and some participants have not always been held accountable for their behavior. In a campaign that emphasizes victory above all else, this should not be surprising—if the most important thing is to win, it's easy to put off addressing internal conflicts, especially with the added stress of federal repression. Inevitably, the people who have bad experiences drop out of the campaign, taking with them the criticism others need to hear.

These questionable priorities have also manifested themselves in certain tasteless tactics. In one instance, a target who was struggling to escape alcoholism received a can of beer with a nasty note; in another, a woman's underwear was stolen and reportedly put up for sale. Utilizing the power imbalances of patriarchal society to target accomplices in the oppression of animals hardly sets an example of struggle against all forms of domination.

There are other ethical questions about secondary and tertiary targeting. Is it acceptable to risk frightening or injuring secretaries, children, and other uninvolved parties? What distinguishes anarchists from governments and other terrorists, if not the refusal to countenance collateral damage?

In essence, the SHAC model is a blueprint for a campaign of coercion, to be used in situations in which there is no other possible accountability process. This does not conflict with anarchist values—when an oppressor refuses to be accountable for his actions, it is necessary to compel him to stop, and this extends to those who aid and abet him as well. But targeting people who are not themselves involved in oppression muddies the waters. When an organizer publicizes a target, there is no telling what actions others will carry out. Perhaps the value of ending animal exploitation outweighs these risks and costs, but anarchists should not get too comfortable making such rationalizations.

Other Applications of the SHAC Model

There has been much talk of applying the SHAC model in other contexts, but few such efforts have produced anything comparable to the SHAC campaign. This bears some reflection. It's worth pointing out that some of the hype about the far-reaching applicability of the SHAC model has come from HLS itself, and so should be taken with a grain of salt. HLS is not interested in promoting effective new direct action methods, but rather in creating enough of a scare that other members of the ruling class will come to their assistance; it follows that even if they claim that SHAC tactics can be used effectively against any target, this is not necessarily the case.

It may be that, because the SHAC campaign maintained momentum while other forms of organizing dropped off, it has exerted a disproportionate influence upon the imaginations of current anarchists, to such an extent that many now tend to imitate the SHAC model in their organizing even when it is not strategically effective. Failures can be more instructive than successes; unfortunately, as they are more readily forgotten, they are often repeated over and over. For this reason, any consideration of the SHAC model should begin with the example of Root Force.

Root Force arose out of Earth First! circles a couple years ago with the intention of promoting a SHAC-style campaign targeting the infrastructure of global capitalism—an exponentially more ambitious goal than shutting down HLS. The organizers researched the corporations involved in pivotal infrastructural projects such as transcontinental highways and power plants. A website was set up to publicize this information and any actions that occurred; road shows toured the country to spread the word. It seemed that all the pieces were in place, and yet nothing happened.

Early in 2008, Root Force released a statement entitled "A Revised Strategy" in which they acknowledged that their efforts had failed to produce an effective direct action campaign and described the difficulties of attempting to inspire action against infrastructural projects located so far away as to seem entirely abstract.

Root Force misunderstood how direct action campaigns take off. Action and inaction are both contagious. If some people are invested enough in a cause to risk their freedom for it, others may do the same; but as no one wishes to go out on a limb in isolation, a sound strategy alone is not sufficient to inspire actions†. Properly publicized, one serious direct action in the Root Force campaign would have been worth a hundred road shows.

The Root Force campaign had other flaws as well. If the goal was simply to give demonstrators something to do, the strategy was as good as any other; but if they hoped to block the construction of the highways and power plants most essential to the expansion of the capitalist market, they would have had to mobilize a lot more force than the SHAC campaign. If the targets they picked really were of critical importance to the powers that be, it follows that the government would have mobilized every resource to defend them. Overextension is the number one error of small-scale resistance movements: rather than setting attainable goals and building slowly on modest successes, organizers set themselves up for defeat by attempting to skip directly to the final showdown with global capitalism. We can fight and win ambitious battles, but to do so we have to assess our capabilities realistically.

Other SHAC-influenced approaches have been characterized by an emphasis on home demonstrations. For example, over the past few years, protesters against the IMF and World Bank have experimented with targeting executives and corporate sponsors. In 2006, while Paul Wolfowitz was president of the World Bank, there was a series of demonstrations at his girlfriend's home; eventually she moved. This does not seem to have impacted the IMF to the same extent as the worldwide social movements described in David Graeber's article "The Shock of Victory" in the previous issue of *Rolling Thunder*. Sarcasm aside, there's little to be gained from harassing people like Wolfowitz: unlike the tertiary parties SHAC targeted, they are not simply going to take their business elsewhere.

Similarly, at the 2004 Republican National Convention, some organizers called for demonstrators to focus on harassing the delegates. The risk of this approach is that it can frame the conflict as a private grudge match between activists and authorities, rather than a social movement that is able to attract mass participation. Like Wolfowitz, Republican delegates are hardly going to retire because a few protesters shout at them—and even if some did, they would instantly be replaced. One proposal for the 2008 RNC protests involved activists targeting corporations that would be providing services to the convention. Targeting corporations providing services might have helped build momentum in the lead-up to the RNC, but it's unlikely that it could have succeeded in depriving an organization as powerful as the Republican Party of necessary resources. The same probably goes for proposals to target weapons contractors serving the US government—it might give demonstrators something exciting to do, but no one should underestimate what it would take to make a corporation like Boeing break off relations with the US military.

Some see the current Rising Tide and Rainforest Action Network campaigns against Bank of America as relatives of the SHAC campaign, although these are directly descended from environmental campaigns that preceded it. They are using secondary targeting to try to stop coal corporations from engaging in mountaintop removal; it's too early to tell how this will play out. Another such campaign is taking place in Indiana, where people are endeavoring to stop the construction of highway I-69 via a combination of home and office demonstrations and forest occupation tactics. In "A Revised Strategy," Root Force cited I-69 as a pivotal infrastructural project, and it will be interesting to see how the state responds should the struggle against I-69 become formidable.

All this is not to say that the SHAC model cannot be applied effectively, but simply to emphasize that activists must be intentional and strategic about where and how they attempt to do so. There are probably some situations in which the model could accomplish even more than it has for SHAC; without a doubt, there are other contexts in which it can actually be counterproductive.

To repeat, the SHAC campaign in the US has only involved a few hundred participants at any given time; a few thousand could possibly take on a bigger target. Even forcing the government to bail out a corporation, whether or not the target was successfully bankrupted, could still constitute an important victory. As of today, it remains to be seen where effective applications of the SHAC model will be found beyond the campaign that spawned it.

"Where all animal welfare and most animal rights groups insist on working within the legal boundaries of society, animal liberationists argue that the state is irrevocably corrupt and that legal approaches alone will never win justice for the animals."

—ALF Press Office

* If there have not been corresponding conflicts regarding race and class, this may simply indicate that SHAC organizing has been predominantly white and middle class. Some have charged that the animal rights movement in the US attracts many from this demographic who are more comfortable protesting the oppression and exploitation of animals than addressing the power imbalances in their relationships with other human beings.

† Compare this to the critique of calls for "autonomous actions" at mass mobilizations that appeared in "Demonstrating Resistance" in the first issue of *Rolling Thunder*.

SHAC Testimonials

We sat on the stoop just down a side street from the house of our target: a director for one of the largest pharmaceutical companies in the US, and a known HLS customer. "OK, there were two and a half minutes between those."

My partner was observing police activity. We'd been there the previous evening, but that had been a weekday; that night people were clubbing in a neighborhood nearby, so the situation was potentially different. My hooded sweatshirt was uncomfortable in the summer heat, although that may have been due to my racing heart, since passersby seemed to be dressed similarly. After about twenty minutes of reconnaissance we moved on the house. I had an opaque water bottle full of red paint in my hand, and I quickly unscrewed the top.

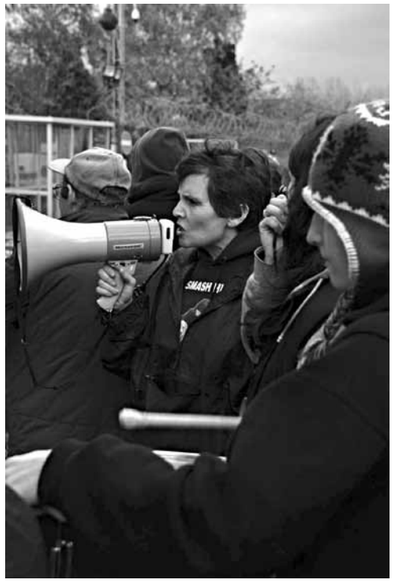
"Wait," my partner said—a couple had just turned onto the street a block behind us. We walked another half a block past the house, crossed the street and waited for the couple to pass, then waited for the next police cruiser to drive by. As soon as it was out of sight, we quickly crossed back. I splashed the paint all over the door and side of the house, and my partner dropped a letter on the ground in a spot where the paint was now pooling. It had been wrapped in a bandanna to avoid fingerprints; it read "DROP HLS." The director would know what we meant; according to Indymedia, activists had demonstrated in front of his house recently.

Demonstrations were OK, but I always stuck to this sort of work. A couple of potentially unstable individuals visiting your house in the middle of the night is infinitely more worrisome than ten people you can see. Also, these visits involved a substantially lower risk of arrest. We quickly walked a block and turned a corner onto a side street, tossing the empty water bottle in somebody's trash. The next day would be pick up day, so recycling bins lined the street. We ripped off our sweatshirts and long pants to reveal jogging attire; we stuffed the old clothes in my partner's backpack and tossed it behind a bush by the river.

The sun was long down when seven packed cars pulled into an empty parking lot to discuss the evening's plans. There were people from all over the country, from California to Texas, come together in the cold Northeast to meet our targets face to face. We gathered in the crisp winter air as one woman passed out small pieces of paper with driving directions to a series of homes. She explained that the company supplied gas for the lab, which had already been through a number of gas companies. We piled back into the cars and headed, anxiously, through the quiet night to our first destination.

As people arrived, everyone milled about nervously, hesitant to be the first to break the silence. I nodded to my friend and started heading across the lawn toward the front door to ring the doorbell. Suddenly dozens of feet pounded the walkway behind me and a moment later everybody was beating on the house, rattling the windows and screaming through bullhorns, while others wrote on the house with markers and pelted the upper floors with eggs (dumpstered, of course). We weren't just screaming outside some impenetrable skyscraper—these were the people who profited from the suffering of beagle puppies and primates in HLS, not their security guards or their cops. Just us and them, here in the night, no protest pens or noise ordinances. We picked the time and place and nature of the confrontation.

SHAC brings the war home.



Activists outing those complicit in vivisection to their neighbors.

Behind the ruckus and din we heard a faint siren in the distance, and everything stopped very suddenly. For just a second, the only sound was that siren in the night, and then again the pounding of feet on the walkway as we dashed back to the street. There was a mad scramble to pile into the right cars, and we were off just as a caravan of police cars careened around the corner. My car slipped past, but other cars were blocked in and the occupants' IDs were taken. No one was arrested, although a restraining order with a number of names was obtained in court later. A few weeks afterwards, somebody painted the offices of the company and they immediately divested from HLS. HLS was forced to build their own pipeline, as nobody was willing to provide gas for them.*

The two security guards practically stepped aside as three dozen of us pushed into the lobby of a towering building containing the offices of who knows how many nasty corporations. We were there for just one that day, though: Novartis Pharmaceuticals, on the seventh floor.

After years of standing outside the offices and shops of various animal abuse profiteers and watching my friends go to jail for locking themselves to doorways, reception desks, and anything else they could get a U-lock around, it felt good to be there. We hadn't come to protest politely, but we also had no intention of getting arrested, to spend the night in jail and go to court at our own expense. We were there to cause a ruckus, give Novartis a good scare, and get away to do it again another day. While three or four of us overwhelmed the security guards, a dozen or so ran riot around the lobby overturning chairs and plants, tossing fistfuls of flyers over the information desk, and shouting into bullhorns about the atrocities committed inside Huntingdon Life Sciences. The rest of us took advantage of this commotion to head for the elevators. We got to the Novartis office just as employees scrambled to lock the thick glass door. We put our signs against the door and pounded on them, screaming through a bullhorn that this protest was only the beginning of the problems Novartis would face if they did not cut ties with HLS immediately. After a few minutes, we stuffed a handful of flyers through the cracks around the door and fled through the lobby onto the street to visit another office.

Later that evening we took advantage of an activist conference elsewhere in the city to get

* According to the *Financial Times*, HLS was "forced to spend £750,000 on a piped gas supply to its site due to the refusal of local fuel companies to deliver oil by tanker."

I was in Chicago for World Week for Animals in Laboratories when the local ADL was working to make Marsh Inc. stop insuring HLS. It was my first real interaction with anarchists. We met at the infoshop to eat dumpstered bagels and juice while planning our demos. A few hours later I was running through the city with thirty other black-clad kids wearing bandanas, scaring the hell out of executives and security guards. I'd never had so much fun in my life.

another large group together. It happened that the Governmental Relations representative for GlaxoSmithKline lived less than a mile from the conference. Just after dark, around 180 people gathered near the conference and we set out on foot to the house. When we arrived, our line in front of the house stretched out as far as the eye could see, at least four deep. Our bullhorns, chants, shouts, and whistles cut through the quiet night. *Here we are, nowhere to run nowhere to hide, if the animals don't get to go home, neither do you. Today we saw you at the office and now here we are at your home.*

We were engaging in psychological warfare against the ruling class of our country. With companies dropping HLS weekly, it felt like we were winning. When the police showed up with their flashing lights, it only added to the spectacle. A handful of people broke off to talk to neighbors who had come out into their yards. We gave them flyers with Janie Kinny's contact information and encouraged them to call her or talk to her tomorrow. Even if nobody actually called or spoke to her about the demo, there are few things that irritate the bourgeois more than knowing the neighbors are talking behind their backs. I've never quite understood this; I assume it has to do with status, which is all you have left after you've sold your conscience and turned your back on the natural world.

Testifying in front of congress, employees of GSK reported that demos like this one made them lose sleep on a regular basis and caused them to jump whenever they heard any noise outside their house. This particular demo came up in the testimony—it was described as "a lynch mob." I guess it's true: our rulers only sleep because we let them.

RT

{Breaking Into Hell
from *Bite Back* #1, lightly edited}

On April 1, 2001, our lives changed. All of us. It was this weekend that I, along with some very dear comrades, entered Huntingdon Life Sciences, and left with 14 precious friends. In a span of three days, the entire animal liberation movement in the United States was entering a new era, with focused energy and dramatic success. We were all changing for the better. The grassroots animal rights movement was learning to focus on specific targets, and how to use their strength to gain victories. We, the underground animal liberation movement, were becoming more focused, plugging into the campaigns of the above ground, to inspire them, to give them hope, and to promote tactics that require audacity, even if they are unconventional, while still using uncompromising vigilante rescues as the most effective way to free animals. But of course, the most important change that weekend was in the lives of 14 beagle puppies, who we lifted from their living graves. It's hard for me to imagine now, these puppies who love sunshine and grass and romping with each other, back in those steel cages we found them in. And they're never going back.

Huntingdon Life Sciences is a vile little lab, and they've not only tried to hide from the animal rights community, but the nation as a whole. The lab is almost entirely surrounded by woods, which was convenient for us (and the animals inside). We were able to walk around the whole perimeter of the lab unnoticed, and see the filth that passersby can't see from the roadway. The back of HLS is dirtier than a junk collector's lawn in Alabama, with chunks of asphalt breaking apart in what are supposed to be delivery driveways. Rows upon rows and piles upon piles of empty cages become warped and oxidized from weather exposure. This brought us great joy, that HLS not only couldn't keep animals in these cages anymore, but seemed to have no use for them now, or in the future. Several large buildings in the back were filled with nothing but garbage.

The evening of March 31, we were approaching the lab through the woods behind it. HLS resides in a town so tiny, they don't even have their own police force, and rely upon the next town over, Franklin Township, to provide them with protection. We put in time and effort until we learned how to outsmart them. There are two bodies of water behind HLS, one being a canal that divides up the police forces of the area. HLS is just within the final reaches of the Franklin Township police force. We knew that police are inherently routine in their work, seldom using any creative skills, and that they wouldn't think outside of their own jurisdiction if they knew that a "crime" was occurring. We therefore entered and left from outside their jurisdiction. This required crossing the canal, at times 100 feet wide, and too deep to be able to walk across. Also, we thought that nothing would mask the smell of 14 puppies like fresh flowing water.

We tied a rope to one of the trees along the shore, and sent one of our first people out in the boat to cross the canal. The oars dipping into the water silently created huge ripples that spread to both shores in a matter of seconds. We too, silent and anonymous, hoped to create huge ripples, showing the world that the use of animals as a vehicle for human greed will no longer be tolerated. At the other shore, the rope was tied to another tree. This enabled us to shuttle each other across the canal in a matter of moments. We followed the backwoods trails created by deer, passing the landmarks we had come to know like the backs of our hands—the abandoned septic tank and the section of woods where the bramble grows so thick that it can only be crawled through—approaching the growing sound of the ventilation fans, which echo through the woods for miles.

Our lookouts were stationed; it was time to go inside. We used bolt cutters to create emergency exits in the barbed wire fence, in case we needed a quick escape. This wasn't very likely, though. The fence doesn't even touch the ground in many places, leaving sometimes three and four foot gaps to slide under, and the back gate was never locked tight enough to keep us from passing in and out for surveillance. Perhaps to the 250 pound security guard, this was safe. We knew the precise timing of the security rounds, and that for the specific employee working that night, we had 6-7 minutes before he completed his rounds and returned to our entry point. The security patrol was hard to miss: the truck used highly visible flashing lights and drove 5 miles per hour.

Activists with animals liberated from laboratories.

When we had initially searched for the animal storage units, we had looked inside the lab. Climbing up the jungle gym of pipes along the back of the main building, we were able to enter the necropsy room through a skylight that wasn't even nailed down. The first night we went, we realized that the horrors Michelle Rokke had witnessed in this same room where we stood were as true then as they were in 1997. Several operating tables were covered in evidence of painful dissections, with surgical instruments left, uncleaned, to soak in the pools of blood left on the tables overnight.

It was only by following the stench of animals living in close quarters that we were able to find the only animals we saw alive at HLS. All of the sheds in the back have alarmed, deadbolted doors—but they also have ladders that lead straight up to the ventilation shafts of the buildings. We climbed up a ladder and entered the building through an unlocked door only 10 feet above the alarmed, deadbolted one. The inside of the lab looked worse than any dusty old attic imaginable. Sheets of plywood created a path crossing over the cave of exposed fiberglass insulation, where tangled wires hung down. We tore apart the insulation, and sawed a hole through the ceiling to the floor below, where the animals were. The locked door was no match for our crowbar, which popped it open in seconds.

When we entered the beagle unit, it was eerily silent. The dogs, upon seeing us, made no noise. Through the darkness, we could see the shining black of the puppies' eyes peering at us with a mixture of curiosity and intense fear of humans. We had waited so long for this moment. We ran from cage to cage and flung open all the doors at once. As they saw the first puppy do it, all the others began to understand that they could get up and leave their prison with the slatted steel floor. The puppies ran all over the unit, exercising their newfound freedom to run, jump, and interact with one another. Those who were small enough went into carriers; we affixed harnesses fashioned of rope to some of the larger dogs to guide them to liberation. We cleared the unit, taking every living animal we found out with us.

I took two dogs with me, both the largest dog and the smallest puppy of the lot. As we ran along a grassy trail created by power lines, the puppy was a ball of energy, and the older dog trotted along at a pace worthy of a Sunday walk. But before we were halfway out, the puppy was getting restless, and he began to cry. The three of us stopped for a moment, and the little one kept jumping up to sniff me as I scratched behind his ears. I pulled him up into my arms, and he began to lick my face through the fabric of my mask. "I understand, little one, you're tired . . . You're just a baby here, fleeing for your life . . ." Now I appreciated the steady pace of the older dog. He seemed to know and understand that if he ran patiently, and kept moving, he would never have to return to the iron cube he had been in for what was most likely years.

The three of us crossed the canal, and knew that we were going to be safe. We were the last ones to meet up with the rest of the group, and as I loaded my new friends up for transportation, all that was visible was a sea of wagging brown and white tails and bobbing puppies jumping all over, relishing the feeling of contact and play. Although we all moved stealthily, there was an intense feeling of celebration. The beginnings of dawn were lightening the sky to a dark blue-gray, and it was going to rain soon. Within hours, our footprints would be washed away in the mud, and the dogs would be hours away, on the long, well-deserved journey to their new lives. The coldness of winter was finally ending, and the sharp spring green glowing with new life could be seen through the darkness. It was a beautiful morning, and it was a brand new day for the animals.

RT

Back in the early days of the HLS campaign, there was a convergence in Little Rock, Arkansas to protest Stephens, Inc., the largest HLS investor at the time. Hundreds of people took to the streets.

In preparation for the protests, the city of Little Rock passed an unconstitutional city ordinance essentially banning public assembly. I was one of the lucky twenty or so who were arrested and charged under this ordinance, and I served a day or two in county jail. I was later convicted of disorderly conduct and, in keeping with the no-compromise ethic of the time, appealed that conviction and fought it in court.

I live in Chicago, so I had to drive all the way down to Little Rock for my court date. My car broke down on the way. After about two hours on the side of the road, I hitched a ride with some college kids to the next exit to call a tow truck. On the way there, they saw a cop on the side of the road and decided to drop me off so he could drive me back to my car after I called the tow truck. I didn't want to be left with the cop, but didn't feel that I could scream out "NO! Keep Driving!" without freaking them out, so I just thanked them and got out.

Thus began my first ride in the front of a cop car. The cop took me back to my car and I thanked him for the ride and went to sit in my car. As I went to get out, he stopped me, explaining that since it was so dark that he would just sit with his lights on until the tow truck came so that no one would hit the car or anything. Again, I wanted to say "NO! LEAVE!"—but I didn't think there was a way I could pull that off without seeming sketchy, so I stayed. It was actually kind of interesting at first. The cop let me play with his radar gun, showed off his computer, and geeked out about all his gadgets. But then he had an idea: "Hey, why don't we run your license plate, just for fun."

That didn't sound like my idea of fun at all. He started entering the plate and my heart beat harder. Up popped my information on the little computer. Nothing out of the ordinary on the screen—my name, address, basic stuff like that. He scrolled down a little bit further; it showed places my plate had been run all over the country, but still nothing bad. Then it appeared, in bold, flashing letters: MEMBER OF TERRORIST ORGANIZATION. Literally. That is what it said on the screen. He clicked it and my arrest picture from Little Rock came up. The only thing I could read before he turned the screen away was "ANIMAL RIGHTS EXTREMIST. APPROACH WITH CAUTION."

He asked me if I had ever been in trouble before. I answered that I had nothing more to say. Then we sat in total silence for 25 of the longest minutes of my life. When the tow truck came I all but ran from the car to get into it.

The Importance *of* Support

Building Foundations, Creating Community, Sustaining Movements

How do we develop anti-authoritarian and anti-capitalist movements that are capable of maintaining and expanding over the long haul? The infrastructures we create in the course of our political work are key to unlocking the answer. If our infrastructures are to succeed and deepen our movements, we need to abandon the pervasive separation between politics and "personal" life and ground our movement activity in everyday practices of mutual aid and support—both in times of happiness and in times of hardship. This article looks at the latter of these: reflecting on how we can develop models for providing each other with compassionate, nurturing support through tragedy, trauma, and hardship.

Integrating support efforts into daily organizing is a crucial element of working for change. Such efforts are foundational parts of radical infrastructure building, both in explicitly political contexts and in more personal contexts. Trauma, tragedy, illness, and other forms of hardship are things that *everyone* experiences throughout their lives. However, activists engaged in the intentional construction of radical infrastructure often handle these in ways that are at odds with our stated intentions and our efforts to create better lives and a better world.

The conversations and experiences that have helped shape this article involve personal experiences with death, illness, chronic pain, and with state-sponsored murder, repression, and imprisonment. Some of these are a direct result of the

At times the disparities between what we've **experienced** and the **potential** of anti-capitalist and anti-authoritarian communities has been maddening.

systems we struggle against; others are an everyday part of life. Support work isn't always intuitive; we draw from complex skill sets, character traits, experience, and privilege or lack thereof. Developing effective models of support is imperative for making our communities relevant and desirable, both to ourselves and to anyone we wish to join our movements.

In recent years, there has been increasing discussion within anti-capitalist and anti-authoritarian communities of support for those facing illness, trauma, and serious personal hardship. Zines such as *Counterbalance* (Seattle), *The Worst* (New York), and *Support*, as well as the recent publication of pattrice jones' book *Aftershock: Confronting Trauma in a Violent World*, have helped develop conversations on support. Organizations like The Icarus Project and the multiple support committees for Green Scare indictees and prisoners provide a few examples of solid support efforts based in everyday life experience and overt political organizing.

As participants in anti-authoritarian and anti-capitalist communities for over a decade, we have personally experienced the benefits and deficits of our radical communities' support efforts. Since we count on these communities for fulfilling non-hierarchical and anti-oppressive social relations, we've dedicated ourselves to building infrastructures that work to support these relationships—as a way to improve our daily lives and support our and others' resistance efforts. Both of us have felt the need to give support and be supported by our loved ones and comrades, particularly in recent times. Sometimes our experiences with support have been positive, but other times there has been a lack of support—or a lack of understanding of the need for support. Some of the attempts at support we have experienced have even been harmful.

The instances when we have felt seriously let down by our friends and political allies for their failure to provide tangible support, or to show true compassion and understanding, have raised serious questions for us about movement sustainability, especially at moments of low power and energy. At times the disparities between what we've *experienced* and the *potential* of anti-capitalist and anti-authoritarian communities has been maddening. We need to constantly ask ourselves: who are we and what do we really stand for as communities based in resistance, if we can't support each other in times of need?

We feel that our communities are more relevant, useful, and sustainable when we are collectively capable of providing support. Likewise, they are more inviting and inspiring when they model forms of mutual aid that are practical and consistent. Support work builds solidarity, strengthens our bonds, and deepens the integration of our politics into our lives in ways that are crucial to the struggles we engage in.

Support over the long haul is particularly important. This means figuring out how to provide meaningful support throughout the duration of hardship—though the need for support, what it looks like, and how long it is needed will vary from situation to situation. In many experiences, it seems support is strongest immediately after a traumatic or tragic situation. We have experienced our communities to be impressively good at this: we throw benefits, we join our friends at their hospital beds or at their court hearings. But what happens six months or two years later? Are those support efforts maintained? Too often the answer is no. After the overt urgency of a situation subsides, it can become harder to determine what sort of support is needed, and the attention of people we need support from sometimes begins to drift elsewhere prematurely. This responsiveness to urgent situations is useful and even inspirational, but we need to build on this to be stronger in providing support more generally. Support over the long haul means that we must sustain our support efforts for as long as our loved ones and comrades need them.

We need to ask ourselves: who are we and what do we really stand for as communities of **resistance**, if we can't **support** each other in times of need?

Anarchists and explicitly anti-authoritarian and anti-capitalist communities can learn a great deal from the history of radical support work. Such work has been crucial to organizations like ACT UP, as well as the civil rights and women's liberation struggles. ACT UP provides one example in which support work was quite literally a matter of life and death, and the organizational functions that activists engaged in—from massive research initiatives to directly politicized forms of mutual aid—teach valuable lessons about the potential of radicalizing care and building political activity with support work at its center. It's been our experience in radical communities that we often attempt to figure out everything for ourselves—reinventing the wheel as if no one came before us. Learning the histories of these movements and the experiences of those who participated in them can inform and guide our work today.

Finally, although *everything* is political, it is necessary to remember the importance of support work beyond explicitly political activity—though at their roots, we must understand the interconnectedness of the two. It is important to support our friends, families, and allies simply because we love and care about them, because they are integral parts of the social webs we inhabit, and because they are crucial to our daily existence. Support is something we all need when we're going through tough times.

An Injury to One is an Injury to All: Why Support Matters

Becoming physically ill and experiencing trauma are isolating; only the person with the illness or experiencing the trauma can feel the pain specific to them. In a context where most of us lack access to adequate health care and often have to devise creative ways to get what we can to make it through, our communities play important roles for navigating these experiences in the day to day. Even for those with insurance, the healthcare system is still terribly isolating, alienating, and disempowering, characterized by professionals who are often callous and cold. Here as well, our communities play necessary support and stabilizing roles on an everyday level.

For those facing state repression, enduring the legal process and penal system can be a nightmare. The struggle to get through costly and lengthy legal battles is a traumatizing experience, and when imprisoned comrades finally leave the prison system, they carry with them stigmatizing records and severe emotional scarring. Others spend their lives behind bars and die inside the prison system. In the case of comrades who are serving life sentences, the challenge for our support efforts is to help create community for those whose lives have been stolen from them, who are trapped in a place that offers very little beyond pain, isolation, and misery. They need and deserve the support of their friends, comrades, and community on the outside to help them make the most of life in the face of such a horrible reality.

"The issue of solidarity, taking care of each other, creating structure, making our own reproduction as people, as activists, the issue—the political issue—is as important as the issue of fighting outside." This was Silvia Federici's response when we asked her about building sustainable movements. She has pointed out elsewhere that "the analysis of how we reproduce these movements, how we reproduce ourselves is not at the center of movement organizing. It has to be."*

Silvia is a movement fixture and an elder with important insight. She played an important role in the feminist movement in the United States during the 1970s. She helped found the Wages for Housework campaign and has written extensively over the past four decades on the

* Silvia Federici, "Precarious Labor: A Feminist Viewpoint." In Team Colors Collective (Eds.) *In the Middle of a Whirlwind: 2008 Convention Protests, Movement and Movements*. Journal of Aesthetics and Protest Press. Online: www.inthemiddleofawhirlwind.info

intersections of gender and class exploitation. From her experiences in women's liberation struggles, Silvia developed the concept of *self-reproducing movements*. "The women's movement put on the agenda the fact that a self-determination struggle, a liberation struggle—it's also a struggle that immediately raises the question of the reproduction of the community, and without that reproduction of the community being part of the struggle, the movement will die."

Self-reproducing movements are intentionally grounded in the day-to-day; they are founded on a micro-political base and develop cultures that use the everyday as a space of activism to expand overt political struggle. Long- and short-term support work is crucial to building movements capable of acting on this terrain. The idea of self-reproducing movements is one useful way to conceptualize the need for support work.

Much of the usefulness of support work comes down to building community engaged in everyday forms of solidarity, as opposed to charitable approaches. In our conversations, Silvia emphasized what this might mean for sustainability: ". . . if you are a movement, what is it that people do? What is the necessity? That has to be put not only [on] the level of personal goodness—you know, "I'm willing to help . . ." [so you] spend two hours at someone's bedside . . . That has to be seen as part of political work—that kind of solidarity, and that kind of help. As long as that is seen as some sort of charity or personal favor, it will not work. You know, people will do it for two months . . ."

Support through State Repression

Daniel McGowan was grounded in a small but strong activist community in 2005 when he was arrested for his involvement in Earth Liberation Front activities. His support committee took the name Family and Friends of Daniel McGowan, signifying the connection of multiple communities directly engaged in supporting him. Family and Friends of Daniel McGowan illustrated various positive elements of proactive and tangible emotional and general support: participants helped raise funds, conducted a massive outreach campaign, helped Daniel with graduate school, helped him to prepare to serve his sentence, and much more. Jenny, Daniel's partner, was a key force in his support committee. Not coming from an activist community, Jenny faced state repression with a group of people largely new to her:

> "Daniel and I kept pretty separate social lives and, though I always knew what he was working on and I was acquaintances with many of his friends, I never felt like I was very involved in the activist community. I think one of the most helpful things that came from this community was the solidarity offered to me. It was very comforting to me to have groups of people come over to keep me company. It was also very important that there was no judgment placed on the situation and that, although no one really knew how to solve the problem, everyone was willing to try to figure it out. At times it was like we were all in it together. That is something I didn't feel at all from my friends outside the activist community."

Ashanti Alston went through the prison experience himself. A member of the Black Panther Party during the 1970s in New York and New Jersey, and a soldier of the Black Liberation Army during the 1970s and early 1980s, Ashanti speaks passionately about the importance of connections in struggle:

> "Support from the political community was small, but it doesn't matter in the sense whenever there's like . . . even this small core group of supporters being there for you and demonstrating it through letters, or you know they're carrying on their political activism—it helps to keep your spirit up so that you can do this everyday experience in prison; even when the everyday turns into every year. For me that political support, and that family support, and that social support coming from your significant communities . . . is really important . . ."

Thadeaus was Brad Will's roommate when Brad was murdered by Mexican paramilitaries in 2006. Because of the depth of Brad's involvement in New York City's radical communities, the response to his murder was particularly intense, and people relied on each other to get through it:

> ". . . when Brad died, no one had to deal with it alone if they didn't want to because every night or every day there was something happening in relation to Brad's death: there were meetings at Bluestockings, there were meetings in Brooklyn on how to respond and how to protest—because it was also a very political death—so that was helpful too, and it was also like, you didn't need to know Brad to be involved. You didn't need to have ever met him or ever heard him. Just the fact that he was an anarchist and he was murdered—or if you were an anarchist or even sympathetic to those ideas, you might have felt like you should've been part of some of that stuff . . . Lots of people flew in—and traveled to New York, people rallied together. People were just there for each other and I feel like that was really good."

When our comrades face state repression, whether it be imprisonment or murder, personal support among family and friends is crucial for getting through. Ashanti's personal experience highlights this: "My biggest fear when I did time was that I was gonna come out OK, but I was gonna come out cold and not able to laugh any more. I'm a jokester, I'm silly—and I always felt like, if they change that about me, I might come out but I'll think that they won in another way. I'm still silly . . . But things like that became important. The letters mean a lot. The conversations on the phone mean a lot. Loved ones, your relationships—whether it's family or your significant others, it means a lot. Those things help keep you going."

Part of the state's goal in repression is to send a message to future dissidents to deter them from engaging in resistance efforts by demonstrating the intensity of punishment people can expect if they engage in such efforts. Our support for those faced with state repression can send the message that our movements take care of our own, and that we have each other's backs—no matter what the state dishes out.

Daniel McGowan has written about how some political movements have created infrastructure for supporting their prisoners during and after imprisonment: "The Irish republican movement has a group called 'Welcome Home' (translated from Irish) that exists to provide support for recently released

As political activists sometimes it feels as if we carry the **weight** of the world on our backs. The degree to which things are fucked up in the world can result in mental and emotional **devastation**.

political prisoners beyond the initial rush and euphoria of release. This work isn't glamorous, but it's necessary. Finding decent housing and jobs, helping people comply with parole and probation, setting them up with clothes and some money when they get out—these are all things our communities can and should do."

A concrete program like the one Daniel describes is helpful on two levels. First, it provides for the basic needs of those released from prison and reduces their isolation. Second, this program offers a concrete model that demonstrates how we, as a movement, take care of those who find themselves in harm's way. In demonstrating our capacity to support our friends through state repression, we can make it less intimidating for people to consider engaging in activities that entail considerable risk.

Overcoming Paralysis: Challenging Ourselves to Provide Better Support

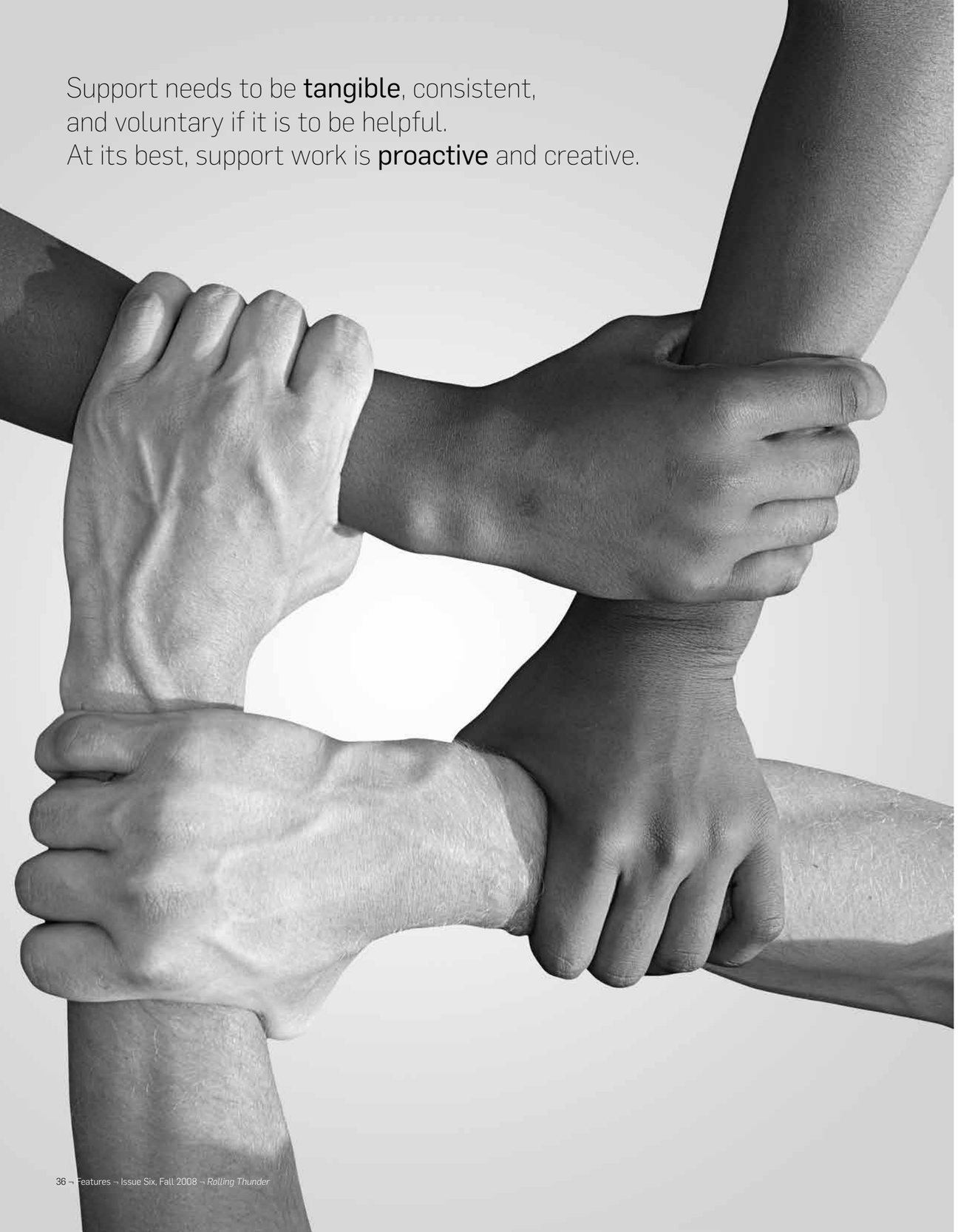
It can be hard to know how to support or even interact with a loved one or comrade who is experiencing hardship, loss, or pain. It can also be hard to ask for support or to let other people support us. However, it makes us more effective activists and makes our communities more inviting when we take care of ourselves and those close to us.

It seems best to assume that when people are not being supportive it is a result of their own uncertainty regarding how to discuss illness or trauma, or because of the impact of past scars or current events that make it too much for them. Although it may sometimes be simple selfishness, it seems more often than not it is these issues or simply lack of skill that keeps us from adequately providing support. Indeed, it's fairly rare for activists to present workshops on how to give support—particularly long-term support—around health crises. Usually, these are things we learn on the fly, sometimes while supporting others with whom we have unhealthy relationships or poor communication. We rarely have the vocabulary to discuss stigmatized issues like illness, particularly when the illness is life-threatening or leads to long-term health struggles.

When a person experiences intense hardships that are so different from the day-to-day experiences of their peers, a major disconnect can develop between people who otherwise have much in common, particularly if their peers do not work to maintain an understanding of what they are going through. The expectations of the person experiencing the hardship may need to change; the ways in which they enjoy each other's company may need to shift. In order to hold onto our relationships and truly be there for friends in need, we need to be open to such changes and sensitive to what others are experiencing. Otherwise, we risk losing our connections with others and creating more isolation around those already experiencing intense hardship—and in a political context, we weaken our movements.

David has been active with punk and activist communities for some time. For the last few years he has been supporting his mother through severe illness. As a result of the overwhelming amount of support his mother has needed, David has sought support and help from wherever he could find it. In particular, he looked for help from friends in his primary networks—the punk and activist communities.

When we spoke with him, David reflected on the disconnection he felt from his peers as he engaged in supporting his mother: "Some of the people I lived with would say to each other, 'David's not fun,' because I was so overwhelmed



with everything, and would just come home and look upset. There were people in the house that criticized me for being upset and who criticized me for asking them for help because it was bringing them down. That was the opposite of what I looking for, because I felt overwhelmed and I needed help—and getting a negative response for expressing that made me feel like I needed to keep it to myself and that made me feel more alone. Since I was hearing this from people I was living with I couldn't not be around them, which made it even harder."

Being neglectful and failing to show sensitivity to the hardships our friends and comrades are experiencing is hurtful and damaging. This behavior prioritizes selfish desires without taking others' needs into account. To build strong bonds of support and solidarity, as well as to be good friends to those we care about, we need to make a commitment to learn from our mistakes and strive to act in accordance with our expressed politics; otherwise, we fail those we care about and make our politics appear to be for the sake of identity alone.

David shared an experience with the inconsistency he experienced between his friends' politics and their everyday actions: "Living in a punk house at the time, with people who identified as anarchists—I remember feeling like they were not prepared to deal with a situation where someone actually did need support. And when I did ask they treated it like more of an inconvenience to their punk lifestyle than an opportunity to express the values they profess to hold."

No matter how hard or how much of a downer it may seem, there is a serious need to talk about illness and trauma—both when it first occurs and over the long-term. Hiding it by avoiding discussion increases feelings of isolation for the person facing the illness. It's also a disciplinary mechanism: by intentionally avoiding discussion we increase feelings of shame, let those facing hardships know that their problems aren't important, and send the message that they should be silent about their needs.

Adequate support means not just being receptive to what someone asks for, but approaching the other person about what they need. Jenny helped illustrate the importance of initiating communication by describing her own situation: "There were definitely times I felt extremely alienated and alone because friends weren't talking to me about what I was going through. I think that some people thought I just didn't want to talk about it. That was really hard to deal with because it came off to me like they didn't care . . . the times when those who assumed it would be better to back off and wait for me to talk to them about it seemed to only hurt."

Another friend we spoke with, Ben—a 27-year-old with a long history of involvement in radical communities—has been struggling against cancer. Discussing his experiences receiving support, he also emphasized the importance of communication: "The best thing you can do is to ask, and to just talk to the person . . . if someone is your friend and they're dealing with a situation where they need support . . . [in general] the best way is to ask the people most directly affected." Jenny also spoke to this: "It's always better to surround the person going through this situation and ask them how they are, how they're feeling about everything and initiate a dialogue."

Ben continued: "We have this fear about saying the wrong thing to someone who's going through illness. In thinking of all the things that people have actually said to me—of all the thousands of words that have been said to me dealing with this issue, there's only like one or two examples where I thought, 'Oh, you know what, you just said the wrong thing.' When you think about . . . all the people [who] had the emotional investment and were willing to actually offer something in terms of even just words as that small level of support, it's overwhelming that such a large amount of people, even if they weren't very articulate, still managed not to say the wrong thing. My point with that is that that's a really overblown sort of fear, that fear is really bullshit and that saying something is always better than saying nothing . . ."

Part of being supportive in a truly helpful way means being responsive and listening to what the person needing support wants. It is not helpful, and may be harmful, to put your desires for how to support someone before the desires of the person wanting support. It's not an easy road to navigate. Ben spoke to this point: "A lot of times you feel like absolute shit. And when I feel like shit, at least with this particular thing, I don't feel like talking, and I don't feel like seeing people . . . I don't find it helpful to just get on the phone with somebody and say, 'I feel like shit,' and talk about all the ways I feel like shit. And I feel miserable and talking about all the ways I feel miserable is not helpful. I feel like people knowing that those times happen, and don't just happen one day but happen for two weeks at a time, and knowing that there's a reason that I'm not calling them back and understanding that, is really helpful."

Support needs to be tangible, consistent, and voluntary if it is to be helpful. At its best, support work is *proactive* and *creative*. Responsiveness is crucial, but so is taking initiative. Ben found that instances where people anticipated needs were "really meaningful, really important and really surprising."

One of the worst things we can do is make the person we're supporting feel like our support for them is a burden. In cases of illness and state repression, it is a sign of seriously misplaced priorities, or ridiculously constrained resources, to make those suffering feel like a problem. David touched on this: "If I am in a situation where I need support and if I have to put a bunch of my energy into soliciting support and then feeling like I am putting people in a situation they don't want to be in—that's going to make me feel worse. The thing I learned and have learned repeatedly is that supporting people can't be a reactionary thing. You need be proactive to provide meaningful support to someone."

Consistency and taking initiative are particularly necessary for long-term support work. Often, in moments of extreme urgency, communities come together to support an individual through a specific situation. However, support tends to decrease rapidly, even if it is needed for long periods. Long-term support efforts mean that we need to maintain discussions with the person needing that support. Likewise, those being supported need to increase their capacity to express their needs and desires—and the ways we interact with them should help make that process *easier* for them. When we engage in support efforts we also need to be honest with ourselves about what

Part of the state's goal in **repression** is to send a message to future dissidents to deter them from engaging in resistance efforts by demonstrating the intensity of **punishment** that people can expect if they engage in such efforts.

we're able to take on, and be honest with both the person facing illness or trauma and the larger community.

This last point is particularly important in activist cultures, where in trying so hard to put our ideals into practice we tend to over-commit ourselves. This sometimes has the effect of creating cultures that celebrate burnout or simply ignore it. In *Aftershock: Confronting Trauma in a Violent World*, pattrice jones makes an important point on this: "The ability to go without sleep or work without taking a lunch break is often mistaken for a measure of dedication. In consequence, social movements are much smaller than they ought to be, simply because so many people burn out or become convinced they don't have what it takes."* Health needs to be a community priority if we're going to sustain ourselves and movements; we need to see setting limits and having clear communication as crucial to sustainability and the support work necessary for it.

We have experienced that activists often create cultures amicable to flakiness, and when our resources are strained—or when we're not honest with ourselves or those within our community about what we can and cannot do—the most common response is to simply flake out. Creating serious resistance movements means lowering our tolerance for what amount to cultures of irresponsibility and rhetoric. This goes for all of our projects, but is particularly important when it comes to the issue of support—especially support that relates to life or death situations.

Being consistent and living up to what we promise to do are crucial for providing the person in need of support with some sense of security over the long term. When we can't come through on our promises, we need to learn to be accountable for our shortcomings. Such accountability is part of a process that benefits everyone involved, and acknowledges our basic humanity: we make mistakes, even when we have good intentions. When flakiness becomes dominant and consistency is lacking, it can be directly harmful to the person facing illness. Ben spoke to this point: "You know, there's a real fear when you get sick that people are going to drift away . . . and to start to think that that might be happening to you is terrifying, it's absolutely terrifying to think that people might be drifting away and that not only might you need to be facing this situation with much less support than you thought you might be equipped with, but also just the absolute pain that's involved in seeing people leave you . . ."

* pattrice jones, *Aftershock: Confronting Trauma in a Violent World, a Guide for Activists and Their Allies.* New York: Lantern Books, 2007.

The Weight of the World: What Holds Us Back

Our social conditioning can cause us to act in ways that, though unintentional, end up being problematic to those who need our support and understanding. Our conditioning can also cause us to act in ways that are unhelpful to ourselves and those trying to support us as we endeavor to navigate our own trauma and hardship. In addition to challenging ourselves to provide better support, we can also serve ourselves by learning how to open up emotionally and better recognize our own needs.

Thadeaus reflected on his own socialization as it related to his experience of hearing the news of Brad's murder: "Well, I felt pretty devastated when I found out. I was in the midst of DJing a party and it was on the Friday before Halloween and a friend came up and told me,

Our **support** for those faced with state repression can send the message that our movements take **care** of our own, and that we have each other's backs —no matter what the state dishes out.

and there wasn't really much I could do. He had pictures with Brad dead, with a bullet hole in his chest. I don't know, I don't think I asked him to show them to me, but I wish he hadn't right then. So I went home after that, and I cried on the way home—and it was raining out—and that was the first time I'd cried in years. The type of household I grew up in, it wasn't OK to cry, not just boys—but especially boys, not even my sister was allowed to cry, she doesn't cry either. So like crying's not something I do or know how to do. Somehow that night I knew how to do it. Like, the second I got on my bike I started riding home by myself through the rain."

As activists we struggle with racism, internalized gender oppression, and other issues in our political work and our interpersonal dynamics within our organizing structures. Struggling against and overcoming these traits of the dominant culture are crucial to how we deal with emotional and physical trauma.

Ashanti reflected on his experiences with issues surrounding masculinity while he was in prison:

> "I remember one experience in particular with a brother who I would talk to a lot about love, relationships, and stuff like that—as I was learning about those things. He was in a relationship with a woman on the streets, and they had just had a baby. Whenever he talked on the phone he was real cold and harsh telling her, 'when you coming up, bring this and bring that.' But as we talked, and as me and his relationship grew, I saw him grow, where he began to reflect on his machismo, the sexism, how hard he was being on his partner. . . . And I'm getting ready to walk back to the cell block, but he's on the phone and he's crying. And my man is a boxer, a heavyweight boxer, but when I talked to him about it later he was telling me that he finally just had to admit to himself how he was being harsh on his partner, and whatever the conversation was, he just decided he's not gonna be this macho person. And whatever it was, my man was cryin' on the phone. I'm like, cry on. The kinda thing now I affirm, rather than just, 'oh you a boxer, you a fighter, we need you in the revolution.' It's this—really understanding that this new man, new woman thing is like—we gotta really begin to practice this. So inside it helped us to be able to survive that. But I think it also helped us develop better relationships with family and other folks on the street, where they began to sense that maybe it was not always just political stuff, too."

Ashanti relates this to present day support for those facing state repression:

> "And so like even today, like when I talk to Daniel McGowan and Andy Stepanian from the animal folks, who are now political prisoners, it's around the same stuff. Like they're getting ready to do time, they know they're getting ready to do some prison time—but my advice is always around the same thing, you know: remain human, develop relationships; the relationships you got with people, really appreciate them. But really don't get into the macho thing about doing this time. Recognize that it's gonna be hard, it's gonna be some hard days. But you gotta draw on some strengths that you may not normally draw on. However you identify them: spiritual whatever, you know. But you also want to recognize that you're a loving human being. And you want that too. I don't care what the conditions are inside, figure out ways to keep nurturing that. Through your relationships with family and political community, but you also gonna find folks inside who are kinda on that same page. And those are people that you kinda wanna develop relations [with] inside, cause you gotta figure out ways to stay human."

Throughout our own experiences, we've noticed that we commonly keep our problems and

stress bottled up for fear of burdening our loved ones. Ashanti touched on this as well: ". . . You need someone that you can talk to, you cannot bottle up emotions just to keep saving other people. Let them make the decision if they can handle it. Don't you just make it all for them, you gotta figure out how to stay healthy. . . Sometimes you can't express that to the folks who you may even be close with inside."

As political activists sometimes it feels as if we carry the weight of the world on our backs. The degree to which things are fucked up in the world can result in mental and emotional devastation, but we have found ourselves keeping our own problems to ourselves, thinking that—relative to so much horror and atrocity—we have it OK. How can we complain when things could be so much worse? In other situations, we keep things to ourselves because we know our family and friends have enough problems and hardships of their own, and we don't want to add to their burdens.

Ashanti continues on this subject: "Sometimes you know you need to get in with someone else, whether it's family, loved ones, or some of your close political companions and say 'hey,' even if it's them coming up for a visit, there needs to be time when you just like, 'man, such and such happened to me, this counselor . . . this guard, that judge, whatever, I'm sick of it. This fucking shit, just. . . ' Hey, it's out. And those who are with you, they help you process that . . . you always want to help them. Sometimes, you know, let people help you too. Let them also make that decision."

We do ourselves a disservice when we dismiss our own needs and emotions, and we do our larger communities and movements a disservice as well. We need to be concerned with our own mental and physical well-being if we want to be effective activists, effective supporters, and generally positive people.

Day to Day Life: Modeling A Better World

We desire a world better than this one: a world that is more thoughtful, more caring, less isolating, a world that celebrates and nurtures community. Our movements are spaces for practicing new ways of relating to each other, spaces to model relations based in compassion and practical forms of mutual aid, for building and expanding resistance. If we can't love and care for each other here and now our movements will be easily destroyed and unsustainable. On the other hand, if we are able to develop a culture of mutual support, this new way of relating to one another will make our resistance to the dominant culture even more inviting.

It is important to see the community aspect of support work. We are woven into social webs; each member of our communities has a role in a support chain. It is common in many situations for the person facing illness or trauma to choose primary supporters; those supporters will also need support. While the issue of illness is often very personal, to the extent that it is appropriate and comfortable, our communities need to expand and open dialogue to make issues like illness less stigmatized and more open for discussion and assistance.

Our politics and our commitment to radical change are put to the test in hard times. We've learned—personally, and through the experiences of those who have benefited from support through tragedy and hardship—that when meaningful, concrete support has been present in times of need, it has created an important sense of community. Such community can help us get through the most painful and difficult situations. These moments when we are able to provide and really come through for each other underscore the best that our communities and movements have to offer.

To share feedback, give input, ask questions, or initiate other correspondence with the authors of this article, please write: theimportanceofsupport@gmail.com

Do's and Don'ts to Consider in Providing Support

Common Mistakes and Problematic Behavior to Avoid

At worst, these behaviors will destroy a relationship and add more pain and hardship to an already unbearable situation. We rarely have the intention of hurting someone else or making things worse, but our culture often perpetuates these unhelpful practices. Part of building alternatives is recognizing ways in which our behavior is problematic and working to overcome problematic tendencies.

DO NOT:

Make people feel like their need for support is a burden: The thought of burdening you adds to the burden of the person who needs support, which only makes an already horrible situation worse.

Assume everything is OK: It's not helpful to avoid the subject of someone's illness or hardship because of nervousness about saying the wrong thing, or because you don't want to talk about things that aren't fun. Saying something is almost always better than ignoring the obvious.

Assume your friends will ask for support if they need it: Many times people are unable to ask for help as a result of their own character, or because of shame or any number of other factors. Do not assume that because people don't ask for help they don't need it.

Use someone's tragedy or trauma for friendship capital: Providing support to get into someone's good graces or to impress them or others is disturbing and gross. Opportunism around trauma is a sad reality that exists in radical communities as well as elsewhere.

Things To Do and to Keep In Mind

Here are some important considerations to guide your support efforts and your interactions with those in need of support.

DO:

Be consistent: This is one of the most important things, and a foundation for providing concrete and meaningful support. There is a place for one-off gestures of support, but consistency is key to playing a primary support role, and to reducing the isolation of hardship.

Volunteer: Effective support needs to be voluntary. Real support is not doing a favor or acts of charity. Real support is genuine solidarity extended because you share a community, because the well-being of your family, friends, and comrades is bound up with your own. Make yourself available, ask how you can help, be there voluntarily. Don't wait to be asked—that may never happen.

Be proactive: Take initiative and try to anticipate needs.

Maintain awareness: Remember what your friend is going through, especially when you are together; let this awareness guide how you interact and how you speak. Be sensitive and remember the context. Everyday greetings and vocabulary might not be appropriate.

Follow-through: Keep promises, do what you say you are going to do, and check in regularly. If you don't hear from someone for a while, remember that through the hardship, it might be up to you to initiate contact. Take responsibility for maintaining contact and communication.

Make your support effort a priority: Check your priorities: do they need to be rearranged to adjust to new circumstances of supporting someone in your life?

Ask questions: Speaking about needs and feelings might not be easy for people you are supporting. Ask questions to meet them halfway, and give your friends opportunities to share their thoughts if they'd like to.

Share the work: Whatever your friend is going through is probably affecting all aspects of life: housework, food, rides, and other things that might have little to do with the immediate issue but need to get done anyway. If these things can be taken care of by someone else, it will certainly take some of the weight off.

Coordinate and organize: Providing support is not always an easy thing to know how to do, and it can be hard to find a starting place. Work with the person you are supporting and others to figure out what people can do to help; coordinate to make sure that tasks are completed and responsibilities are distributed.

Do what they need you to do: not what you feel should be done.

Let them decide the terms of their support: For instance, when they need support and what they need. This may mean making personal sacrifices to meet people where they are at.

Change your expectations of those you're supporting in accordance with their specific situations.

Be honest and be accountable: with the person you're supporting, your community, and yourself about what you can or cannot do. Making false promises and flaking out builds distrust, weakens our bonds, and weakens our movements.

Know your own limits: it's important to recognize our own limits and considerations when trying to provide support in order to sustain our own health and not overextend ourselves. It's important to try the best we can, but important not to beat ourselves up for making mistakes or not meeting certain expectations. The best we can do is try and learn from our mistakes, while letting our past experience guide our future efforts.

A WORLD OF WINGS AND CRIES

Swedish anarchists build their own autonomous zone

One of our most handsome and dedicated volunteers helped with the board and batten siding.

Many years ago I took a job as a carpenter's apprentice in Stockholm.

I was a thousand miles from home, had a kid on the way, and had no place to live and no income. I was about to get too far gone. So I signed up for the first decent thing and figured I'd at least be good with money for a while and could worry about whether or not it was the right way of life some other time. Six years later I was still stuck in it. By then I was fully educated and well paid with a secure job and union membership—and none of that made it easier to get back to living free as I had in the old days. I kept saying to myself *this is how it happens; this is the long and winding road that leads us away from the people we'd hoped to become.*

On the other hand, of the jobs for which I was eligible at the time, apprentice to a carpenter wasn't too bad. My life could've gone in any number of directions—I'd applied for all kinds of shit. Bike messenger. Store clerk. Dishwasher. In the beginning I couldn't speak the language, so that ruled out a lot. This was in Sweden, remember, and I'm from North Carolina. Greensboro. Lucky for me, the father of the girl with whom I was about to have a kid owned a small contracting firm, and he gave me a chance despite the obvious disadvantages. I stuck to it, and slowly over time I picked up the pieces to the puzzle. I figured that if I was going to have a job, I should at least try to be useful. Everybody lives in a house or an apartment, I reasoned, and all those spaces need to get fixed or built or whatever; so at least I'd be providing something of concrete value. It seemed to me as good a use of time as any.

How you think about your job has as much to do with where you come from as with where you want to go. My folks worked throughout my childhood. White collar. Mom worked with the state before going private. Dad climbed the corporate ladder. By the time I was 21 I'd decided I wanted to work as little as possible for the rest of my life. I would have told you I'd rather be poor than sell my time. But I'll say this—regardless of your beginnings, humble or otherwise, when you're about to bring a life into the world and you don't have the resources to house and feed a baby, a good job is a godsend. Whether or not that automatically equates parenthood with wage slavery remains to be seen. I spent the first part of my adulthood trying to rid my life of all its inherited safety nets and then decided to take on one of the most demanding projects there is. Adults have always said that somewhere along the line life stops being just a party, but what does it become? I was about to find out.

So I re-entered the work force. I picked up the routine of getting up early and getting to work, busting my ass all day, then arriving home tired and paid. The stress of food and rent eased as my wage rose, but I had new problems. My final day of unemployment was like breathing out that last breath before drowning. My career as a musician pretty much ended, and I hadn't had the chance to become a poet or a painter yet. Prospects for going back to school seemed slim what with being in Sweden and all. But there were upsides other than the merely financial. I was no longer responsible for choosing how to spend my days, but I was given the opportunity to show my talent, if I had any, within a certain frame. Doors were opening and closing all around me. I secretly coveted the dream that maybe, just maybe, the skills for which I'd traded my free time would serve me in projects of my own choosing. I even daydreamed about it on the job, pretending that the multi-million dollar apartment complex I was building was actually a radical collective of badass artists and activists. I hoped something might come along one day that would make all those early mornings worthwhile.

In December 2005 I was helping clean up at a local collective here in my suburb after having hosted 150 antifascists from Copenhagen. Every year the Nazis in Northern Europe gather here to commemorate the death of a Nazi guy who was murdered by some immigrant kids a couple years ago—and every year the antifascists come to give battle. We host a breakfast for the busses from Denmark, so they don't have to go out on an empty stomach. Anyway, I was washing up in the kitchen and I happened to meet this couple, two young but experienced-looking punks. I was introduced to them by a mutual friend and they started telling me about this project they were involved in. They called it "Kulturkampanjen," which is something like Culture Campaign, though it has a much better ring to it in Swedish because the words for "campaign" and "struggle" are similar—not to mention double Ks are more aggressive than double Cs.

By that time Kulturkampanjen had been working for two years to create a new free space in Stockholm. They began by squatting abandoned buildings, starting with the enormous one that used to belong to the State Television Department—a gorgeous old industrial mansion that had been abandoned for ten years. Together with a few other groups they began the construction of living and working spaces,

Culture of Control:
Autonomous Zones in Sweden and Europe

In the previous issue of *Rolling Thunder*, we documented the defense and eviction of Ungdomshuset, a Danish social center that had served as a gathering place for thousands of people across more than two decades. Why doesn't Sweden have anything similar?

A few key factors distinguish Sweden from the rest of Europe in respect to the development of autonomous zones. First, there are no laws that protect squatters' rights. Many European countries established squatters' laws after World War II as a way to deal with housing shortages in bombed-out cities. Sweden, being neutral through both world wars, did not experience this. Another deciding factor has been the Social Democratic policy concerning the standard of living in Sweden. During the first part of the 20th century, the Social Democrats began to develop detailed zoning laws and building codes. Everything from the height of a kitchen counter to the number of toilets per square meter has been researched and written into law. This standardization is meant to protect the rights of renters, to ensure that no one is forced to live in squalor; it also ensures that no one is allowed to live in squalor, thereby standardizing not only building codes, but also the lifestyle necessary to support them. It is, after all, the renters who pay the cost, not the building companies. This same theme of control extends throughout the Social Democratic policy concerning the development of culture: the unspoken rule is that no movement may exist that the state has not itself brought about. All movements, cultural or otherwise, must either be incorporated into Social Democracy or totally destroyed. The Swedish government spends lavish resources on cultural development, and has succeeded in keeping public opinion on its side regarding extra-governmental movements. The building of the Cyclops can be seen as a counterattack on this view of culture.

Recent years have seen a renewed effort by the European Union to evict and remove even long-established squats. It has always been standard policy to protect the interests of capital against autonomous movements, of course—but now state governments appear to be making a point of attacking squats on principle. The eviction of Ungdomshuset, for example, cost the equivalent of over 10 million US dollars. The capitalists can hardly expect a satisfactory return on such an investment in a single derelict building; it follows that the war on squatting is no longer a matter of financial expedience, but has become an ideological war—a religious crusade against all who do not accept the sanctity of private property. Thus Cyclops, though developed as a response to the specific Swedish context, offers a model that may become increasingly relevant across Europe in years to come.

Instead of buying expensive glulam beams, we made our own out of plywood, bolts, and good old PVA carpenter's glue.

a cafe, and an office. They contacted the owners of the building and the Stockholm Social Commissioner, Margareta Olofson,* to begin a dialogue about the use of the space and make their intentions known. They were waved off by the politicians, charged with breaking and entering, and evicted. Soon after the eviction, the city government ordered the demolition of that fantastic building.

Kulturkampanjen, at that time consisting of no more than five to ten people, tried to maintain a dialogue with the politicians. Eventually Olofson invited the group to meetings at Stockholm City Hall, where they were scolded for their unacceptable methods and told to find a place they could rent. Kulturkampanjen replied that the City of Stockholm spends a fortune in taxpayers' money keeping a hundred buildings empty while citizens of the city freeze to death and starve. They proclaimed the municipally owned and controlled cultural centers insufficient and demanded the opportunity to create their own space. They presented a list of thirty suitable abandoned buildings and continued to open and enter the forgotten corners of the city. During the occupation of an old subway building later that same year, Kulturkampanjen, in cooperation with a professional dance company, submitted blueprints and drawings, financial plans, and lists of scheduled events to the landlords, offices of city planning, and municipal commissioners. The government's response was the same. The group was thrown out and the building scheduled for demolition.

The group then decided to begin working in secret. They broke into a giant abandoned forge and began to renovate the inside. At the forge there were new challenges because unorganized groups and individuals were also using the house for other purposes. After half a year, Kulturkampanjen abandoned the project on account of extensive vandalism of the building and of their own renovations. The project reached a definitive end when the smithy caught fire and burned down near the end of 2004.

Kulturkampanjen resumed dialogue with the politicians in City Hall. Their ideas were received positively but no solutions could be reached. It goes without saying that a gang of kids, no matter how ambitious, will never be taken seriously by a city government that takes orders from the owners of capital, and that the rules of the game are too ingrained to be changed, no matter how ridiculous they may seem to the people who are forced to play by them. All those meetings and all that dialogue were just a bullshit show, a bureaucratic routine to maintain the facade of democracy while bowing to the gods of finance. This is the way it has always been.

At some point during the meetings at City Hall, someone there had suggested that since none of the premises available for rent were up to scratch, Kulturkampanjen might try building their own. Looking back, I can only imagine that this person was joking. The likelihood that a small group of young people with no experience in construction, and no budget whatsoever, would be able to wade through the paperwork necessary to even begin building must have seemed miniscule. The idea that they might then somehow pull the technical knowledge of how to construct the building magically out of their hats—that put the chances of success near zero. I can't help but suspect that this suggestion, coming from the mouth of the beast itself, was the equivalent

* NO RELATION TO CLARK OLOFSSON, TO OUR KNOWLEDGE.

Using traditional methods, we built and raised the roof trusses by hand.

of Snow White's poison apple, intended to put this group to sleep forever. But Kulturkampanjen took the bait with ardor, and a year later was ordering lumber by the mile. The motherfuckers' bluff was called.

So I'm there with a rag in my hand, washing up after the Danish antifascists, and I'm talking to these two kids. They're telling me they just got their plans approved by the Zoning Commission of the Municipality of Vantör, a huge achievement for them. They're very excited, telling their story with wide and glowing eyes. They've rented the corner of a gravel lot on the outskirts of town for six hundred kronor a month, less than a hundred bucks, and soon they will meet with the State Building Authority of Stockholm, after which they plan to begin construction. One soaps and rinses a dish and hands it to me, I dry it off an hand it to the other, she puts it away. They talk out of turn and complete each other's sentences. They're looking for an engineer who will sign off on their plans, which they have drawn themselves. They want to build the place with containers, which they say you can get for cheap on the Swedish version of eBay. I was like *Okay, these people are totally insane; but this is obviously the chance I've been waiting for.* When the dishes were done, I took down a telephone number and promised to call later to get more details. I knew I was going to get involved, but I didn't yet know what that would entail.

The ISO shipping container is a cuboid module forty feet by eight feet by eight and a half feet, constructed on a steel frame with bottom cross-members, steel corrugated walls, steel corrugated roof, metal doors, and ISO corner fittings at all corners. These suckers can carry a payload of up to 26,680 kg each and have the unbelievable stacking capacity of 190 tons. Most of these containers are manufactured in China and are used to transport goods to the markets of the West. Having arrived in port, the containers are loaded onto trucks and trains

Kulturkampanjen trusted that the artists and activists who needed an autonomous cultural center would show up to build it.

[Opposite] Seen from the loft across the exposed rafters, the prominent round window that gives the Cyclops its name offers an open and geometrically pleasing view; at the end of the first summer, the Cyclops had all its major parts in place, but the house was far from finished.

and sent out across continents; they are seldom returned. This one-way flow of export has led to a buildup of used containers in countries like Sweden. A readily available, standardized unit, the shipping container made an ideal starting point for the inexperienced architects of Stockholm's new autonomous zone.

The first meeting I went to was in a student housing apartment of about thirty square feet, near downtown Stockholm, about two months after I'd finished my apprenticeship and begun work as a bona fide artisan. I think we started by talking about the drawings for the roof. I asked them if they'd thought about the grading of their lot, because that seemed to me to be the first place to start. They hadn't. Two of them were in architecture school. One of the older dudes was the father of one of the younger ones, and the other old dude was a family friend. We sat around and they filled me in on how they planned to go about this whole thing. On the one hand it seemed like a fantastic amount of work, more than any of us could calculate, and there were so many question marks, so many weak links, that it seemed impossible. On the other hand, it was exactly the sort of thing I'd been waiting for. And if people came through, if things worked out like we hoped, it would be an incredible experience.

They figured if they used containers, they wouldn't have to figure out how to build a complicated load-bearing frame to support the roof, plus they'd get a weather-proof skin and four rooms for free. Their idea was to build the gable walls, which would enclose the 700 square foot space between the containers, as modules which could be taken apart and lifted into the containers. Following that principle, they hoped to make the building almost portable. They planned to build with found materials as much as possible—to drive around in a van dumpster-diving everything from abandoned buildings, construction dumpsters, and trash heaps. Combined with zero labor costs—we were counting on volunteers—that would put the price within reach. We wouldn't have to compromise our vision

by making everything commercial in order to meet costs, and the house would be built by the people who would later use it.

There were problems with the design, of course. Insulating the containers from the inside, combined with drastic wintertime differences in indoor and outdoor temperature, would create large thermal bridges and possible condensation problems inside the walls. This, plus a ceiling height of over 20 feet in the main chamber, would make the house at best inefficient to heat, at worst unsuitable for year-round use. Relying on volunteers was also risky. We were gambling that somebody other than us would actually give a fuck, and we would need a lot of and from them. The point was not that we had an airtight plan, but that we had a place to start.

So I joined Kulturkampanjen and hit the ground running. In the beginning we met several times a month. Planning, drawing the plans, looking for used containers to buy on the web . . . We held benefit shows and sought wide support for our project. We shuffled papers and tried to get all the details in order so we could begin building when summer came. I know what you're thinking, reading about something like this in a glossy magazine, looking at all the pictures of the finished building: it might seem that we were solidly capable of doing it, it may even seem easy. Let me tell you, from the first meeting I attended to the grand opening of the house a year and a half later, shit was in total chaos. We all had to push ourselves way beyond what we thought we'd originally signed up for. A lot of people gave up and moved on, but new folks were always showing up. Our group had mad drama. We suffered schisms and problems with hierarchy and gender; frustration abounded. But we constantly sought solutions and tried to be as creative as possible, never letting go of the vision of our project.

I kept myself in the periphery at first. At that time, almost everybody in Kulturkampanjen was younger than me. I was unsure what role I wanted to play. It was obvious early on that I was the only one who had even a modicum of professional building experience. Would that create a weird situation? Also, I can't deny that I had qualms about working with people still in high school. I feared they would be uncommitted and unreliable. Nevertheless, I decided to go through with it, and soon I felt myself nearing the heart of the project.

On a sunny day in June we formally began work on what would become Stockholm's most radical performance and activity space. Before

the containers arrived, we measured the grading of the lot and discovered that, to our good fortune, we had the best spot in the lot for water drainage! We measured out where the containers would be placed, and then we ordered them. When the containers were set up and the first deliveries of wood arrived, we called in all our friends and began work. We built the roof and the floor at the same time. We built six-foot-tall roof trusses spanning forty feet! We made our own jig and raised the trusses by hand, up on top of the stacks of containers, tied together with scaffolding twenty feet up in the air. We looked up drawings and dimension tables in books and on the internet, and we trusted our lives to them. We worked with bike helmets on. We split up into groups. The idea was to chop the monster up into manageable pieces we felt capable of taking on. One group began work on the built-up beams and joists for the floor. Another group began laying out the windows

Every detail in the house, from the collage windows on the gable walls to the cantilevered landings on the staircase, has been painstakingly hand-crafted—though not by experts or tradesmen!

[Opposite]
While calculating the dimension of our front steps, we tried to imagine how it might feel to sit there on an early spring afternoon; in lieu of sky-lifts and other modern conveniences, we accessed the roof details and higher sections of facade by building and rebuilding old-school wooden scaffolding.

and framing for the modules that would make the gable walls. This madness went on for months. We were barely finishing details such as fascia and drip moulding when winter fell.

That first summer I really felt invincible. We were a strong group. The first few weeks we took turns sleeping at the site. We had just ordered all this wood—it turned out we weren't able to dumpster everything!—and we didn't have good locks; we were afraid that if we took our eyes off the place for even a minute it would vanish like a broken spell. So we threw down some mats in one of the upper containers and decided that every night someone, preferably two or three people, would sleep at the site. I remember waking up groggy as hell climbing down the ladder to brew cowboy coffee at the fire pit. Across the ditch there was another lot, and a construction company used it to store aggregate—so there was often someone rummaging around piles of gravel with a backhoe. Something about waking up that way makes you feel dirty as hell—not necessarily in a bad way, just dirty. Plus, there were mosquitoes at night, so we wore chemical repellants. What can I say, smoke, Deet, sweat, sawdust, sand, sun beating down at six in the morning like it was noon . . . put the active back in activism!

Our schedule for the place was ridiculous. Granted, we had no idea how many people would show up to build, and we naïvely thought all the materials we needed would be readily available, not to mention the budget to pay for them—but still. Our first time-table had us finished with the staircases and loft at the end of the first month, leaving us month two to get started on wind turbines and plumbing. At this writing, a full two and a half years later, we are still not connected to water and the roof is yet to be insulated. We have no climate-friendly source of heat or electricity, and the bathroom and kitchen are not even completely built. But my opinion now is that none of that matters. What matters is that we keep on.

After the initial rush of taking on the project, after that first adrenaline shot of getting started when potential appears out of the fog like a ghost hammer thirsty for the heads of nails, I began to comprehend the crazy scope of the task we had taken on, and I realized I would either have to stabilize my rhythm or risk burning out too fast. Damn, how much willpower and focus it takes to organize the building of a house! Here was the fire I'd been waiting for, finally the one that deserved all my fuel—but it was also a black hole that could devour my time and energy and vanish with no guarantees. Our to-do list quickly became (and remains to this day) so damn long that looking at it was like opening the fucking bible. Itemizing, prioritizing, coordinating the needed materials, and keeping up with the to-do list could easily have been a full-time job in itself, quite apart from us actually doing the shit! On top of that, we were trying to function as a consensus-based collective, so all those little decisions fell on the heads of several people at once, none of whom knew exactly how to go about getting everything done. So before we could even put hammer to nail we faced the task of organizing ourselves.

We were not a dream team, not at all the collective you'd imagine accomplishing a thing like building an autonomous cultural center from the earth up. Kulturkampanjen was and is a rag-tag group, a few dedicated people at the center of a wide periphery of flighty, loosely-tethered volunteers. We work in our free time. Practically all of us have full-time jobs or studies that require the majority of our focus, and we all have families and relationships that need our time and energy. All the same, we hacked our way through the jungle with blunt machetes, hot on the trail of a dream that seemed just within reach. Step by step, one task at a time, we created the Cyclops.

At the end of the first summer we were all ready for a break. We hadn't been able to hold to the original timetable, but we had accomplished a lot. As the days became shorter and the weather colder, we worked less and less, and after a while we decided to take a break for the winter. When spring came we started work on the interior. First, we built the loft and staircases up to the second-level containers. Then we raised insulating partitions around all the exterior walls and installed wiring, lights, switches, and outlets, which we ran to a fuse box where we could connect our generators. By that time summer was almost over and we decided that it was time to open the place up, despite the fact that we still weren't connected to water. So a group of us broke off and began to work on the grand opening, while the rest of us focused on finishing the last details: painting the interior woodwork and getting the drawbridge operational.

The drawbridge was the high-water mark of our innovation and improvisation that second summer. I remember the night we hooked the bridge up with the winch. The basic design was to have a counterweight on one side and the winch on the other. This turned out to be more complicated than expected! We had to calculate the weight of the bridge itself and account for the leverage of its forward lean to know how long to make the cable attached to the counterweight. The math was too difficult for us to figure out whether one person would be able to hold the winch against the weight of the bridge, so we had no idea what to expect! The image of the winch spinning out of control and yanking somebody's arm out of socket led us to overcompensate. We attached a huge stone to the other side; in the end, we actually had to push the bridge down. The counterweight was too heavy! This back and forth between uncertainty and applied science is one of my favorite things about DIY projects. Relatively simple feats of engineering become epic challenges when there are no experts around—and ordinary teenagers become heroes and heroines! Moments like this renew and reaffirm my conviction that life can be deeply rewarding when we play with the limits of what we know and care to do.

Day after day we worked, as our grand opening approached. It would be the culmination of our first year and a half of labor. By then, we were about fifteen people working several hours every day: coordinating, networking, calculating, building. For me, it was a time to unleash my energy, to bring the fucking rain! We pulled out all the stops, called in all our contacts from around Scandinavia and Europe, brainstormed, and busted our asses to make it happen. I remember waking up and biking with a thermos of coffee in my backpack through the bright Swedish morning, dodging people more or less going through the motions of their lives, and showing up to work on this project—not because it was fresh on my mind, not because it was especially attractive, but thinking this is what a truly

A couple months after the grand opening, a mixed-media artists collective called "logokryp" became the first group to move in and set up a studio space.

ambitious project demands, this is what it's going to take for our DIY projects to reach the level of our professional ones. And though it was hard, though it seemed weird to do for free on the weekends the same shit I do every day for a high wage, it was very satisfying to give Kulturkampanjen what it deserved, and to follow through on a serious commitment to my dreams for once.

At the beginning of September 2007, our big day arrived. I played hooky from work that Friday and showed up early to Cyclops to start getting prepared. We divided the building up into different areas: containers one and two for workshops, containers three and four for storage, and the main hall for performances and large discussions; the loft served as a lounge area and space for smaller discussions. Outside, we set up a field kitchen and space for distributors along the wall of the building, and beyond that another tent area for outdoor workshops.

People came from all over to pitch in. A new people's kitchen collective had taken responsibility for serving meals during the weekend. An anarcho-feminist who works as a professional audio technician for the largest theatre in Stockholm coordinated and ran our sound system. A well-established DJ crew organized the big Saturday night party. A local pirate-cinema collective, known for showing pirated copies of unreleased movies on the walls of buildings around town, organized film showings throughout the weekend. There were bands playing, collectives and individuals giving workshops, and volunteers to chop vegetables and sweep floors. Throughout the building of the Cyclops, Kulturkampanjen has called on the expertise of volunteers from every corner of our social circles and beyond; whatever we have accomplished has truly been a group effort, and this was clearly manifested during our grand opening.

Friday evening we had our opening ceremony. We made a ribbon out of duct tape and, after a few words, three members of Kulturkampanjen cut it with a hedge-clipper. Then we slowly lowered the drawbridge while booming Richard Strauss's "Thus Spoke Zarathustra," the theme song from Stanley Kubric's 2001. And with that, the house was open! Everyone filed in and looked around. Many had visited during the construction and were surprised to see

how the place had turned out; others were there for the first time. Those of us who had put serious hours into the project could stand back and watch the reactions of the public and feel that soon they would know what we knew—more is possible via DIY than Capital wants you to think! Later that evening some bands played and we had our first all-out party, which was alcohol-free and very energetic. We relaxed and danced and were carried off by the romance of the place . . . but then it was time to focus on the coming weekend.

Saturday the weather was less than ideal. It rained that morning and more or less the entire day, which made trouble for our outdoor workshops and distribution area. We rigged up tarps right and left and went right ahead. We opened the day at 10 am with a documentary film a student friend had completed about Cyclops, followed by an open discussion about Kulturkampanjen and autonomous zones, with reports back from free zones and squats across Europe. With the recent eviction of Ungdomshuset in Copenhagen, and severe pressure on Köpi in Berlin, the climate for squatting in Europe has clearly worsened since the 90s. On the other hand, the construction of the Cyclops constitutes a huge step forward for Sweden, where the government has invested incredible resources in hindering cultural development outside the social-democratic framework [see sidebar]. From there, we continued an ambitious schedule of workshops and discussions encompassing as much of the anarchist movement as possible: swarm communication and media activism, antiracist strategies and campaigns, reports from the 2006 uprising in Oaxaca, class struggle feminism, perspectives on a sustainable society, activist trauma and recovery, workplace activism, even slogans and songs of struggle. Saturday was our big day. Our tents were routinely blown over and relashed, and the distributors and kitchen had to deal with constant dripping. But despite the weather we drew about 300 people, which made for long lines to the portable bathroom and contributed to a kind of Woodstock atmosphere, especially with the rain and mud.

When evening gave way to night, the entertainment began. The last workshops concluded around 8 pm and the first band started setting up. The bands included a traditional Swedish crust band, a folk group, and a Baltic group that played modern garage in 2/2. It was truly a beautiful sight to see people hanging all over the stairs and loft we'd built. The transformation from a project in the works to full-fledged cultural force was incredible to behold, and the feeling spread through everybody there. Our generator gave out during the Baltic group's set, but after a few minutes they started playing despite the blackout, without amplification, as if they couldn't keep their hands off their instruments.

I remember how dark it was. I came out and saw a group of scraggly activists with headlamps shining white like crown jewels gathered around the generator discussing the situation. The guy from Brighton who had come to give the activist trauma workshop was a trained electrician, and he said we needed a soldering iron. He stuck his hands into the gullet of the thing and dug out a couple of wires that looked damaged. Behind us, the house was damp. Having laid my hands on those walls before they were walls, having seen the place on paper before it was raised—this and the half rain of the night made me take a deep breath. And then the machine jumped to life and the house lit up and everyone inside cheered.

I was vibrating with adrenaline the entire time, walking around thinking *no one has ever seen anything like this in Sweden before*. I had that feeling in my gut of breaking new ground. Music had never sounded better. Shortly before midnight we switched from live music to DJs, and a Stockholm drum-and-bass crew took over. Though I'm not much for drum-and-bass, I couldn't stop dancing. I felt like my dance was some kind of interaction with spirits whose presence affects us in subtle but powerful ways. My moves were intended to say "thank you" and "take us higher"; in that moment, I felt like I would do anything to make the project work. If somewhere there was a baron in a tower conspiring against us, he would by god regret letting this night slip though his fingers!

At around 5 am I unplugged the generator and told everyone to pack up their shit. I went out to start cleaning the lot, and when I went back in the smell of the house had changed. I realized then that the place would probably never again smell like sawdust and paint. Now it smelled more like miso: sweat and beer, familiar scents from my days traveling with punk bands. We lowered the drawbridge to air the place out. The floor was filthy, what with all the rain. Our raw untreated floor, soaked in mud and water, didn't really look like a floor anymore. It looked more like clouds, with streaks across it like the vapor trails of jets where the moisture had settled into the tongue and groove. We cleaned up the best we could but there was no denying that Cyclops would not be the same from here on.

My energy was still holding out, even after a very long night, and I didn't want those precious moments to slip by too quickly. So, unsatisfied with our unreliable rain shelters, I decided to throw together something that could at least cover the kitchen. Morning had broken and the rain had abated; so my friend and I, who had also been awake all night, got out some tools and set about putting together a simple wood frame that would hold a tarp taught. We were just putting the finishing touches on it when the first carload of volunteers arrived. I tagged out and went home to sleep while the others prepared for the coming day's activity.

The workshops resumed at noon with a lecture about the road protests of the '90s and a presentation on theater of the oppressed, followed by discussions of summit protests, labor and environmental struggle in Chile, environmental activism in Stockholm, and that summer's Climate Camp in London; members of Brazil's MST and Sem-Teto even came to offer a presentation, and there was a meeting to prepare for the European Social Forum occurring in Malmö in 2008. I slept most of the day but returned in time to hear the Brazilians, who just happened to be traveling through with their samba group and knew somebody who knew somebody who had worked on Cyclops. The weekend concluded with a kids' film from the '70s, Resan till Melonia, an animated dramatization of Shakespeare's "The Tempest." A few of us from Kulturkampanjen said a couple words to the twenty or so people who stuck around in humble gratitude, and the grand opening came to an end. We had officially raised anchor and our journey to the future had begun, our bearing as luminous as the slight embers rising from a bonfire into the star-filled night sky.

With its unique atmosphere and spacious lot, the Cyclops is an ideal venue for festivals and cultural events.

After the grand opening, things cooled down. All the members of Kulturkampanjen were exhausted after our sprint to the finish line; some even decided to leave the group for a while. With the pressure of the grand opening no longer hanging over our heads, we could all take some much-needed time to breathe. Besides, with the cold and dark of the Swedish winter looming again, volunteers were hard to come by.

Opening the house shifted our focus. Now we had to bring people in and get some activity going in the building, so our efforts included networking, getting the word out, and administrating events. It was slow going at first, but by the time spring rolled around we had semi-regular events and steady collaboration with several external groups. Today, a couple DJ crews throw regular parties, some DIY anarchists have arranged a weekly welding workshop, and a collective of artists rent one of the container rooms as a studio. This fits with our vision of Kulturkampanjen as an administrative body coordinating external groups who have their own ideas of how to use the house. At this point we can't really offer these groups a problem-free activity space, so they have to have a little gusto to make it work. With several key details unfinished—we still haven't connected to municipal water or insulated the roof—we have yet to reach the vision of a cultural center with activity every day, all year round. All the same, we consider ourselves well on the way.

Working with Kulturkampanjen has taught me a lot over the past two years. I suspect the difficulties we have faced are typical of most DIY projects. The most obvious challenge was our lack of technical knowledge. The carpentry work was a challenge I could handle, but we needed the assistance of structural engineers, welders, plumbers, electricians, fire technicians, and inspectors. We also had to figure out how to get the paperwork in order, navigate zoning laws, write building permissions, draw plans, and get them approved. Our operating premise was that if we really beat the carpets we would flush somebody out who could help us, and this proved true. For example, an acquaintance of a family friend knew how to run conduit and

came out one day to explain it to two punk kids, who made that their summer project. In fact, we found that there were copious resources within the DIY anarchist community, and as word spread about our project many capable people came to us offering to help. There were things we couldn't get around paying for—fire inspections, for example, had to be conducted by a certified technician—but we found our budget sufficed so long as we kept them to a minimum.

But our lack of technical knowledge engendered deeper problems. Early on, we realized that our collective skill in building was distributed strictly along gender lines, and we were going to have to engage that problem actively if we wanted to eliminate gender discrimination in our group. That was our intention, and we had a well thought out plan that was never completely fulfilled. As the only skilled laborer in the group, I arranged two weekend-long carpentry workshops for women only. Our idea was that those groups would go on to start separatist workdays, having used the classes as a springboard into the routine of working at Cyclops. We also planned to arrange gender workshops for Kulturkampanjen to attend as a group, but that didn't pan out either. All in all we have been about 1/5 women in the core group and about 2/5 in the volunteer periphery, and I'm sure they have to fight for their place, and that many others have fallen by the wayside.

When I look back and ask myself why these and many other plans were never carried out, the answer lies with our collective relationships and our individual priorities. Some of us prioritized the building of our house over the maintenance of our group, and our collective has suffered as a result. Others in the group would have preferred to give precedence to focusing on the structure and organization of our collective and our personal relationships. These factions within the group had a hard time resisting the temptation to make value judgments about one another. Both factions were suspicious of each other's intentions, which created tensions and distractions additional to those of building a house and maintaining a healthy collective. Finding the strength and inspiration to pick up a hammer day after day is difficult enough without having to navigate the treacherous waters of intrigue and mistrust. And when time is a scarcity, no one wants to throw away precious hours on a project that will not reach fruition. Poor follow-through on the part of those who claimed to prioritize relationships within the collective combined with the stubbornness of a goal-focused group led to the collapse of our plans and designs concerning gender equality.

We have been at maximum rpm since day one, and after four years we've barely succeeded in creating a space to have a show. If we had taken the time and energy to thoroughly address our relationships, would the Cyclops exist today? On the other hand, is it worth making a house if we have to perpetuate hierarchy in the process? As members of a collective, what demands can we make on one another? Can we demand a certain number of hours a week? Can we demand to be treated with respect? The answer to the latter question seems simple—but how deep are we willing to dig in order to get at the roots of institutionalized disrespect? This was the great question that kept reoccurring in our activities and our debates, the central question every group must answer for itself: who are we and what exactly are we trying to accomplish?

The harsh reality is that every collective must exist within the larger context of the world, and this further compounds the problem. Each member chooses how much time and energy to contribute to the aims of the collective, and it is the coalescence of these contributions that gives the group its pool of resources. For individual members, this is rarely a free choice. We have jobs, children, responsibilities, other commitments, other projects and goals. We give what we can and hope for the best. Gender, ethnicity, class, and background all play a role in how much we want to and are able to commit.

Inequities in the amount of time each person is able to dedicate to the collective pool of resources must be understood in their sociopolitical context. Every actor plays a part and no one's role should be taken for granted; however, it can also seem that without the driving force of two or three central figures, this project would have never been realized. While some members take time off from the project to take care of themselves, others feel that if they ever stop giving 110% there would be no group from which the others could take a break. This dynamic has been detrimental for Kulturkampanjen. The collective should, of course, not demand its members to be self-destructive; however, members must take responsibility for the projects they take on and be open about their ability. All too often someone was supposed to do something, some simple task, and a week would go by, two weeks would go by, and it just wouldn't get done. Unclear or miscommunicated intentions between members have led to frustration and loss of trust. We've experienced a shortage of people truly willing to throw down for the sake of Cyclops, and that increases pressure on the few who are. The sheer fact of this pressure led some collective members to develop feelings of guilt, despite them having been clear with the group and with themselves about how many hours they were willing to work.

We have also had our share of members whose idea of activism goes no further than a monthly consensus meeting, the minutes of which consist of a long list of broken promises. It is my opinion that these people should leave activist circles altogether and plague the boardrooms of corporations instead—they would do more for our movement there. To be clear, I'm talking about people who choose to join as collective members, not volunteers who show up to work for a few months and then decide to move to Gotland. One of the important roles of Kulturkampanjen has been to provide a place for activists to apply their excess energy; we don't make demands on our volunteers—we are grateful for their valuable contribution. My point is that when you join a group and say you're getting involved, you need to follow through. If you're touring through activist circles for social or other reasons, don't let collective members become confused about your level of commitment.

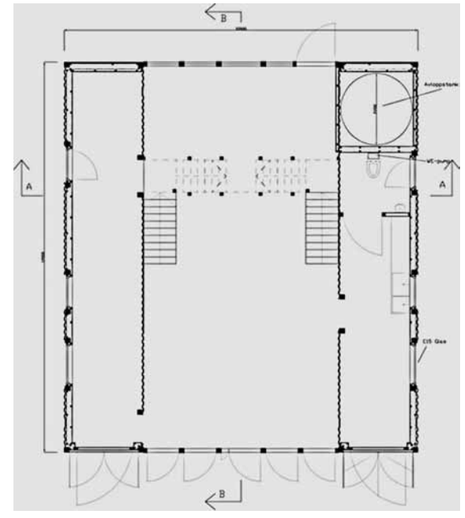
My experience in Kulturkampanjen notwithstanding, I hold to my belief that non-hierarchical, anarchist collectives can be more effective and powerful than traditional, oppressive ones, and I prefer the goal-driven focus of Kulturkampanjen to other groups I have been a part of who were too busy fine-tuning their infrastructure to actually accomplish what they set out to do.

Not only is the drawbridge practical for loading and unloading large objects, it also can function as an impromptu stage.

These days when I'm at Cyclops, I can feel that the place needs my time, it cries out for my attention. And I want to give it. I feel that there is so much I could do for that place if I only had the time. But between raising my son, who is now six, working full time, and taking care of my friendships and relationships, there is not much time available. It's a damn shame that such an important and meaningful project has to survive on leftovers. The amount of time we have to spend as we truly wish is a good barometer of our freedom. And I imagine that this is what all workers feel who have had the gumption, and the breathing room, to start their own projects: frustration at having to watch what is meaningful to them decay while continually pumping the majority of their time, energy, creativity, and skill into building apartments for the rich and earning millions for stockholders who never lift a finger. Those bastards! I wonder what fantastic buildings we could create if a gang of us were free from their yoke. Cyclops could be just the beginning! We are proof, I believe, that an emancipated work force does not cease to produce, but simply redirects its energy. My bones ache for the chance to run wild with my abilities, to work at Cyclops full-time! The next step for Kulturkampanjen must be to reduce the ratio of wage labor to creative autonomous activity in our own lives. Only then can the Cyclops, and our more ambitious future projects, begin to reach their full potential.

A couple weeks ago I helped arrange a party at Cyclops, collaborating with a group known for throwing clandestine disco raves at various locations around town. On my way there I thought about how far things had come since that December morning washing dishes with the two kids from Kulturkampanjen, all the people who have passed through my life since then. When I looked back, I saw all the different forms my activism can take: learning construction, selling beer, borrowing microphones and amplifiers, calculating and comparing the weights of different roof systems, brewing coffee, sleeping at a construction site, sweeping up sawdust, arranging to borrow generators, sorting through extension cables, learning how to tie and untie knots. I started to wonder what actually separates my activism from the rest of my life. As I walked towards Cyclops, like so many times before, and saw the ridge of the roof crest out above the shrubbery beside the path, the answer was clear. There is no difference.

Our plans were conceptual at best, but they were enough to appease the authorities and give us room to improvise.



D: *Thanks for the draft about the student movement in Bogotá! I have some ideas for expanding it. Most of all, I suggest you include more description, more details. See if you can describe the feeling in the air, the places the meetings took place, what people were wearing and how they spoke—try to do it like a novelist, so the readers feel as if they are there. Gabriel García Márquez is from Colombia, no?*

B: I wanted to describe more the actions and the scenery, but I don't have the English vocabulary to do so. I think that you can write that part remembering how everything is over here. I leave that to you. Here is a brainstorm: the nights over here are cold, it rains often, you saw the campus during your visit and it is pretty big with graffiti, we slept inside the buildings with tents, sleeping bags, cardboard boxes, blankets, we had one computer to write our plans and keep track of the discussions, people had regular student clothes (like the ones you saw over here), some people speak very good they know exactly what to discuss, some people like to talk too much shit, most have a really revolutionary attitude, the air was of solidarity, struggle, etc. We cooked soup and gathered around a bonfire.

D: *I like your idea. So OK, I will expand the story using my own creative skills. Here is my first draft, then:*

> Days of Struggle, Nights of Passion:
> The Student Movement in Bogotá
>
> Call me D—. You're lucky—I'm your narrator. Not everyone gets to have a narrator like me. Actually, just call me Superguay. All my friends do.
>
> Our story begins on a sweltering night in Bogotá. Marisa and I are making love in an alley. I have the sunroof of my sports car open so her hair can blow in the wind above me, the way it would in a music video. Marisa is the police chief's daughter. I have to meet her to get the state secrets we need to wage La Lucha. Otherwise I'd be with Teresa, of course. Or maybe Paula.
>
> Eight hours later, in the chilly air of noonday Bogotá, Luis and I are on the roof of the Biology building, nonchalantly tossing grenades into crowds of pigs below. They surge forward in waves, lose several men, and fall back again in dismay. Over and over, the poor bastards. We do this every Monday—it's a student tradition. My father did it before me, only back then they used anti-tank missiles.
>
> Between charges, Luis is working on his physics homework. "What can you tell me about the coefficient of viscosity of liquids?" he asks languidly.
>
> "Oh, that's the degree to which a fluid resists flow under an applied force, expressed as the ratio of the shearing stress to the velocity gradient," I respond, pausing to pull the pins out of two grenades at once with my teeth. I have the shiniest white teeth—you'd really be impressed, lucky reader. "It decreases as temperature increases because the bonds between molecules are weakened. You know?"
>
> "Oh yeah, I remember now," Luis responds, copying my explanation onto his forearm in ballpoint pen as shrieks of agony rise pleasantly from below. We're real rebels here—we don't just fight the police, we even cheat on exams! Well, Luis does—I don't need to, since I know just about everything.
>
> "Say, Luis, this is getting boring," I opine. "What do you say we occupy the university?"

Perhaps you get my point—you can't just ask me to write historical fiction about something I've never experienced! Also, you say that you "don't have the English vocabulary" to write good descriptions of atmosphere or events, but your English is better than many Rolling Thunder *contributors from the US. But if necessary, I will call your bluff: we have translators here that can turn Spanish into English! Just write in Spanish and we'll do the rest.*

B: OK, OK! Here is the new version, with descriptions!

The Students Are Preoccupied, and the Campus Is Too

Shutting Down/Opening Up the National University of Colombia

Report courtesy of Red Revuelta (www.redrevuelta.tk)

Students marching towards the Chancellor's building: "¡We want an open discussion! ¡We need grass-roots organization!"

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

At 10 pm, Maria advances toward the fence carrying a small backpack and two sleeping bags. Andrés, Pedro, and Carolina keep an eye on the surroundings while María, the last to enter, crawls through a small hole. Now we're all inside, and the rest of our compañeros and compañeras are waiting for us at the Sociology Department. Tonight we will make this building our home, and a nerve center of debate, action, and popular power.

A few weeks ago, the Chancellor and board of directors announced a new set of student rules for which we were not consulted. In a vacuum, these rules might not seem all that bad. However, seen in the context of the market economy, these changes correspond to a general program to turn education into merchandise and transform students into well-behaved employees. The new rules include a system of credits that penalizes students for failing subjects, which disproportionately affects those who must work while they study or who have nutritional or family problems. The rules are also intended to foster a network of informants: students are encouraged to denounce other students to the board of directors if they see them doing anything they consider subversive.

In response, earlier that day, 3000 students had gathered for a General Assembly in the university's main auditorium, named the "León de Greiff" for one of Colombia's greatest poets. Expectations ran high. Over the preceding days, fliers had circulated offering a general description of the problems that would be caused by the new set of student rules, and word of mouth about the assembly had given people time to prepare their ideas and proposals. After a long discussion, the students voted unanimously to strike. Apart from the specific details of the new set of rules, many students were angry because they felt that the Chancellor and board of directors had violated student democracy by imposing these rules from above. It was agreed that only a strike could draw this to the attention of the 12,000 other students that study in Nacional, Bogotá's National University.

This particular conflict takes place in the context of a larger struggle. The board of directors of the University—who appear to take orders directly from right wing president Alvaro Uribe Vélez*—are slowly introducing policies that tend toward the abolition of public Universities. Along with other institutions, like the Colombian public telephone company (Telecom) and the social security service (Seguro Social), the National University is on the road to privatization.

* President Uribe has ruled since 2002; he was reelected in 2006 and may be reelected in 2010. He is a staunch supporter of US policy and is believed to have strong links with paramilitaries and drug cartels. As of this writing, 29 congressmen, all supporters of Uribe, are in jail because of direct links with paramilitaries, and 30 more are being called to inquest. His brother has an ongoing process for the same charges and his cousin was recently captured for the same reason. His political adviser is the cousin of drug kingpin Pablo Escobar.

Some Background on Public Universities in Colombia

Universities in Latin America, especially public ones, differ dramatically from their counterparts in the US. North American campuses have been notoriously quiet since the 1960s, but in Latin America it is taken for granted that they are hotbeds of dissent and social struggle. The campus of Colombia's largest university, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, the site of the conflicts described in this report, is perennially adorned with spray paint urging people to "DEFEND THE UNIVERSITY!" and threatening "THE UNIVERSITY IS FROM THE STREET AND IN THE STREET WE WILL DEFEND IT," a claim that would be doubly false anywhere north of Mexico. This talk of "defense" addresses the government's immediate efforts to privatize the university system, but also extends to a more general notion of the university as a safe space for dissent.* As in Chile and Greece, police officers are not permitted on campus; in the militant demonstrations that erupt once or twice a semester, police gather outside the gates, firing tear gas into the university while students throw back *papas bombas*—projectiles made with black powder and coins or rocks, which can disable armored water cannons if used correctly. An enormous mural of El Che, looking somewhat younger than usual, gazes upon the central student plaza; university officials have ordered it painted over a thousand times, but never succeeded in eradicating it. Passing through the university at dusk, an observer might encounter half a dozen masked figures in black dashing from wall to wall with stencils and spray paint, past other students who take this regular occurrence in stride.

* During a visit to Colombia in 2007, your humble editors met with a radical media collective in Bogotá. Poking fun at her own feisty radicalism, one of the filmmakers explained that she documented anticapitalist protests "because wee are *stoodents in a pooblique ooniversitee!*" in the same tone in which an anarcho-punk from Minneapolis might explain that he and his friends steal photocopies "because we are *THE ENEMIES OF CIVILIZATION!*"

Colombia is located at the junction of North and South America, a strategic position that has brought dire misfortune upon Colombians since the first colonial invasions. A century ago, the US forced the secession of Panama from Colombia to obtain control of trade passing from Atlantic to Pacific, and today the rich ecosystems south of Panama are being devastated to open the way for pan-American highway traffic. Unlike practically every other major South American nation, Colombia was not explicitly ruled by a dictatorship in the latter part of the 20th century—instead, the pretense of democracy was maintained, with representatives of the Liberal and Conservative parties alternating rule under the Frente Nacional between 1958 and 1974. This means that today, unlike Brazil, Argentina, and Chile, Colombia has yet to enter the post-dictatorship era; it is a "democracy," but one in which every serious opposition candidate has been murdered or bought off and corporate rule is maintained as often by brute force as by political machination.

Having not entered the post-dictatorship era, Colombia is still wracked by the kind of internal armed conflict that other Latin American countries suffered between the 1960s and 1980s. Politics in Colombia are framed by the brutal forty-year civil war between the US-supported government—and its paramilitary supporters, who are interlinked with the drug cartels the US claims to oppose—and guerrilla insurgents. The two primary guerrilla factions are the FARC and the ELN, both communist groups formed in 1964; the FARC is descended from Liberal and communist guerrilla groups formed by campesinos in the late 1940s, while the ELN was organized by students returning from the Cuba of Castro and Guevara, working with campesinos with a long history of struggle in certain regions of Colombia.

Every year thousands of Colombians die violently in this struggle, but Bogotá is the eye of the storm: a space of relative calm in which the conflict takes more subtle forms. Here, direct violence is mainly felt in the 'popular barrios' where paramilitaries have managed to take control and commit selective murders. Throughout the rest of the city, violence is hidden within the structure of capitalist production: multinational corporations displace people from their homes, exploit their cheap labor, and devastate the natural environment in the course of extracting resources. When people respond to this exploitation via self-organization, corporations answer with legal and illegal violence.

This occurs on a more intense level in the countryside: campesinos resist by organizing themselves in social movements or by joining the guerrillas, while corporations use the state military and the paramilitaries to kill every form of resistance. In the countryside people experience an open war, involving massacres and mass displacements. These struggles influence what goes on at the public universities. Students learn about the struggles around the country, but also experience struggles of their own.

The main challenge faced by students in Colombia is the creeping privatization of public universities, one aspect of neoliberal restructuring. Privatization means that public universities, at which those without great access to funds can still currently obtain an education, will be turned into businesses that define their prices according to the market's laws of supply and demand. In a few words, privatization means that a student who currently pays US$20 to study a semester will have to pay US$2000 or else drop out. But the issue goes beyond the financial. The capitalist economy demands universities focused only on preparing students for careers—but throughout the entire tradition of social and political struggles in Colombia, public universities have been centers of political, social, and cultural discussion and action.

Not so long ago, in May 2007, we fought against an article from the National Plan of Development intended to force the university to contribute to paying back the pension fund debt. This responsibility, which was always assumed entirely by the state, now also rests on the National Universities. This is clearly a strategy to draw funds out of the universities so they will eventually have to sell out to the private sector to continue functioning. We also carried out a long strike, in 2005, against an academic reform that would push a model of education more conducive to serving corporations and the market than promoting critical debate and transformation. Today, in 2008, our strike draws energy from these past struggles.

Public universities in Colombia are not just centers of education, but sites of political dissent and social and cultural action. There is a long history of political struggle in these universities, and social movements throughout Colombia owe much of their growth, force, and influence to the political work done in and from them. In the 1960s, many students left to join the guerrillas and other legal and illegal revolutionary groups. For example, the priest and freedom fighter Camilo Torres—who studied and taught in the university, and who died in 1966 a few months after joining the ELN—began by organizing students and working in the barrios doing popular education. Today,

Graffiti on the Design building.

{Opposite} Barricading; students breaking the fences of the Chancellor's building.

student organizations continue to be active, working extensively both on and off campus. This legacy of struggle explains why so many students react quickly against the oppressive measures imposed by the government—and why my friends and I decided to occupy the University, entering through the tiny holes that had been strategically left in the fences.

That night in April, I walked quietly with Pedro, Carolina, and María to join the rest of our friends. About sixty of us had gathered around a little bonfire near the sociology building to smoke, eat, debate, and conspire. Some people quoted Marx or Che, some used clichés, others left rhetoric aside in their speeches. While the discussions took place, others went to express themselves on the walls inside the buildings. Poems were written with markers and most classrooms received some kind of graffiti: "Camilo Vive," "For an education that serves the people," "Down with the student rules."

The main discussion lasted for hours. We discussed strategies for defending the university; many were very critical about the issue of student representation. Some argued for organizing ourselves from below, using stronger forms of direct democracy. Pedro had brilliant ideas, but some of them were too crazy to be carried out. Carolina was a little more centered and proposed that it was necessary to write a communiqué so that other students would know what we were doing at night. The other fifty people present agreed, and Carolina, along with five others, decided to stay all night writing on the only laptop around.

In the end, we all agreed to occupy the University. We called this the *Pre-okupa*: pre-occupation. Our objective was to squat that night and open the fences in the morning so all the students could enter, even if classes were canceled and the campus was supposed to be closed. This had not been decided in the General Assembly, but it did not conflict with the decisions of the Assembly either. We considered it a complementary initiative, but also an experiment: we wanted more horizontality and more discussions at the base. The occupation was necessary to guarantee the continuity of the strike: an open university was a university that could continue fighting; at the same time, sleeping on campus and breaking the fences could raise the morale of the students.

However, just after we came to this decision, we heard from our contacts off campus that the Chancellor had decided to close the University the next morning because of the strike—and, more significantly, to permit police to enter. At that moment, all the buildings were being closed by the private guards inside the campus, and most of the students headed towards the main doors.

But some of us decided that this time—unlike in previous strikes—we would not leave. Thirty of us agreed, and María climbed quickly through a window to reopen the Sociology Department. We entered quietly and organized our tents and sleeping bags. We were tense and it was cold, but after long discussions we finally managed to sleep for a few hours.

The next day, at 5:30 am, we were ready at one of the main gates of the University. The guards inside the campus had gathered to wait for our next move. Five of them surrounded the locked gate and asked us to leave. Andrés took hold of the fence and began shaking it back and forth. The guards just stared. The black fences started breaking and the students outside the walls joined Andrés in tearing them down. Suddenly there was blood everywhere, and it became clear that Andrés' hand had been trapped between the fences. Friends took him quickly to the hospital, but despite his pain,

Starting the "Pupitrazo"; an ESMAD tank; waving the University flag against the board of directors; the sign of the occupation and the permanent encampment.

Andrés cried out "Viva la Universidad" as he departed. Even this dreadful situation did not keep us from celebrating victory.

The fifty students who had been watching from outside decided to enter. The police were nowhere to be seen, and the private guards were powerless. We felt that everything was possible. The *Pre-okupa* was working: the orders from the Chancellor had lost their meaning and anyone could enter the University to discuss the new student rules and the future of the student movement. Hour by hour, new students entered the university and gathered in small groups. That afternoon all students joined in another General Assembly. Once again the main auditorium was packed. Professors who wanted to hold classes were out of luck. We had occupied the university and interrupted everyday academic life.

Thursday, April 17

After two days of sleeping inside the University, we felt it was time to push things farther, so we escalated to the now well-known "Pupitrazo" tactic. This consists of taking chairs and tables outside the University to block the main streets that surround the campus. As always, the police were waiting for us, and immediately began shooting tear gas and rubber bullets. Angry students returned fire with rocks from behind the campus walls, and a spontaneous riot broke out. The majority of the students covered their faces with their shirts and started to break up cement from the sidewalk and walls to use as projectiles. "Viva la Universidad" mingled with explosions from guns shooting tear gas canisters. As things escalated, the police threatened to enter campus with their tanks.

The riot police in Bogotá are called ESMAD. These pigs, dressed like black robocops, have killed at least six students over the past decade. Most recently, at a Mayday demonstration in 2005, they beat 15-year-old anarchist, Nicolás Neira, to death in the street. With this memory still fresh, students were angrier than ever and did all they could to keep the tanks from entering the campus. The ESMAD deployed two enormous black metal tanks with water cannons, and riot police advanced in ordered lines on foot. While thirty policemen received orders from their superiors, two hundred students acted spontaneously, defying authority. Students hid behind trees or walls until the right moment, then ran up to the fence to throw rocks; occasionally some of them leaped out of the gates for a better chance to hit the tanks or policemen. Others stayed in the rear, lighting bonfires to neutralize the teargas and assisting students who had been hit by chemical weapons. After two hours of intense street fighting, students had successfully prevented the police tanks from entering the campus and retired triumphantly.

Friday, April 25

We had occupied the University for two weeks. The sociology and agronomy buildings were filled with tents and sleeping bags and the walls were decorated with graffiti. Every morning the gates were forced open, and students came to participate in the General Assembly and the smaller assemblies that took place in almost every Faculty. Every night the participants in the *Pre-okupa* spent long hours in discussion, wrote communiqués, and cooked together over bonfires.

In Colombia, in addition to the military and the police, there are paramilitaries.* Paramilitary forces also have a presence in the University; some students will spy for them and report on the activity of other students. A paramilitary group active in Bogotá sent emails threatening seven of the students most active in the main board of the General Assembly. After this, we decided it was time to change our strategy: it would be safer to leave campus at night, but remain present during the day talking and organizing with other students. So the *Pre-okupa* was transformed into a day activity; we placed tables at the University's main entrances and gave out information to the students who gathered there. We offered flyers, legal documents composed by teachers and directors, and a long text we had written presenting a political analysis of the situation at the University. All of this was printed with the assistance of a sympathetic teachers' association, and with money we had previously saved for this kind of situation, so many flyers were given away for free and others for donations.

Monday, April 28

The information tables worked, but more action was needed. Some students wanted to return to class and the Chancellor was talking about re-establishing academic normality. Knowing this, our next move was to stay on campus overnight again, but this time we didn't sleep. After a long discussion, we divided up into two groups. Each group had to enter seven different buildings and block the entrances with chairs, tables, and other objects. I ran with my friends to the Humanities building and entered through a window. The building had four floors and many classrooms. We took all the seats and tables from these classrooms to block the main doors. At the same time, some students used cement and paper clips to sabotage the doorknobs of the administrative offices.

After a few minutes, we entered another building. This time we had to climb the wall to find an open door. The guard was not inside. Later, he explained to me that he didn't sleep in this building because he was scared: every night he heard noises and doors being slammed. He believed that the building was haunted because in 1984, after a big riot, the police had entered this building and killed several students. With the ghosts of our comrades on our side, blocking that building was pretty easy. That night we wrote long sentences on the walls, destroyed some doorknobs, and made sure that no one could enter the place.

In the Languages building, the situation was a little different. Four of our friends entered the place by climbing a ladder and going through a window. Once they were inside, the only guard in the building was so nervous that he didn't want to give them the keys so they could open the doors and let others in. Our friends threatened him, but that didn't work either. In a few minutes the rest of us, who were outside supporting the action, were surrounded by twelve guards, and we had to negotiate the exit of our compañeros and compañeras.

The next day most of the buildings were blocked: students couldn't go to class, and the administrative workers found their offices closed. We hoped this would force the board of directors to negotiate with us. When the word spread that the University had been blocked by force and the student movement was getting bigger, the president appeared on national television. He threatened the students, saying that we were terrorists and guerrilla cells and gave orders to the police to track down and prosecute troublemakers. This was no joke.

At the same time, inside the university, a movement against the blockades called "I want to study" appeared. These right wing students and teachers wrote emails and organized protests against the student movement. In their eyes, any act of civil disobedience or direct action amounted to violence. We had to try out different strategies to fight against this initiative. In the end, their pressure did not have significant effects, but this doesn't mean that they will not be a threat in the future. Sometimes people think that what goes on in the universities is too trivial to influence the whole country. But after doing some research, we learned that president Uribe used to be a leader in the "I want to study" movement when he was young and not so dangerous.

Monday, May 19

After three more weeks of pressure, meetings, demonstrations, and blockades, we were ready to negotiate. Unfortunately, once again the board of directors wanted to trick us. First, they told us that if we could guarantee two days without blockades they would be willing to sit down to discuss the situation. We did our part and for two days the University had classes. However, the board of directors broke their word and refused to receive the

* Colombia has a long history of paramilitary activity, but the paramilitaries as we know them today were created in the 1980s at the behest of ranchers, drug dealers, and manufacturers, with the aid of multinational corporations and the state. Their main objective is to fight the guerrillas, but they also kill, torture, and sometimes massacre other workers, campesinos, journalists, students, and teachers. Not so long ago some of these groups signed phony peace accords with President Uribe; in reality, there are even more paramilitaries now than before, and many who have been "brought to justice" for committing horrible massacres will serve less than three years in prison.

Common graffiti: "Uribe [is a] murderer."

students representing the movement. That day, two hundred students entered the Chancellor's building. We stayed there for fifteen minutes, until the police threatened to arrest all of us. That building was not convenient for a riot, so we had to give up and go out thinking that everything was lost.

Nevertheless, from that day until today, when I sit down to write this report, the students at the National University have still not surrendered and continue to block the campus. We will not abandon our struggle until we can discuss the Student Rules. We have fought a lot against this authoritarian and neoliberal policy, and this time we are fighting until victory is ours. We need a University for the people, a University for human beings who care about the transformation of the current society, a University where decisions are made by all of us, from below.

D: *That's much better, thanks! Now I only have a couple more questions. First, you saw the coverage of the CPE riots in France in* Rolling Thunder *#4. Are there connections between the occupations in Colombia and the student actions in Chile, Greece, and France from the past few years? Has there been communication or influence between the students involved, or are they happening totally separately?*

B: There is no connection between what happens here and what happened in France or Greece. We have no information; I mean I think that I am the one who is best informed because I read *Rolling Thunder*. However there are a lot of Latin American experiences, and people sometimes talk about of what is going on in Chile or México.

D: *How many of the participants in the student movement identify as anarchists? How many are part of communist groups? What is the relationship between specifically anarchist organizing and the Left in Colombia? Are there conflicts over how horizontal the decision-making and initiatives are within student organizing?*

B: There has always been a tradition of anarchist movements inside the public universities, although there has been less anarchist participation in the most recent strikes. In addition to explicitly anarchist efforts, a wide range of students use anarchist methods and ways of organizing. For example, in this strike, many people organized themselves in networks—"webs"—reaching decisions horizontally and encouraging action from the base via grassroots organizing. That struggle was a central issue in this strike: a lot of people wanted to make others understand that it was necessary to discuss things in the faculties before addressing them in the general assembly. Most students involved in the movement are communists, but they are not necessarily closed-minded Marxist-Leninists. Many Marxists here—though not all of them—follow Latin American revolutionary ideas from Che, Camilo Torres, and Mariátegui, which are less dogmatic. Many believe that revolutionary struggle must respect diversity, individual creativity, and freedom, and for these reasons they support more horizontal forms of organization. Some also have a great influence from the Zapatistas.

This doesn't happen in all movements and it is not a common trend in the rest of the country, but students are now experimenting a lot with more horizontal ways of organizing themselves. This may be the reason some anarchists are able to easily work with communists inside the university. In the last year we have seen a lot of anarchists who are trying to ground themselves in this particular situation in Colombia in order to fight in solidarity with other popular struggles. Many believe in "popular power": collective power created by the people, without hierarchies.

Gift Shops at the End of the World

Plush iguana doll, $19.99, available from the Naval Exchange at Guantánamo Bay

A friend was planning a trip to Germany. Her upcoming visit would be less stressful than her last one, she explained, because she wouldn't be stopping by Buchenwald. A this point, our conversation got somewhat freighted, emotionally speaking—I have mixed feelings about memorializing the Holocaust, since doing so runs the risk of trivializing horror—but she seemed intent on talking about Buchenwald, so I listened. *Yeahyeahyeah*, she continued. *Buchenwald—it's nestled in this mountain above the town the camp's named after, and there's this winding road to get there, and at the approach to the camp gate there's this decaying stone structure where the zoo was, and the Germans obviously knew it was a slaughterhouse, because the corpses would be loaded on what I'd guess you'd call a lorry and driven down the mountain and they'd fall on the roadside—*

"Wait," I said. "There was a zoo at Buchenwald?"

There was. The zoo hosted a handful of bears, an aviary filled, appropriately, with birds of prey, and even a few monkeys. Operating a death camp didn't prevent the staff of Buchenwald from facing a basic problem of modern living: what to do for entertainment? Theodor Adorno remarked that there could be no poetry after Auschwitz. But was there to be no beauty, no spectacle, no fun at Buchenwald? Not according to Commandant Karl Otto Koch: "Buchenwald zoological gardens has been created in order to provide diversion and entertainment for the men in their leisure time and to show them the beauty and peculiarities of various animals which they will hardly be able to meet and observe in the wild," wrote Koch in a 1943 order. "But we must also expect the visitor to be reasonable and fond of animals enough to refrain from anything that might not be good for the animals, cause harm to them, or even compromise their health and habits . . ."

The horrors of the 20th century taught us a lot about the banality of evil. But we've learned less about the *ennui* of evil—the soul-crushing existential directionlessness that accompanies its routinization. If work will set you free, as the sign at the gates of Auschwitz contended, then the leisure activities at Buchenwald implicitly offer guidance on how to use that freedom. The former guidance, of course, was the most cynical ever offered, as it was given to men, women, and children about to be exterminated. But Koch's insistence on beauty in Buchenwald is both pornographic and chillingly sincere. He wanted his troops in good spirits for the work ahead.

It's an impulse I understand a little better after visiting US military installations at Guantánamo Bay and Iraq. These bases are the size of small cities, and they host all the logistical necessities: laundry facilities, dining halls where exploited workers from the former Halliburton subsidiary KBR serve troops up to six flavors of ice cream amidst a war zone, and—most fascinating to me—gift shops. You can purchase souvenirs of your wartime experience or buy trinkets to ease the boredom that washes over you after bombarding a detainee with 80 decibels of Machinehead for 18 consecutive hours.

The NEX at Guantánamo Bay

My first experience with the lighter side of endless war came in July 2005. Guantánamo Bay offers journalists a Potemkin tour of the island prison, and I decided to take one. So, on an unbearably hot and humid afternoon, I touched down in occupied Cuba to witness American justice in the Bush era. Detainees were bound at their extremities and loaded onto small flatbeds known as Alligators for transportation from one end of the camp to another. Interrogation chambers had small sections dug out of the concrete floors, into which steel bars could be inserted; detainees would be shackled to these bars during questioning. The central message that the military wanted me to absorb is that the Camp Delta detention complex at Guantánamo isn't the ad hoc mesh chicken wire enclosures of GTMO v1.0, known as Camp X-Ray, but a professional detention complex. Camp Five, the prison facility constructed a few months before my arrival, has all mechanized bloc doors and panopticon surveillance cameras, modeled on the Miami Correctional Facility in Bunker Hill, Indiana. Why the military considers this exculpatory I do not understand.

About three hundred yards away from Camp Delta is a suburb. Really. Guantánamo Bay has been a US naval facility for a century, and accordingly, there need to be creature comforts for the families of sailors assigned to the place. So, with little warning that you're about to leave the containment center housing what the Bush administration has called the most dangerous terrorists on the planet, you putt forward a bit—Guantánamo laws prohibit driving faster than 25 miles per hour—and find yourself in Levittown. Levittown is all manicured lawns, pink-painted stone houses and little kids riding Big Wheels. If a detainee ever escaped, the psychological disconnect of seeing manicured lawns and hearing sleepy porchside small talk so close to his torture chamber would be unbearable.

As in any suburb, the town square at Guantánamo Bay is a mall. Well, not a mall, exactly, but something called a NEX, or Naval Exchange. Located in a small strip next to a barber shop, comparable in size to a small supermarket, the NEX is basically an on-base outpost for sailors to buy provisions. This being the modern world, that means everything from snack foods to toiletries to movie posters for your quarters. The imperative is to provide enough comforting reminders of home to take one's mind off being at Guantánamo.

But then there are the souvenirs. Those are for the sailor who doesn't want to forget about her Guantánamo deployment, but instead wants to celebrate it. Arranged in tidy rows up along one of the NEX's walls are the t-shirts. These are high-quality, 100 percent cotton, many featuring snazzy multicolor screen printing. Most avoid directly confronting the unhappy circumstance of Guantánamo's principal function. A number of t-shirts on display poke fun at the lazy, bored lifestyle that the Caribbean base tends to cultivate, portraying the fruit-filled cocktails favored at the officers' clubs.

Others, however, are more aggressive. One selection, a black-ink-on-white shirt, represented the silhouette of the camp skyline, which it termed THE TALIBAN TOWERS, Guantánamo's "five star" accommodations. (Each star represents one of the branches of the US military: Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard.) Another celebrated the work of the Joint Detention Operations Group, the command consisting of what are essentially prison guards. The military tendency to speak in acronyms preordained the artwork for this one. Joint Detention Operations Group abbreviates to JDOG, and so, sure enough, the shirt sports a cartoon bulldog snarling at the viewer. As of this writing, it remains undisclosed whether the dogs used to menace detainees at the camp are in fact bulldogs or a different breed.

All malls cater to kids, who pester their parents to buy them needless wares, and the NEX is no exception. You can get your personalized novelty license plates. There are adorable refrigerator magnets as well. One, which I bought for my girlfriend, showed two contented-looking dolphins jumping out of a spray of sea foam in front of a rainbow that read GUANTANAMO BAY above her name. But the stuffed animals are one of the most popular items, according to a clerk. Guantánamo Bay is filled with iguanas, some as large as fire hydrants. Because the US sanctions on the Castro regime have, over the past 50 years, succeeded in impoverishing Cuba, Cubans have taken to eating the once-plentiful lizards, leading the smart ones to escape to the Guantánamo base, where well-fed sailors have no reason to eat them. (The reason you can't drive above 25 miles per hour on the island is to avoid killing endangered iguanas.) Naturally, then, iguanas are among the favorite exoticisms of the children whose parents are stationed at Guantánamo. Just as naturally, the NEX offers a green plush iguana about the length of a child's arm with GUANTANAMO BAY stitched in yellow thread on its sides. One of them now guards my desk at my office.

Stunned by all the swag commemorating a prison camp designed to keep people imprisoned without prospect of due process, I ended up spending something on the order of $100.

Even in Guantánamo Bay, Baghdad, and Afghanistan, the capitalist market affords US servicemen and reporters an array of exciting shopping opportunities.

Friends, family, co-workers—and yes, myself—were in for t-shirts, magnets, shot glasses, and plush toys. It was only after the spell of the NEX wore off several hours later that it occurred to me that buying its merchandise was just part of the bad taste that had stunned me in the first place.

The Hajji Mart at Camp Liberty

Baghdad was different, dirtier, worse. Nearly two years after my visit to Guantánamo Bay, the Iraq war still dragged on, and I took a trip to Baghdad for a stint as an embed. Among the things you learn when traveling to Iraq's capitol to spend time with US troops is that though the military occupies Iraq in general, it occupies the living hell out of Baghdad International Airport. There will never be complaints from concerned Washington commentators about an insufficient force present at what everyone there calls BIAP.

The airport complex has become a city within a city. Entirely off-limits to anyone the military wishes to deny, it's not a haven for governance or diplomacy like the nearby Green Zone. BIAP is a gear-grinding hub of military materiel flying in and out and keeping people and machinery housed, equipped, fed, and entertained. Surrounding the airport is a constellation of military bases with names like Striker, Liberty, Victory, Slayer. To give a sense of how large the complex is, Camp Victory, which occupies a favorite summer vacation spot of Saddam Hussein's and serves as the administrative hub of the war, is about five kilometers away from the airport.

One afternoon I had nothing to do for hours after the patrol I accompanied had returned to Camp Liberty. It was a lazy and boring day, which is nice to have in a war zone. But being on the base doesn't afford a visiting reporter the opportunity to do much. You can lift weights or use a slow internet connection at the so-called Morale Welfare and Recreation Tent. You can jog around the lake and slap at mosquitoes. You can read a book in the air-conditioned trailer that the brigade hosting you provides for your lodging. Or you can visit the Hajji Mart.

A word about the term "Hajji Mart": it's racist. "Hajji" is an American derivation of a term used to denote a committed Muslim who's made the pilgrimage, or *hajj*, to the city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia. It's an expression of condescension and hatred toward the Iraqi people, and it gets used with stunning abandon. During testimony in March 2008 outside Washington, DC, Geoff Millard, a member of Iraq Veterans Against the War, confessed that during his tour in Iraq, everything was "Hajji this, Hajji that." It's much like "Gook" during the Vietnam war. In order to go to war, you must dehumanize your enemy. Hence "Hajji."

A Hajji Mart, therefore, is a store run by one of the few Iraqis allowed onto the enormous BIAP complex, offering the sort of cheap junk Americans think of when they think of wily, obsequious, pushy Iraqis. Lighters with buxom women drawn on them—tilt them in the light and watch her go topless. Stuffed-animal camels with a small microchip inside that plays vaguely Arabic-sounding music. An assortment of pipes, hookahs, and other wink-and-nod drug paraphernalia. No Hajji Mart is complete without a vast library of DVD bootlegs of the latest movies. This is the primary attraction of the Hajji Mart, the wares that all bored soldiers and marines come to purchase. All this is displayed in a windowless, boxy shack by an Arab man who knows how to act nonthreatening and friendly when the Americans walk in.

Our correspondent models a high-quality screen-printed t-shirt, $21.99, available from the "Hajji Mart," Camp Liberty, Baghdad

My guide was a bored and impatient young soldier—I'll call her Pallas. She really didn't want to be babysitting me, but journalists aren't allowed to walk around Camp Liberty without an escort. Small talk wasn't really possible. She'd tell me her husband was also a member of her battalion and yeah that made things in Iraq more bearable and it's a lot better than most other people have it and was I married and huh that's interesting. I was relieved to make my way to the Hajji Mart. It meant that I could walk around by myself for a few minutes of peace and quiet without either unbearably chatting or enduring an awkward silence.

But the Hajji Mart itself was unpleasant. If the NEX at Guantánamo cast a spell over the would-be customer, the Hajji Mart didn't. The novelty of the Hajji Mart had worn off on its clientele, who paced idly, staring discontentedly at the same wares on the same shelves that they had seen for months and months and months. Didn't these fucking Hajjis have any new DVDs? How long can it fucking take to get a new fucking bootleg?

There were a few t-shirts. My memory is faulty, to be honest—a lot of my time in Baghdad was hard to deal with, and I've been surprised how much of it I've put out of my mind. But I have a vague recollection of t-shirts that showed the American and Iraqi flags together, an implicit promise of either friendship or domination. Then I saw a very different shirt.

It was tan, obviously meant to be desert-colored. The front was blank except for a black-inked cartoon of a soldier's face as he pointed his gun barrel out of a fist-sized circle. Around the circle it read: OIF—the ubiquitous acronym for Operation Iraqi Freedom, the military name for the occupation. SINCE 2003. With that, the war became a product that improved with age, the way investment banks will boast of their lineage, conveying what's meant to be a comforting reliability. This item, this institution, this occupation is meant to endure.

The back of it was the main attraction. It was a representation of the warning that appears on the rear of the American Humvees and other combat vehicles. WARNING, it read in English, KEEP BACK 100 METERS OR YOU WILL BE SHOT. No intermingling of the American and Iraqi flags. No cross-cutting message. No euphemism. To underscore the point, Arabic script appeared below, conveying what I can only assume is the same warning.

I can't explain what led me to buy the shirt. I'd like to believe it was an attempt at memorialization—a chance to prove, as I would with my writing, that what I was experiencing truly happened, that war makes people do things like wear on their bodies a constant reminder that they kill people. But that's probably wrong. What probably happened instead was that I was titillated, just like the bored soldiers trying to will a new bootleg DVD onto the Hajji Mart shelves by staring endlessly had once been titillated. "Wow," Pallas said when she saw me draping the t-shirt over my chest to test the fit. "Just like it says on the backs of our trucks."

What was clear even then was that buying the shirt was, at the least, inappropriate. I was ashamed to bring it up to the vendor. He quickly folded it so he didn't have to look at it. He didn't look me in the eye. He asked me for money. I didn't argue the price, and handed it over so I could end the interaction quickly. He was ashamed. I was ashamed. For those who would collect or sell souvenirs of other people's misery, shame is the only appropriate reaction.

Reclaim New York!

by Jane Mumford and Lewis Jacobs

This is the second installment in a series analyzing contemporary radical activity in locales around the US.

New York City, for all intents and purposes, is a walled city.

Its geographic boundaries are fixed; it cannot move outward, only up, only by continually reinventing its topography, by cannibalizing itself. Eight million people live in this seething city, millions more pour in every day for work, and within this constant flux—the cement chaos of Gotham—they must find space to live, socialize, play, and work. Space defines everything in NYC, and the grid of regulation, regimentation, and police repression that has been laid over the city is the definition that those in power want to be universally accepted. This definition has always been contested by anarchists and others beneath the boots of those who enforce it.

And so the political history of New York can be summed up as the attempts of authorities and capitalists to reduce the ebbs and flows of chaos, which is the natural state of the megalopolis. Unregulated spaces have always been flashpoints of rebellion, and the city has seen generations of confrontations that have seriously threatened the powers that be. Because of the physical and geographic limitations of NYC, the "haves" have always been dangerously close to the have-nots, and in order to reduce the likelihood of full-scale insurrection those in power have limited the access to space of would-be rebels. The assault on unregulated space continues as city officials fence in parks, privatize public areas, dedicate more and more street space to traffic and parking, enforce strict anti-loitering laws, and maintain 40,000 cops on the corners of every neighborhood. The very memory of the city's space is being colonized as its revolutionary history is buried under towers of glass and steel. New York City has always been a tinderbox, and even 40,000 cops are a spell that the city's teeming neighborhoods could break. Consequently, the authorities must remain eternally vigilant to snuff out any spark of resistance.

The Anti-Globalization Period

Rudy Giuliani's regime was characterized by an unprecedented wave of street warfare, albeit one-sided. Resistance during the 1980s and early 1990s from groups like Act Up and the squatters of the Lower East Side was understood by the city's elite as a challenge to their control of both human bodies and public space, and the mid-90s saw the Empire State striking back. Corporations worked hand in hand with Giuliani's regime as a flurry of restrictive legislation was passed along with corporate sweetheart deals. Business Improvement Districts were empowered to "clean up" the streets, curfews were enacted for all parks and public spaces, and anti-dance laws were dredged up from the dusty pages of the criminal code books, causing the city that never sleeps to go into a coma. The numbers of police were more than doubled, and the boys in blue harassed, jailed, and intimidated legions of homeless people every night. Times Square was sold off to Mickey Mouse and promptly filled with security cameras, corporate security guards, and a special squadron of police. Public spaces such as Charas/El Bohio were sold off to developers, while health inspectors, liquor license guardians, and legions of city bureaucrats went into overdrive "removing chaos" from New York. The last squats were attacked and evicted by police, and when that failed, city-sponsored arson was used.

It was against this grim backdrop that the rise of the anti-globalization movement occurred in New York. Though there were many different radical political campaigns and trends prior to this, movements that focused on space, like the homeless tent city in Tompkins Square Park, were the touchstones of the emerging anti-globalization movement in the city. Additionally, campaigns like the battle around the Commons in the UK, forest defense struggles in the Northwest, and the Zapatista rebellion in Chiapas provided inspiration for anarchists and radicals looking to respond to the Giuliani years of colonization and occupation. New York author Hakim Bey's book Temporary Autonomous Zone was widely read and discussed; Bey's ideas about creating open and spontaneous spaces of liberation in order to regenerate resistance movements had tremendous influence on anarchists and activists in NYC. The deeply-felt need to break free of the confining regulation of space inspired the first Reclaim The Streets (RTS) event in New York, which occurred in October 1998 in downtown Manhattan.

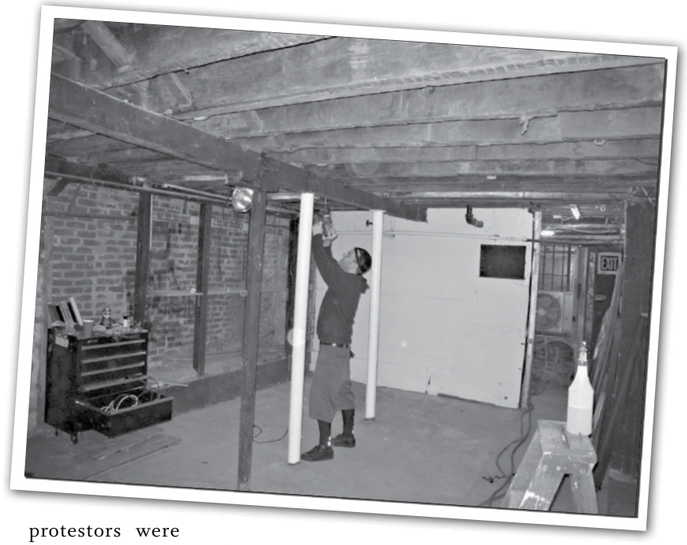
This RTS was not the largest protest in New York or even the rowdiest, but it was important because it ushered in a new political dialogue. The contestation of space expanded from a strictly local issue to an assault on corporate globalism. This RTS was the first major manifestation of the New York anti-globalization movement; as a temporary public display of collective autonomy, using a diversity of creative tactics to connect local and global issues, it introduced the hallmarks of what became a vibrant scene. The political street party offered a clever format to pull together various social threads: activists whose spaces and gardens were being sold to millionaires, squatters who had been evicted or had their homes burned down, ravers angered by the anti-dance laws, people forced out of Manhattan by absurd rent prices based on real estate speculation, and anarchists, radicals, and passersby. By contesting the control of space, RTS raised local concerns in a non-reformist manner while establishing links to a greater critique of capitalism and authority. This new configuration of issues and groups heralded a new heyday of organization and confrontation, which exploded in NYC following the watershed of the anti-WTO protests that occurred in Seattle in November 1999.

New York City took the gauntlet that protesters threw down in Seattle and ran with it. The WTO reportbacks at Judson Memorial Church and Charas were standing room only. NYC formed an offshoot of the Direct Action Network, the organizing body in Seattle, and the New York DAN held weekly meetings attended by huge numbers of people. New York was also one of the first cities to create a city-specific Indymedia center, and New Yorkers began organizing immediately for the IMF/World Bank protests in Washington, DC in April 2000. Anarchists had always been part of the activist scene in the city, and now they took a larger role in a variety of protests and organizing activities, particularly around issues of space—for example, joining others in February 2000 to defend Esperanza, a besieged East Village community garden. Other community gardens had been evicted already, but the defense of Esperanza was strikingly fierce, drawing on a variety of new tactics imported from Seattle and elsewhere: tripods, lock boxes, puppets, and of course, black masks.

New York anarchists were inspired by the diversity of tactics employed in Seattle, but anarchist tactics in New York did not shift to focus on small groups or property destruction. Anarchists took up the symbols of the black bloc—black clothing, masks, moving together as an explicitly anarchist contingent—but East Coast black blocs were always more focused on claiming space than on destroying property. The black bloc at the IMF/World Bank protests had a decidedly East Coast character—it emphasized size, controlling space, self-defense, and a conspicuous absence of property destruction.

In New York, the absence of property destruction did not reduce police repression. Anarchists and other activists started organizing immediately after returning from the IMF/World Bank protests in hopes of creating the first black bloc in New York City during the annual May Day march. A small segment agitated for a Seattle-style tactic of hit-and-run property destruction and did some limited damage the night before May Day—though this had almost no impact, as no one knew it happened. During the planning of the anarchist contingent, organizers referenced the increased police repression of RTS and decided that the black bloc should join with the large Amnesty for Illegal Immigrants march. However, when anarchists gathered in Union Square, cops attacked the would-be bloc within minutes, and although only 19 protesters were arrested, the police achieved their goal of preventing the bloc from forming.

At the time, there was increasing cooperation between local police departments;



Only a few spaces like ABC NO RIO, pictured above in its early years, persist from the halcyon days of autonomous zones in the 1980s.

protestors were surrounded by police from New York and intelligence officers from Philadelphia who were preparing for the Republican National Convention protests that summer. Owing to inter-agency trainings on the lessons of Seattle, the NYPD knew it was easier to stop a black bloc from forming than to try to contain or disperse it after it had formed. Later that day, other space-liberating tactics were used with somewhat better success—at the end of the May Day march, radicals broke into an abandoned lot to plant a community garden.

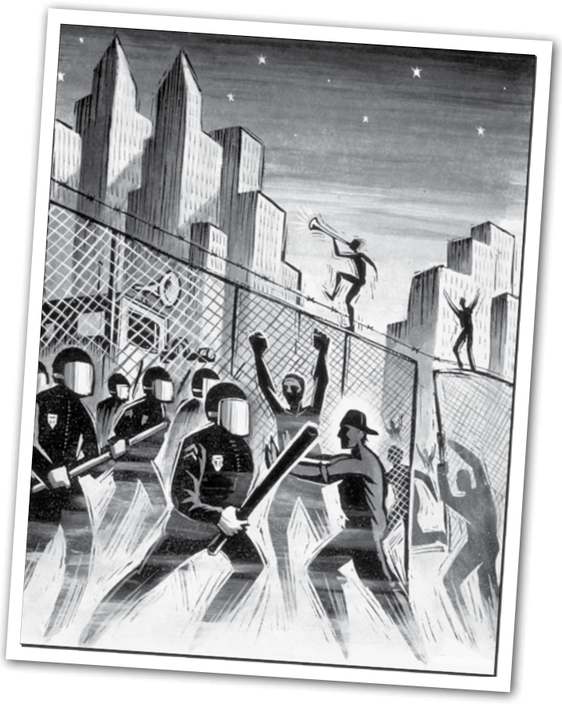
May Day 2000 reinforced the opinion of local anarchists that New York City was exceptional in that it was almost impossible to seize or hold space. Radicals knew that even a modest public demonstration would be immediately disrupted by law enforcement. Police created elaborate surveillance and crowd control techniques to keep the streets under control. In 1999, the NYPD had created a special "Disorder Unit" trained by federal agents experienced with protesters in the Northwest. The NYPD was successful in creating a chokehold around radical activity in New York, and many anarchists took the battle for space to cities such as Philadelphia, where numerous New York activists participated in the RNC protests of August 2000.

By that fall, New York City had become ceded territory. Blackout Books, an anarchist infoshop in the rapidly gentrifying Lower East Side, closed its doors with hardly a whisper after the landlord raised the rent and the benefactor who paid the bills refused to cover the sharp increase. The intense police repression that many experienced in Philadelphia left its

The political street party offered a clever format to pull together various social threads: activists whose spaces and gardens were being sold to millionaires, squatters who had been evicted or had their homes burned down, ravers angered by the anti-dance laws, people forced out of Manhattan by absurd rent prices based on real estate speculation, and anarchists, radicals, and passersby.

mark, and activists in New York scaled back, as evidenced by the lackluster IMF/WB solidarity and Reclaim the Streets protests in September 2000. Facing local mask laws, ubiquitous police presence, and the disappearance of radical spaces, anarchists in New York looked to major mobilizations in other countries for inspiration and new tactics.

Many anarchists and radicals in New York were impressed by the legend of the Italian Tute Bianche movement, having seen them in Indymedia footage from the IMF protests in Prague. The image of radicals in padded overalls, helmets, and inner tube shields confronting the police appealed to New Yorkers, as it addressed familiar police tactics. New York cops prided themselves on not needing tear gas to control protests, instead relying on brute force and overwhelming numbers to contain and disperse protests. The Tute Bianche model seemed like a promising new tactic that could be employed by anarchists to offset this asymmetry in force. New York City Ya Basta! formed to emulate the tactics of the Tute Bianche; unlike their Italian inspiration, Ya Basta! was made up almost entirely of anarchists. Though Ya Basta! did attend some local protests, its real focus was on preparing for the FTAA protests in Quebec City in April 2001.



Eric Drooker, whose artwork became world-famous during the anti-globalization era, depicted the struggles centered in the Lower East Side.

Despite the failures and repression in New York and Philadelphia, a tangible energy remained in the activist community—anarchists weren't demoralized so long as the struggle against capitalism and the state was still going strong on a global level. New ideas and tactics in other cities suggested that it was still possible to mount an effective and public resistance—so it was not surprising that New Yorkers threw themselves into the difficult project of organizing a caravan of over 100 vehicles to cross an international border to fight in the streets in Quebec City. New York Ya Basta! was the most audacious of this optimistic spirit, and the group traveled around the Northeast encouraging people to join them on the road to Quebec City. In the end, NYC Ya Basta! failed to achieve its objectives of opening space or even getting to Quebec City. This led to the quick abandonment both of Ya Basta! and the tactics of the Tute Bianche.

The aftermath of this failure caused many to rethink seasonal mobilizations as a revolutionary strategy. In some ways, the emphasis on creating temporary infrastructures for struggles and protests elsewhere had contributed to people ignoring local struggles and the creation of permanent infrastructure. Some supported a renewed focus on community organizing, while others believed that even more militant actions were needed at mobilizations; still others floated between these two camps. The community organizing tendency took on a variety of local projects, including Mayday Books, the anarchist infoshop that succeeded Blackout, as well as street medic collectives, immigrant ally organizations, and groups interested in creating free schools. A significant number of local activists and anarchists were also planning to make the September 2001 anti-IMF/World Bank mobilization in Washington DC a serious spectacle of resistance, particularly after the pitched battles at the G8 in Genoa that summer.

An interesting aspect of this new focus on community organizing is that it broke with earlier models that emphasized space; instead, activists focused on general issues and services like immigration rights, health care, and grassroots media. Earlier versions of these projects had been closely connected to neighborhoods; spaces like the East Village Free Clinic, immigrant service organizations such as Make the Road by Walking, and newspapers like The Shadow had all served specific localities. Charas/El Bohio, a squatted public school turned community center, exemplified this change in approach to space. Charas was located in the Lower East Side and had been a meeting space for local radical and neighborhood groups. When the legal battle for Charas had run its course by fall of 2001, the group that organized Charas was faced with a decision: take a different space picked by the government, or stay and fight. Groups formed to defend Charas, but in the end it was given up—typifying the new approach in which fighting for space was considered too difficult and time-consuming.

Those who still believed there was value in large mobilizations shared the opinion that Seattle-style tactics were no longer effective. In organizing outside the coalition model, anarchists in Quebec City and Washington DC had inspired serious critiques of coalition politics. There was also an increased emphasis on decentralized groups and tactics after Genoa. The murder of Carlo Giuliani and the brutal beatings and torture of protesters at the hands of the Italian police force had a major impact on how anarchists understood the seriousness of the conflict between the anti-globalization movement and the state. Many argued that the stakes had changed and that smarter and more militant actions were in order. Space received less attention in these conversations, as the focus shifted towards property destruction, sabotage, and street fighting—tactics with which New Yorkers had comparatively little experience.

New Yorkers fleeing across the Brooklyn Bridge on September 11, 2001.

Post-9/11

Those who were preparing to wreak havoc in Washington, DC for the September 2001 IMF/World Bank protests had no idea what chickens were about to come home to roost. The destruction of the World Trade Center created chaos—the traditional functions of public spaces instantly became irrelevant. Bridges became pedestrian walkways, streets were taken over, parks became unregulated all-night meeting grounds. This reworking of space was completely unmanaged by any agency or organization. The makeshift memorials, vigils, and other forms of community response were not only completely spontaneous but also completely at odds with the state and capital.

Giuliani was forced to beg people to return to shopping, work, and the traditional atomization of capitalist society, the functioning of which had been so completely disrupted. The parks were filled with people organizing themselves, discussing events, setting up impromptu memorials, and exchanging mutual aid. A huge tent city appeared around Ground Zero where volunteers from all walks of life organized. Radicals had always believed that if the enchantment of capitalism and the state could be dispelled, average people would spontaneously self-organize; finally it was happening, albeit in unimagined circumstances.

Unfortunately, the threat of unregulated space did not go unnoticed by those in power; the cops moved in to enforce park curfews* and destroy the memorials. National guardsmen and other law enforcement created a "frozen zone" around Ground Zero. Anarchists and radicals largely failed to respond. Not only could they have fought against these incursions, they could have opened more space for people and presented anarchist ideas at a time when jingoism was being trumpeted from almost every media outlet. It is a bittersweet irony that so much organizing in the past had focused on opening up space, but when a real opportunity and need appeared, activists did nothing. This illustrates how far radicals in New York had moved from using space politically.

The aftermath of 9/11 created a negative feedback loop: as activists retreated from geographically focused projects and de-emphasized the struggle for space, they lost more and more ground as basic infrastructure melted away under the glare of new surveillance and the increasing militarization of the city. In December 2001, Charas was finally handed over to the gentrifiers of the Lower East Side without a fight. The organizers of Charas accepted a

* These were the same curfews that squatters and their allies had fought against a dozen years earlier.

Critical Mass was the one visible political event focused on public space that actually gained momentum after 9/11. The RNC Critical Mass was the largest one in its history: 5000 bicyclists took off in waves from Union Square, snarling traffic throughout most of Manhattan. The number of bicyclists was so large that there was not one huge mass, but a number of large bike blocs reclaiming the streets and opening up public space from both cars and police.

deal in which the city offered to replace the building that had been Charas for 20 years. It is telling that what had been a liberated space in the Lower East Side was thought of as interchangeable with any randomly rented location; detached from its history, Charas did not survive.

In February 2002, the World Economic Forum met in New York instead of Davos, Switzerland, in supposed "solidarity" with the beleaguered city. Activists, now without Charas, vowed to protest these meetings and reclaim the city from the interlopers. Anarchists promised a return to the heyday of anti-globalization resistance, but were only able to manage a contingent in the permitted march, which was lined with cops in complete control of the situation. The next day, anarchists attempted to stage an unpermitted snake march through the Lower East Side. The police not only stopped the march but arrested anyone violating their control of space.

After the WEF, the state consolidated control of the city. Unregulated political space contracted further, as 11 of the 12 remaining squats in the Lower East Side went legal in 2002. From this point on, with a few exceptions, the contestation and reclamation of space occurred mostly under the guise of art- or party-related events, for which fun and "creativity" were the primary objectives. While RTS had been an explicitly political event, the subway parties, First Warm Night, and Chenguin events focused on taking space for entertainment purposes only and did not challenge the police when they inevitably showed up to shut things down. Anarchists, taking a cue from this playbook, organized several "pirate parades" featuring participants dressed up as pirates, and on one occasion even created a bicycle-powered pirate ship. In order to avoid police attention, the radical politics of these events were not advertised.

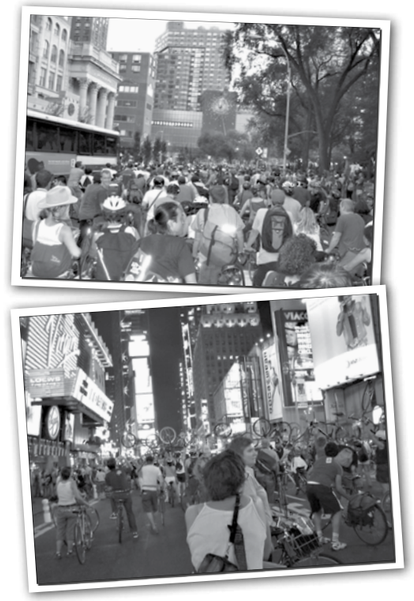
Thanks to the US invasion of Afghanistan, the WEF protests had featured a strong anti-war component, and soon afterwards most New York activists and radicals became focused on the impending war in Iraq. The collectives, affinity groups, and consensus-based networks that had handled the bulk of the organizing of the anti-globalization days were funneled into the monolithic, hierarchical models of the traditional 1960s Left. ANSWER, United for Peace & Justice (UFPJ), and Not In Our Name churned out IKEA-like uniform protests with prefab signs, speakers, and permitted marches that could have occurred in any city anywhere in the world. Anarchists in New York were skeptical of this type of organizing and sought to subvert the schemes of the various old-Left dinosaurs; participating in the permitted marches, anarchists hoped that the sheer numbers of protesters would help deflect the riot cops that lined the edges of the "free speech zones."

Several demonstrations took place before and immediately after the war began. Of these, February 15, 2003 was the most exciting, but not due to the plans of the old Left or the subversions of the anarchists. UFPJ was the main organizer for this international day of action, and in New York it called for a huge mobilization at the United Nations building. A half million people came—some from New York City, and others bussed in from out of town. The cops, cocky about their stranglehold on the streets, overplayed their hand by canceling the permit for the march in the expectation that people would simply not show up. However, people showed up in huge numbers, and when the police refused to let them go to the permitted rally zone the crowd of half a million protesters was forced to roam the streets, blocking most of mid-town and eventually shutting the city down. The most intense confrontations were not sparked by UFPJ organizers or militant anarchists, but by outraged citizens. People pushed through police barricades and shouted in anger after cops attempted to trample the crowd with their horses. While many did not get to the rally, everyone participated in taking the streets. In contrast, anarchists had no visible presence, dispersed in small groups throughout the sea of people and lacking any real plan. Because they did not consider taking the streets a possibility, the opportunity to support the spontaneous seizing of public space was missed.

A little over a month later, when the buildup to the war gave way to shock and awe, anarchists in New York remained ill-prepared. The day the Iraq war began, a snake march was attempted once again, this time from Columbus Circle to Times Square; although the weather was no help, activists and other radicals had not done enough preparation to achieve the sought-after disruption of the city. Unlike the Bay Area, which saw major city-wide disruptions after weeks of planning, the protest march in New York was contained in one lane. March 22, 2003 saw another international day of action against the war, and anarchists undertook a standard approach, establishing a presence in a permitted march. Several hundred anarchists and other protesters did manage to break out of police lines, but were quickly broken up by police.

After the war got going, the streets remained relatively quiet until the blackout of 2003 forced millions of people out on a hot August night. Though there was no political agenda, this returned life to public spaces as people assisted each other and street parties broke out across the five boroughs. Although it was slowly ebbing at this point, the Lower East Side was still a major rallying point for radicals and anarchists, and anyone who could went to Tompkins Square Park. The scene was festive, with bonfires and free vegan ice cream rescued from the non-functioning freezers of local grocery stores. The cops let people drink and party in the park, knowing that the situation was a powder keg only wanting for a spark. The population of the city, still reeling from the attacks of September 2001, took to the streets as a multiplicity of communities, with only minor incidents of looting and politically-motivated property destruction.

Believing New York, long the symbol of liberal decadence for conservatives, to have been completely beaten, the Republican National Committee chose the city to hold the coronation of George W. Bush in 2004. Protesters quickly mobilized a massive effort to spoil the convention; for months leading up to the event, dinosaur organizations squabbled with city officials about space for demonstrations. UPFJ and other liberal groups struggled against the NYPD for a rally at Central Park and a permitted march route that would pass in front of Madison Square Garden, the site of the Republican National Convention. Anti-authoritarians hoped the city might reject the permits and that the chaos of February 15 could be repeated. Eventually, the city rejected the Central Park rally but relented on the march permit, leaving the liberals and their lawyers pacified.

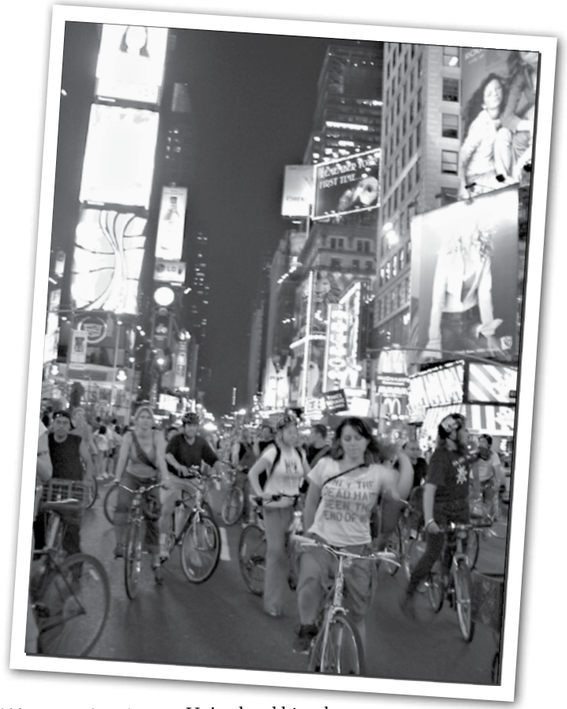


The RNC Critical Mass ride held up to 45 blocks at a time for more than two hours.

Unlike previous anti-globalization protests, there were no convergence spaces and no spokescouncil meetings for people to meet face to face. Organizers gambled instead on an exclusively decentralized model of action, distributing information through websites such as RNC-notwelcome.org. The years of intense police repression and surveillance had taken a toll on radicals and anarchists in the city; they did not believe they could organize openly or mount a serious confrontation with more than 40,000 police on the street.

This lack of physical space for people to come together may have contributed to the demonstrations being disjointed and lackluster. Local New York anarchists spread several different calls for decentralized actions in Times Square focused on contesting space and disrupting delegates—including the Mouse Bloc, the Queer Fist! kiss-in, and Chaos on Broadway—and rejected going to the heavily-policed permitted march, where a large out-of-town anarchist contingent marched and a giant green dragon puppet mysteriously caught fire in a spectacular blaze. None of these succeeded in seriously disrupting delegates or opening space: the Mouse Bloc and Chaos on Broadway were limited to small hit-and-run verbal attacks on visiting conservatives, the Queer Fist! kiss-in was corralled and mass-arrested by the police, and the anarchist contingent in the permitted march quickly dispersed after the flaming dragon failed to incite liberal protesters to break out of the script of the permitted free-speech zone.

The RNC Critical Mass was the exception to this rule—it was the only action in which people, not police, controlled the streets. Time's



Critical Mass, seen here in Times Square, continues to this day, although as a shadow of its former self.

Up!, a local bicycle activist group, and others had been organizing monthly Critical Mass rides in the city for years. Around the end of the anti-globalization period, the number of people participating in these rides increased, and as the rides became more and more political they actually attracted greater participation. Critical Mass seemed to be the one visible political event focused on public space that gained momentum after 9/11. The RNC Critical Mass was the largest one in its history: 5000 bicyclists took off in waves from Union Square, snarling traffic throughout most of Manhattan. The number of bicyclists was so large that there was not one huge mass, but a number of large bike blocs reclaiming the streets and opening up space from both cars and police.

After riding around the city, the various threads of the ride converged in front of St. Mark's Church in the Lower East Side. St. Mark's Church, thanks to the weekly clearinghouse forums that had taken place in the run-up to the RNC, had become the de facto convergence space for the throngs of protesters coming into the city. There were already hundreds of people there, and when several thousand bicycle riders arrived, chaos ensued. This did not translate into an uncontrollable situation, at least not for a substantial amount of time. Due to the enormity of the crowd, it was almost impossible to tell what was going on even half a block ahead. There was a minor confrontation resulting in a few arrests when police moved in on a group of radicals. The crowd, unused to controlling the streets, was hesitant to engage the police or move further out into the neighborhood, and reinforcements soon arrived to disperse the bicyclists.

The NYPD was eager to emphasize its control of the streets immediately after the RNC protests. Critical Mass was an obvious site of conflict, and the city was rightly concerned that its growing momentum could spiral out of control. After the massively successful ride during the RNC, police took an added interest in the monthly rides, using new, more aggressive tactics to try to crush them. Every month they corralled riders for an hour or more at Union Square, then followed and controlled their movements, often making dozens of arrests. Additionally, the police struck at the infrastructure of Critical Mass by confiscating bikes, even parked ones, and holding them as evidence for weeks and months at a time. These tactics were remarkably successful at stunting both the politics and size of the mass.

Critical Mass was not the only victim; the authorities sought to undo whatever modest gains in resistance remained after the protests were over. Casa Del Sol was an old and mostly forgotten squat in the South Bronx. Fearing eviction, the steward of this space had invited protesters to stay there, and afterwards, with this influx of new people, Casa Del Sol became a hive of activity. Anarchists worked on a community garden, held video screenings and workshops, and threw benefit shows for various radical causes. More and more people were moving into the building and working to make the gigantic structure a usable community space for radical activities and local residents. The government struck back within three months, on November 30, the anniversary of the Battle of Seattle. They evicted the squatters and, true to form, set the building on fire to prevent reoccupation.

The Present

The current organizing of NYC radicals and anarchists is typified by the New York manifestation of the Really Really Free Market (RRFM) model. The first RRFM in New York City occurred shortly before the protests against the RNC in 2004. Organizers did not even entertain the idea of holding the Really Really Free Market in a park or other public space, where they are commonly held in other cities. It was assumed that this would be impossible in such a controlled environment, and so RRFM organizers relied instead on the private property of St. Mark's Church for space to illustrate their anti-capitalist values. It may seem paradoxical for a public event like the RRFM to be held on private property, contained within the six-foot wrought iron gates of a church, but organizers believed they had no choice. Really Really Free Markets have continued to occur several times a year since then, but always within church property.

It shouldn't come as a surprise to anarchists that private property is far from a safe haven. Jane Doe Books, the Brooklyn Free Store, Blackout Books, the Chashama Art Space, and Mayday Books are all radical spaces in New York that have closed—some due to gentrification, some due to financial backers pulling the plug, and some due to apathy. The spaces that have continued to exist have only been able to do so by focusing on economic survival, which often comes at the expense of a space's ability to challenge the status quo. Spaces such as Bluestockings and ABC No Rio are extremely important to the activist scene in New York City, but the reliance on private property means that substantial effort must go into fundraising and selling books, and the price for failing to do so is shutting down. The apparent security of private property isn't real: it is contingent on the observance of government regulations and codes and the payment of rent to landlords. By maintaining their relationship to space in exclusively legal and capitalist terms, anarchists in New York relinquish the places they physically inhabit to the control of capitalists and cops.

The memorial for Brad Will, an anarchist and Indymedia journalist murdered in 2006 by paramilitaries in Oaxaca, Mexico, showed just how much space anarchists had relinquished over the years. The memorial for Brad was huge, with hundreds of people attending from a myriad of different scenes and struggles; many of them were no longer active but had been moved by Brad's death to seek out their former community. The films and photos of Brad's life and work, as well as the statements of friends and family, documented Brad's lifelong involvement in the liberation of space. Brad's story, in some ways, mirrors the trajectory described in this account. Brad was a squatter in the 1990s and became heavily involved in the anti-globalization movement; he was always to be seen at events like Reclaim the Streets, Critical Mass, and pirate parades. His work as a journalist often centered around popular struggles for land: in Brazil, for example, where he was arrested at a landless farmers' occupation, and ultimately in Oaxaca, where he was documenting the resistance of a people fighting against government for control of their streets, neighborhoods, and lives.

Emotions and nostalgia ran high at the end of the memorial, and as the marching band struck up its first notes, everyone spilled out of St. Mark's Church, taking to the streets in celebration of Brad and everything he stood for. But the march didn't belong to the world that was remembered at the memorial—instead it wound through the streets of a gentrified Lower East Side that almost no one lived or organized in, ending at the doors of Charas which were pried open. People entered—not to stay or fight, but to remember. The symbolic opening of Charas and the march around the squats of yesteryear, although meaningful in fostering a sense of community in the wake of the loss of a friend, was simply a reenactment, not resistance. After taking photos and leaving marks on the walls of the abandoned community center, everyone left, leaving the space that had once been a vibrant center of radical organizing in New York to molder once more.

But this doesn't mean that anarchists and other radicals are not organizing around public space issues in the city, even if they have given up on creating lasting autonomous zones. Radical queer groups, in particular, have recently been prominent in contesting the authorities' domination of space. This commitment to opening and reclaiming space comes from the very history of the queer rights movement. The Stonewall riots described in an earlier issue

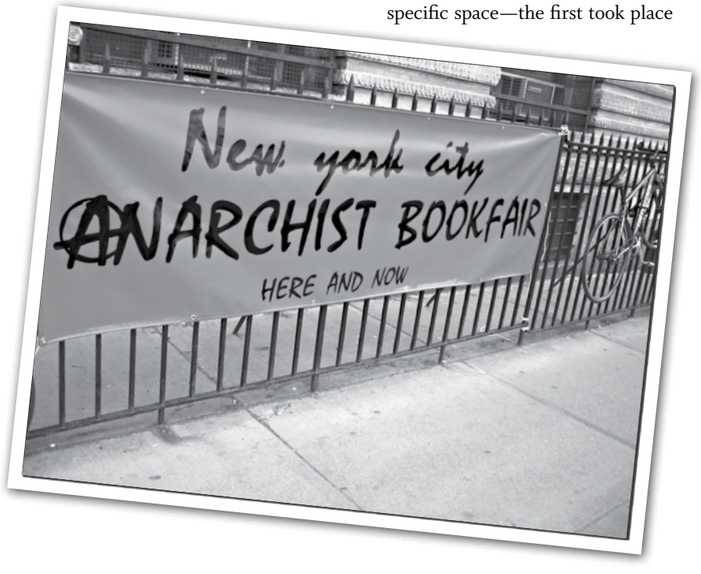
Permitted anarchist contingent in the St.-Pat's-for-All Parade in Queens.

of *Rolling Thunder* were a radical reclamation of space—they began with street fighting over the city's attempts to control queer meeting places, and in the nights that followed queer activists used the propaganda of the streets to propel their radical agenda across the country and the world. ACT UP learned this lesson from Stonewall, and kept protests in the streets of New York, even shutting down the city by blockading bridges and tunnels.

Over the past several years, FIERCE, a group of radical queer and trans youth of color, took their protests for the right to congregate on the streets and piers of the "gay mecca" of Greenwich Village to the same streets that gave birth to the Stonewall riots. The affluent residents of the neighborhood, fearing that their "quality of life" would be disturbed, cited noise from the youth and trash on the street as pretexts to bring in the police and enact a curfew at the piers. Despite repression, FIERCE staged a variety of rowdy public protests demanding their right to use this space in the West Village. The city, in order to contain their raucous rebellion and persuade them to abandon the streets, has offered them a compromise on the curfew as well as a youth center.

The Radical Homosexual Agenda, another queer group, has consistently challenged regulations that prevent more than 50 people from congregating in public without a permit. Pointing back to Stonewall, they argue that access to public space is a queer issue, and have staged two relatively successful "Parade without a Permit" marches. It's interesting to note that these protests were not about any specific space—the first took place around City Hall, and the second around the West Village—and on the surface they seemed to be calling for a reform in city law. More recently, in June 2008, the Radical Homosexual Agenda worked with the group Picture the Homeless to target New York City Mayor Bloomberg at a LGBT dinner at Gracie Mansion. Picture the Homeless unfurled a banner reading, "We Want Homes—Not Shelters, Not Condos, Not War, Not Tourists, Not NYPD."

Commercial events like the NYC Anarchist Bookfair can only offer temporary spaces on the terms of the capitalist market.



Gentrification is a major force in New York City, as neighborhood after neighborhood falls to the predatory cycle of inflated rents, bourgeois encroachment, and the displacement of poor and non-white residents. The traditional stronghold for anarchists and other radicals—the Lower East Side and lower Manhattan in general—no longer exists. Skyrocketing rents in Manhattan have forced most radicals and anarchists to spread throughout the five boroughs, particularly to Brooklyn. The lack of real political space in the city—whether neighborhoods, parks, or meeting spaces—prevents people from building the rapport and community that once gave local resistance teeth. An exception to this rule is Bluestockings, an activist bookstore and café in the Lower East Side. In times of emergency, such as those following Hurricane Katrina, the death of Brad Will, and the arrest of Daniel McGowan, Bluestockings was the one location radicals and anarchists could go to find needed camaraderie and mobilize a collective response.

Though gentrification has been ravaging the city for decades, anarchists have only recently begun discussing strategies for resistance. Gentrification, like so many other issues, is extremely complex, and it has been difficult for New York radicals to conceive of an approach that could stop or even slow the process—especially since the idea of permanently liberating space has essentially been abandoned. In the '80s and early '90s, anarchists and radicals were at the forefront of fighting gentrification in the Lower East Side, but back then they were fighting for their own neighborhoods, squats, and community gardens. Today, many anarchists and radicals find themselves in the difficult position of being gentrifiers—much like the radicals, artists, and bohemians of the Lower East Side in the '80s. But unlike their counterparts in the LES two decades ago, who were building a community rooted in space, few anarchists and radicals today seem to prioritize that goal, even if they understand that they are functioning as tools of social displacement. Fighting gentrification is a very difficult proposition when you have only tenuous connections to a neighborhood in which you are seen as the "new gentry."

The 123 Space—a new community space organized according to anarchist principles—is an attempt to do something about gentrification before it is too late. The 123 Space is located in a part of Bedford-Stuyvesant on the frontier of gentrification advancing from Williamsburg. The past ten years have seen gentrification spread quickly east across western Brooklyn, swallowing entire neighborhoods and redeveloping them for young, mostly white professionals who work in nearby Manhattan. Though the 123 Space is a miscellany of community projects run by a variety of groups including the Freegan Bike Workshop, the NYC Anarchist Black Cross Federation, Misled Youth, and the In Our Hearts Network, it has made an effort to draw in neighbors, particularly youth, and prioritize their needs among the primary objectives of the space. As of this writing the 123 Space has only been open one year, and it is too soon to tell if it can meet the needs of the residents of Bedford-Stuyvesant or the radical community at large. It will be interesting to see if the 123 Space succeeds in connecting to a marginalized community in a way that does not lead to further exploitation or gentrification.

Even the Really Really Free Markets in New York depend on the goodwill of those who own private property.

Moving Forward

New York City anarchists and activists have made mistakes in the fight for space, and this has contributed to an overall weakening of resistance. However, there are reasons to be optimistic about the future of anarchy in this city. Pandamonium, an August 2008 event billing itself as a "Costumed+Roving+Street+Party" and "Apocalyptic+Dance+Rock+Battle," is an example that shows that street level resistance is still possible even in NYC.

Pandamonium was a conscious attempt to politicize public space without taking an overt political position. The organizers drew on the long history of New York street parties at which music, dance, and art have been the main draw and the lack of permits has not been advertised. Conscious of the difficult context in which it was organizing, the group decided to meet in Union Square, which has historically been a busy meeting spot. The square was filled with droning 9/11 conspiracy nuts, skateboarders trying new moves, club-hoppers about to spend a night on the town, and hundreds of other people just enjoying the summer evening. The pandas from Pandamonium lifted banners and played dance music from cheap boom boxes tuned to a pirate radio station created just for the action. They passed out fliers and homemade panda masks to the crowd, telling people to tune their radios to the clandestine station. Their festive and attention-getting antics created a stir of excitement.

Union Square was just the kicking off point for Pandamonium; the group ushered hundreds of people into a nearby subway station where the music continued, transforming a normal subway ride to Brooklyn into a mobile dance party. Arriving on Bedford Avenue, the main commercial street of Williamsburg, partygoers found tubs of free beer on the sidewalk. Tickets and arrests for open intoxicants were an important cornerstone of Giuliani's crusade, and the pandas, in leaving beer out for the taking, encouraged people to disregard this law. Partygoers already excited from the festive ride on the subway quickly snatched up the beer.

A bike cart with a PA system tuned to the pirate radio station started up as projections of riots and panda porn appeared on a nearby building. Cops were on the scene almost immediately, using tactics that had worked in the past: they tried to decapitate the party by arresting the people they saw with the bullhorn and sound system. Although the sound bike was confiscated, this didn't stop the music or the party, thanks to the decentralized use of radios. As Pandamonium kept moving, people began lighting sparklers, throwing projectiles at the cops, and putting up barricades.

The organizers had chosen a route moving away from Bedford Avenue, the main party spot of Williamsburg, towards a sparsely populated

area by the East River. They had hoped to challenge the recent crackdown on people drinking in and otherwise occupying the green space by the river. Away from the main street and with plenty of reinforcements, the police tried to grab the organizers and the party seemed to break up. The transmission continued, however, and Pandamonium reformed and spontaneously marched back to Bedford, where the party persisted for another couple of hours and retook the street. Pandas distributed flyers with a political message and instructions on how one could put together a similar event.

Conclusions?

For New Yorkers to ignite a powerful resistance to the regimentation and regulation of city life, we need to change the way we approach radical politics. Pandamonium utilized tactics and strategies that reoriented resistance back to the streets and the physicality of the city. The Pandas, after retaking Bedford Avenue, unfurled a banner reading "Reclaim the City!," emphasizing that reclaiming the place we live is key to expanding our resistance. But this is not easy, as was demonstrated by the police reaction—plenty of cops, helicopters, mobile command units, arrests, and use of force. Holding space in the streets is not something we are capable of at the moment, but that does not mean we can't build up to it, nor does it mean we shouldn't utilize our strengths in the meantime. The Pandas were mobile and decentralized; as long as they kept moving, they circumvented the hierarchical authority of the police. The use of Union Square, which is always teeming with people in need of meeting places outside the consumer relations of stores and cafés, showed the value of building relationships of resistance in areas that offer fertile ground—since so much space has been lost that we no longer have our own local rallying points. Events like Pandamonium indicate that limiting radical space to the supposed safety of private property has not paid off; we must seek new approaches not only for acquiring physical bases of operation, but also to confront restrictions imposed on everyday life.

Pandamonium comes after years of street actions designed to confront authorities' attempts to marginalize radical activity. Despite their attempts, we have not gone away. There are probably more radicals in NYC today than in any other area in the US. This diversity allows for frequent interactions between a variety of groups, and this can open up intriguing possibilities for new hybrid movements. In the 1980s homeless people, punks, squatters, ACT UP, and Puerto Rican community groups made common cause to resist developers and city officials in the Lower East Side. New York is still well-situated for new combinations of groups, people, and cultures to come together and challenge authority.

These hybrid movements possess a natural ally in the chaos of the city, which cops, laws, and surveillance cameras still cannot completely control. The city often breaks out into moments of self-organization; this has happened a number of times over the past few years, though for the most part radicals have only been marginally involved. These episodes could have been opportunities to build new alliances and tactics for the creation of a new street-based resistance. It is important that anarchists develop strategies to promote and defend self-organization when it inevitably breaks out in the streets of New York again.

Events like the Tompkins Square Park and Stonewall riots, the Battle of Seattle, and the Zapatista Rebellion show that resistance situated in a local context and fought in geographically defined places can have enormous impact on other radicals around the world. The fight for physical space added urgency and immediacy to the politics that were behind these movements and actions, making them feel real and achievable. Everywhere people live, they must fight to take or defend space; because we spend our lives here, it is imperative that we always keep our struggle in the streets.

Unpermitted street parties such as Pandamonium demonstrate that it is still possible to reclaim territory from the economy and the authorities.

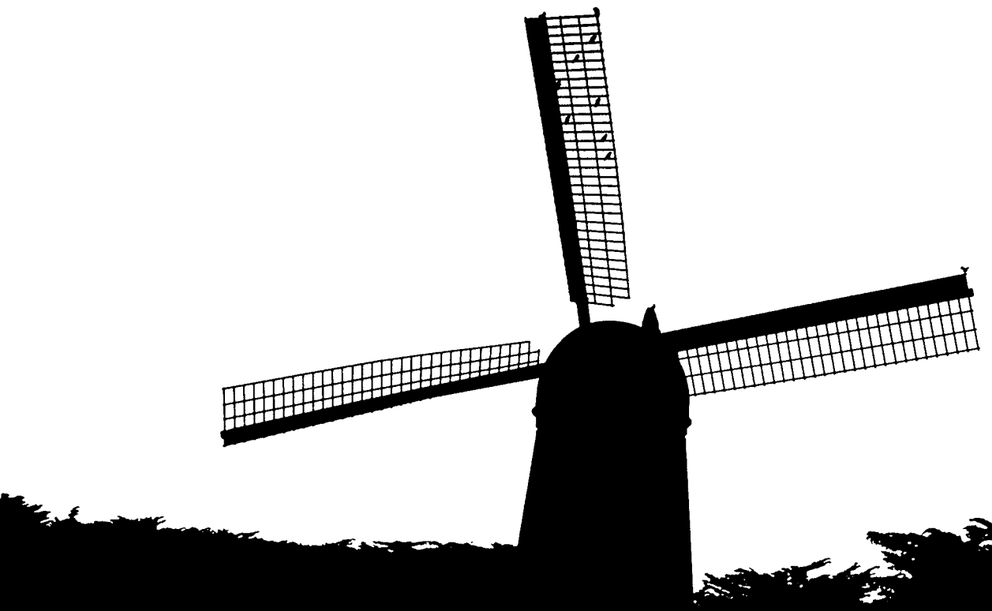
The Six Most Beautiful Minutes in the History of Cinema

Brener and Schurz

Sancho Panza enters a cinema in a provincial city. He is looking for Don Quixote and finds him sitting off to the side, staring at the screen. The theater is almost full; the balcony—which is a sort of giant terrace—is packed with raucous children. After several unsuccessful attempts to reach Don Quixote, Sancho reluctantly sits down in one of the lower seats, next to a little girl (Dulcinea?), who offers him a lollipop.

The screening has begun; it is a costume film. On the screen, knights in armor are riding along. Suddenly, a woman appears: she is in danger. Don Quixote abruptly rises, unsheathes his sword, rushes toward the screen, and, with several lunges, begins to shred the cloth. The woman and the knights are still visible on the screen, but the black slash opened by Don Quixote's sword grows ever larger, implacably devouring the images. In the end, nothing is left of the screen, and only the wooden structure supporting it remains visible. The outraged audience leaves the theater, but the children on the balcony continue their fanatical cheers for Don Quixote. Only the little girl down on the floor stares at him in disapproval.

What are we to do with our imaginations? Love them and believe in them to the point of having to destroy and falsify them. But when, in the end, they reveal themselves to be empty and unfulfilled, when they show the nullity of which they are made, only then can we pay the price for their truth and understand that Dulcinea—whom we have saved—cannot love us.



Anarchists Traveling through History:

Bakunin Escapes

"I shall continue to be an impossible person so long as those who are now possible remain possible."

Mikhail Bakunin—penniless aristocrat, overbearing anarchist, noble-blooded foe of hierarchy, founding member and director of dozens of nonexistent conspiracies, Marx's translator and staunchest opponent—completed few of the projects he started and participated in fewer successful uprisings. His chief accomplishment was the wild and wide-ranging life he led in service to his indomitable desire for social upheaval.

The student of anarchist theory can read elsewhere Bakunin's various arguments against religion (though at times he professed to believe in God), the State (though for much of his life, he was a Slav nationalist), and Marx's authoritarian blueprints for communist revolution (his critique of which has been entirely borne out by history—though there were authoritarian tendencies in his own thinking as well). Here, we barely have the space to recount Bakunin's most notorious adventure, his escape from Siberia after being sentenced twice to death and then to lifelong imprisonment and exile. In the international scope of his activities and vision, Bakunin prefigured the itinerant insurrectionism of many modern anarchists; considering his life, we can see that anti-authoritarian ideas have been connected with globe-trotting adventurism since long before globalization, "lifestyle politics," or the latest generation of dropout vagabonds.

Bakunin began the year 1848 in Brussels, where Marx happened to be putting the finishing touches on his *Communist Manifesto*.* He was already living in open disobedience of the Russian government, which had ordered him to return immediately over three years earlier and sentenced him *in absentia* to hard labor in Siberia. When the revolution broke out in France that February, he traveled there immediately and participated in its first month; similar uprisings soon ensued in other parts of Europe, and Bakunin set out for Poland, hoping to foment an insurrection that could spread to his native Russia. Later, in the confession he penned in prison, he reconstructed a possible conversation between himself and a fellow passenger:

"What are you traveling?"
To raise a rebellion.
"Against whom?"
Against the Emperor Nicholas.
"By what means?"
I scarcely know myself.
"Whither are you bound?"
For the Duchy of Posen.
"Why there in particular?"
Because the Poles tell me there is more life and movement there . . .

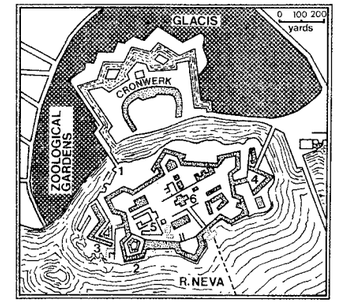
* Even at this early date, Marx and Engels made a bad impression upon Bakunin, who summarized their activities with words that could as easily describe their heirs today: "Vanity, malice, squabbles, theoretical intolerance and practical cowardice, endless theorizing about life, activity, and simplicity, and in practice total absence of life, action, or simplicity . . . The single word *bourgeois* has become an epithet which they repeat *ad nauseam*, though they themselves are ingrained *bourgeois* from head to foot. In such company you cannot breathe freely." For his part, Marx printed the rumor that Bakunin was an agent of the Tzar in his *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, while actual Russian agents were hot on Bakunin's trail. The conflict between the two was not to come to a head until 1872, when Marx effectively dissolved the First International to prevent Bakunin's influence from pushing it out of his control.

"What funds have you?"
Two thousand francs.
"And hopes of more?"
Nothing definite, but maybe I shall find some.
"You have friends and connections in the Duchy of Posen?"
Except a few young people whom I used to meet fairly often at Berlin University, I know not a soul there.
"Have you letters of introduction?"
Not one.
"How can you hope, alone and without friends, to match yourself against the Russian Tzar?"
The revolution is on my side, and in Posen I hope to be no longer alone.

En route to Poland, he passed through Frankfurt, Cologne, and Berlin, where he was arrested. The authorities released him, but barred him from traveling to his intended destination; he made his way instead to Breslau, and from there to a radical congress in Prague. At the end of the conference, an insurrection broke out in Prague; Bakunin remained tirelessly at the barricades until it was bloodily crushed a week later. He barely escaped to retrace his steps to Berlin, where he spent the summer; he ran out of money, as he was to again and again throughout his life, and his landlady seized his possessions in lieu of rent.

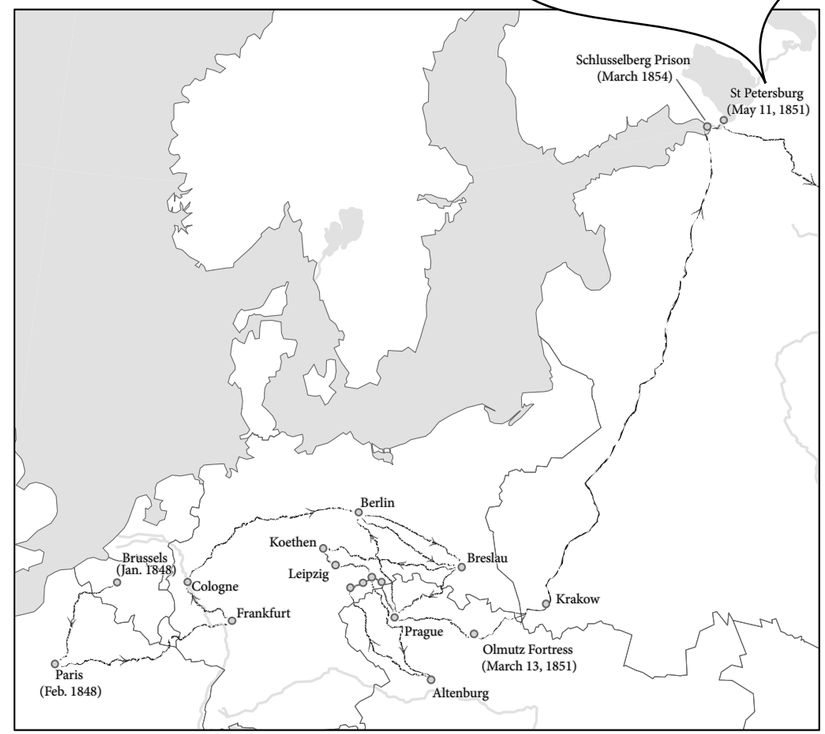
Hounded by police and government agents wherever he went—he was able to reenter Breslau only by borrowing scissors from a stranger on the train, with which to cut off his beard so as to slip unrecognized past the guards at the station—he passed the next several months moving from town to town, working night and day on various writing projects and apparently fruitless efforts to found revolutionary secret societies. By spring of the following year he had settled in Dresden, where he befriended Wagner, twenty years before the latter was to strike up his friendship with Nietzsche. Bakunin was hiding out at the house of a former conductor of the state opera, who had been fired for his controversial opinions; on April Fool's Day, 1849, he saw Wagner conduct Beethoven's Ninth Symphony at the Opera House, and approached him to declare that, "should all the music that has ever been written perish in the world-conflagration," they must pledge themselves to rescue that symphony, even at the peril of their lives.

A month later Dresden was in the midst of full-scale revolt and Bakunin was suspected of having burned that same Opera House to the ground. He played a central role in the uprising, coordinating the defense of the city in the face of invading troops even when all the other organizers had abandoned it, neither sleeping nor eating and shouting himself mute at the barricades. Finally, as the hand-to-hand fighting in the streets came to a bloody finish, he accepted Wagner's ill-informed suggestion that he withdraw to Chemnitz, where conditions were supposedly ripe for insurrection. Alas, this was not the case, and their first night there Bakunin and his comrades were woken from sleep by officers who informed them they were under arrest. Bakunin's sole remaining possessions were the seals of the "provisional government" that



PLAN OF THE FORTRESS OF ST. PETER AND ST. PAUL

1. Courtine of Catherine
2. Trubetskoi Bastioul
3. Trubetskoi Ravelin
4. Alexeyevskiy Ravelin
5. The Mint
6. Cathedral



had been organized during the uprising, thirteen thalers in cash, and a great quantity of compromising correspondence.

Even without the correspondence, several governments already had it in for him. He was imprisoned in Dresden for thirteen months, sentenced to death, but when he was finally led out of his cell it was not to be presented to the firing squad but to be turned over to the Austrian government. He passed the next nine months in a Prague prison, and the following two chained to a wall in the Olmutz fortress, where he was condemned to hang for high treason. Once again, at the end of his imprisonment he was not executed but turned over to the impatient Russian government. Bakunin had not been back to his homeland in eleven years, and when he stood once more upon its soil, he exclaimed, "It is good to be back in one's own country—if only to die there."

"Conversation is prohibited," answered the officer in charge.

However, he was spared the death penalty yet again. Instead, he was confined for six years: first in the fortress prison of Peter and Paul where so many other anarchists and revolutionaries were to perish, then in a cell on the shore of Lake Lagoda. During this time, he contracted scurvy, lost all his teeth, and sustained other permanent damage to his health. Finally, owing partly to his mother's efforts on his behalf, he was transferred to Siberia. On the way, he was permitted to stop briefly at his beloved childhood home, which he had not seen for seventeen years. He had left a brilliant, self-confident young rebel; he returned now at the apparent end of his life, a broken captive humbled before all-powerful enemies.

Exile in Siberia proved to be a vast improvement in his circumstances, however. Siberia was populated by many political exiles, men and women of great intelligence and strength of character, and they were permitted a great deal of freedom compared to prison life. Bakunin married a local woman, Antonia Kwiatkowski; to his credit as an anarchist in deed as well as word, he was accepting and supportive when she later openly carried on a romantic relationship with his friend Carlo Gambuzzi, with whom she had several children. The newlyweds lived at first in Tomsk, until Bakunin was able to arrange to move to Irkutsk.

In June of 1861, Bakunin finally had an opportunity to escape, and seized it without hesitation. A Siberian merchant asked that he make a business trip to the mouth of the river Amur; Bakunin set out with a letter that granted him free passage that far, but sternly specified that he had to be back in Irkutsk by the end of the season. By the second of July, he had arrived at Nikolaevsk at the mouth of the Amur, the furthest point to which he was permitted to travel. There, he hoodwinked a local official into putting him aboard a vessel bound for Kastri, then transferred mid-sea to an American sailing vessel bound for Japan. Bakunin spent his final night in Russia in the port of Olga before arriving on August fourth in Hakodate, Japan, where he blustered his way through an interview with a confused Russian consul. Three weeks later he was in Yokohama. Japan itself had only opened up to Western trading eight years earlier. Here, he had the surprising experience of running into his old comrade Wilhelm Heine from the Dresden insurrection.

To leave Japan, Bakunin arranged to embark on a boat bound for San Francisco. The night before the boat departed, the captain invited him to join in a dinner party he had arranged for an "honored guest." This guest turned out to be the Russian Consul-General, who had certainly heard of Bakunin and knew he shouldn't be roaming so far afield. Bakunin brazened out the entire dinner party, spinning absurd explanations as to how it was that he was permitted to be in Japan, and must have breathed a deep sigh of relief when the vessel set sail the following morning. Back in Siberia, the inquiry into his escape was to last more than two years.

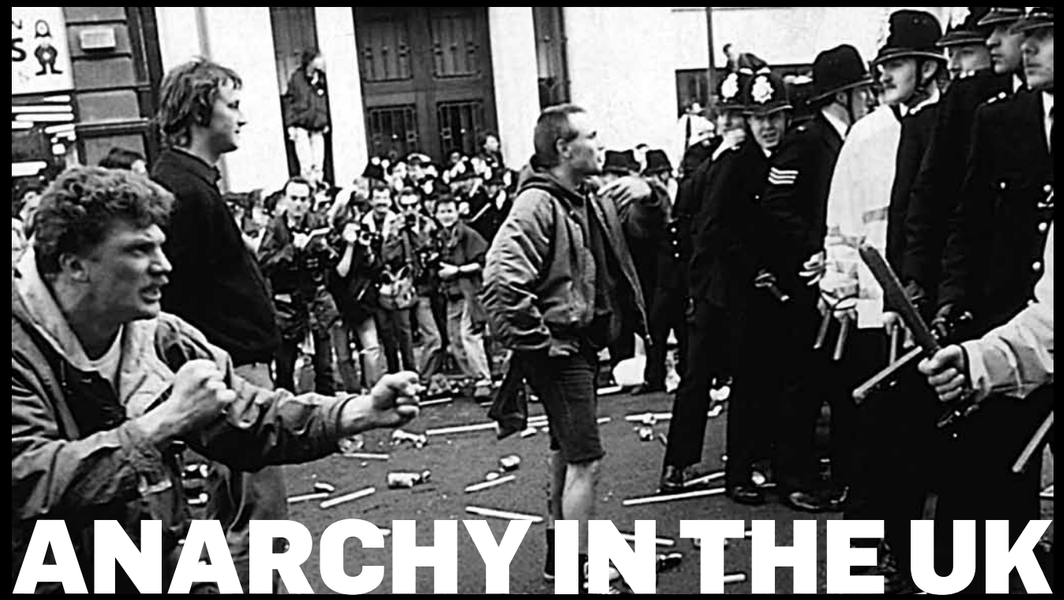
While crossing the Pacific, Bakunin struck up a friendship with a young English clergyman. The two spent long days in conversation, during which Bakunin spoke openly of his adventures and persisting revolutionary intentions—and, somewhat less characteristically, emphasized his sympathetic feelings towards Protestantism, going so far as to declare that when Antonia rejoined him in Europe he would endeavor to convert her to his new friend's faith. At the end of this trip, he borrowed $300 from the clergyman, which enabled him to reach New York by way of Panama. He wrote to his companions from the 1840s, matter-of-factly reporting in a single sentence that he had escaped from Siberia and was on his way to rejoin the revolutionary cause before immediately launching into a passionate entreaty for funds.

Once in New York, Bakunin took a little time to visit old friends he had known in Europe two decades earlier. He also traveled to Boston, where he made the acquaintance of Josiah Quincy, a former president of Harvard, and bumped into one of the Austrian officers who had conveyed him to prison from the Prague court house after he had been condemned to death. He interested himself in the American Civil War, which was raging at that time, and came to the conclusion that American democracy was as ruinous for liberty and equality as European despotism. Finally, he departed to cross the Atlantic.

Having landed in Liverpool and hastened to London, Bakunin arrived at the house of his old friend Alexander Herzen on December 27, 1861, after twelve years in prison and exile and seven months on the run. He stormed in just as Herzen and others were sitting down to dinner; noticing one of them reclining on the sofa, he exclaimed, "It is bad to be lying down. We must work, not lie down."

Bakunin's route out of exile in Siberia . . .

. . . to join his fellow expatriates in London.



ANARCHY IN THE UK

The Poll Tax Rebellion

March 1990, what a month!

All across the country, every night on the telly, every morning in the newspapers, all day conversations in the street, Poll Tax, Poll Tax, Poll Tax. Two years of continuous hard work against the tax in Scotland, a year everywhere else, and at last we seemed to be moving. Protests in Bristol, Brixton, Shepton Mallet, Leeds, Hackney . . . a rolling circus of hatred against the tax, each action angrier and more ferocious than the last. There was a real sense of excitement—what would happen next?

The March 31 demonstration felt like it was going to be the crescendo, the finale of everything that had gone before: it was the start of the long battle ahead, it would show the government and the councils what a fight they had on their hands—this was where everybody would be together in the center of "power," this was going to be the big one . . . and it was.

The Campaign

In the late 1980s, Margaret Thatcher's Tory government, which had already succeeded in imposing several bitter defeats on British workers and poor people, attempted to implement a new flat rate tax. Officially, the tax was called the "Community Charge," an instance of Orwellian doublespeak if there ever was one; but across the UK it was dubbed the Poll Tax, in reference to an extremely unpopular tax that had sparked a peasants' revolt in 1381. Because this tax demanded the same payments from everyone without reference to income, a great many people simply couldn't afford to pay it, and opposition to it was widespread from the outset.

Most of the Labour Party, Britain's equivalent of the US Democratic Party, paid lip service to this opposition, but still insisted that citizens would have to pay it. Their rationale was summed up thus by one representative: "This is a party that aspires to be in government . . . I don't believe such a party can afford selective amnesia when it comes to the law of the land." Others argued against a campaign of non-payment on orthodox Marxist grounds. One Socialist Workers' Party pamphlet read:

> Community organization stands in stark contrast to the power of workers organized in the workplace. Community politics diverts people away from the means to win, from the need to mobilize working class activity on a collective basis. And by putting the emphasis on the individual's will to resist, difficulties and defeats will be the responsibility of the individual alone . . .
>
> The biggest danger for socialists is to substitute individual non-payment organized through community campaigns for mass working class action.

This rhetoric will sound all too familiar to anarchists who have more recently been subjected to arguments against people organizing themselves within their communities as they see fit, rather than according to the dictates of a power-hungry vanguard.

Despite most established organizations refusing to support non-payment, grassroots Anti-Poll Tax Unions sprang up everywhere to encourage and facilitate this form of resistance. Based in informal circles of friends and neighbors, these groups swiftly picked up steam and began to coordinate their actions on a national level. A typical group would cover its neighborhood in posters, set up literature tables on the street, go door to door distributing information, hold weekly meetings, and organize other regular events. Many opened offices with public hours and set up telephone hotlines to provide support for those who could not or would not pay.

This campaign drew attention to the massive numbers of people who were unwilling to pay the tax, which in turn strengthened the courage and resolve of non-payers. Anti-Poll Tax activists circulated petitions committing to non-payment, held public burnings of tax forms, and attacked local offices accepting tax payments. Canvassers who attempted to deliver the forms were also threatened or attacked. Other activists crippled the judicial system by means of delaying tactics, and when non-payers were taken to court, local Unions provided legal support and volunteers to accompany them through the judicial process.

In some cases, bailiffs were sent out to requisition property from those who did not pay; activists distributed information about the limits of bailiff's legal rights, and in many cases mobilized throngs to defend people's houses from their incursions. Phone trees were often used to convene a crowd immediately at a house at which a bailiff was due; some bailiffs had their own houses attacked by angry mobs.

As a result of all this activity, many councils could not recruit the staff to implement the

new tax, while Anti-Poll Tax Unions received more and more volunteers. In the end, over seventeen million people refused to pay the tax—practically a quarter of the eligible population!

All this local activity was complemented by a series of increasingly confrontational protests. Towns all across Britain held local demonstrations. In early March of 1990, five thousand people turned out for an event in Bristol, and when the police attempted to arrest a few of them, the crowd pulled them free, kicking one arresting officer unconscious and hauling another six officers out of their van. The next day, in London, at a demonstration of equal numbers, protesters attempted to enter the council meeting at the town hall. The police charged, and in the ensuing riot fifty corporate shop windows were smashed.

The stage was now set for the nationwide demonstration that had been called for March 31. There was some conflict over what to anticipate: Militant, the left wing of the Labour party, which had attempted to obstruct and co-opt radical organizing since the beginning of the campaign, at first only expected 20,000 people to turn out. This gross underestimation was the result of their being totally out of touch with the grass roots of the Anti-Poll Tax movement. They had arranged for the march to end in a rally at Trafalgar Square, but they realized only three days before the event that the crowd would probably exceed the square's 60,000-person capacity. They requested permission to divert the march to Hyde Park, but the police refused.

The riot that ensued was the biggest in recent British history and, together with the non-payment campaign, had far-reaching consequences throughout British society.

The Riot

In the days before the demonstration, two feeder marches followed the routes of the two armies of the Peasants Revolt of 1381. These arrived in South London at Kennington Park, south of the River Thames, on March 31; starting at noon, they were joined by between 180,000 and 250,000 people.

The march set off from Kennington Park at one-thirty in the afternoon, and began moving faster than planned because anarchists pushed open the main gates of the park so people were not forced through the smaller side gates. This meant that the march spilled over onto both sides of the road and stayed that way despite police and stewarding efforts.

An hour later, Trafalgar Square was nearing capacity. Unable to continue moving into the Square, the huge march slowed down and eventually stopped in Whitehall. The police, fearing a surge towards the newly installed security gates of Downing Street, blocked off the top and bottom of Whitehall. The section of the march which stopped opposite the Downing Street entrance happened to contain a large number of anarchists and a group called Bikers Against The Poll Tax, all of whom were angered by several heavy-handed arrests, including one of a man in a wheelchair.

Meanwhile, the tail end of the march had been diverted at the Parliament Square end of Whitehall. A large Class War banner was at the head of this diverted and unpoliced march. They led the march up the Embankment for a few hundred yards and then turned off up Richmond Terrace, bringing the diverted march out into Whitehall, directly opposite the entrance of Downing Street.

Mounted riot police were brought up and charged the crowd, ostensibly to clear people out of Whitehall—despite both retreat and advance being blocked by further lines of police. The Whitehall section of the march resisted and eventually fought its way out into Trafalgar Square.

The mounted riot police then charged straight into the packed crowds in Trafalgar Square. Soon thereafter, four riot vans drove directly into the crowd outside the South African Embassy, apparently attempting to force their way through to the entrance to Whitehall where police were re-grouping. The crowd attacked the vans with sticks, scaffolding poles, and other items in order to slow them down and protect the lives of those in their path.

The police then closed all the main Underground stations in the area and sealed the southern exits of Trafalgar Square, making it difficult to disperse. Buses had been parked south of the river, so many people tried to move south. Sections of the crowd, reported to be unemployed coal miners, climbed scaffolding and rained debris on the police below. The builders' portakabins below the scaffolding were set on fire, followed by a room in the South African Embassy on the other side of the Square. The smoke from the two fires caused near darkness in the Square.

The police finally opened the southern exits of the Square and slowly forced people out. A large section of the crowd was moved back down Northumberland Avenue and eventually allowed over the River Thames to find their way back to their buses. Two other sections were pushed north into the West End, where they commenced wrecking and looting. Police ordered all pubs in the area to close; together with apparently random police assaults on shoppers, spectators, and tourists, this heightened tensions by forcing drunken and disgruntled crowds onto the streets.

Fighting between rioters and police continued until three in the morning. Rioters were selective in their choice of targets: they attacked The Body Shop, McDonalds, Barclays Bank, Tie Rack, Armani, Ratners, National Westminster Bank, and Liberty's, as well as banks, Stringfellow's nightclub, and car showrooms. Expensive cars such as Porsches and Jaguars were overturned and set on fire, while other potential targets—such as pubs, small shops, older cars, and the offices of the Irish airline Aer Lingus—were left untouched.

The Aftermath

The riot left more than forty-five police injured, and ten times that many human beings. Three-hundred-forty-one people were arrested during it, and another hundred and fifty were arrested in the course of a police inquiry that included dawn raids on the houses of local Anti-Poll Tax activists and tabloids printing photos of police suspects.

Not only the Thatcher government, but also the police, major labor unions, and the Labour Party all blamed the riot on extremists, hoping thus to discredit the non-payment movement. But membership in Anti-Poll Tax Unions tripled in the weeks following the riot; it had not alienated the public, but instead catalyzed revolt and shaken the foundations of power.

To handle the legal fallout of the riot, the Trafalgar Square Defendants' Campaign was set up: an independent, defendant-controlled group committed to unconditional support of all defendants and to providing general legal support for all involved in resistance to the poll tax. The front organization through which Militant attempted to control the Anti-Poll Tax movement had initially condemned the rioting and looked to wash its hands of the arrestees; now it belatedly attempted to set up a competing group of its own, but ultimately was forced to concede defeat and support the Trafalgar Square Defendants' Campaign.

The Campaign was mysteriously able to acquire more than fifty hours of police video tapes covering the riot. These contributed to the acquittals of a great number of defendants, as they proved that the police had fabricated and inflated many charges. The Campaign also organized a solidarity demonstration and march the following October, which was again violently attacked by police. This time, however, the legal support network was organized well enough that this was a PR disaster for the authorities. In conjunction with the trials of the demonstrators of March 31, this confirmed serious public doubts about the policing methods which had been introduced during the previous decade.

Margaret Thatcher resigned as Prime Minister before the end of the year; in his first parliamentary speech as Prime Minister, her successor John Major announced that the Poll Tax would be abolished. Thatcher's downfall is largely traced to the debacle surrounding the attempt to introduce the Poll Tax.

The Poll Tax rebellion also called into question the legitimacy of the British left wing. Almost all its parties and organizations had opposed a non-payment campaign, and yet it was exactly such a campaign that defeated the Poll Tax and the politicians who instituted it. Just four months after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Poll Tax riot offered a vivid image of what effective political activity looked like, in contrast to the bumbling and obstructing of the Left.

Demonstrators making a fuss in downtown London.

The Moral of the Story

For those of us who cut our teeth in the wave of anticapitalist activity that reached its peak following the WTO protests in Seattle, the struggle against the Poll Tax is one of the success stories of the previous generation of anarchists. The non-hierarchical, informal organization of the Anti-Poll Tax movement prefigured our own organizational structures;* the images of people fighting the police and destroying corporate property entered our collective subconscious as punk rock record covers, anarchist poster designs, and television news footage, even if we didn't know the story behind them. They took flesh once again when we fought the police at the FTAA ministerial in Quebec City and smashed the windows of corporations and police stations after the last Presidential Inauguration.

There are some salient differences between the so-called Anti-Globalization movement in the US and the Anti-Poll Tax movement in Britain. In its favor, the Anti-Poll Tax movement was more widespread throughout the UK than the Anti-Globalization movement ever was in the US, in all likelihood because it was immediately relevant to the needs of the greater part of the population. It's interesting to note that its central focus was a lifestyle choice—non-payment, essentially a form of "dropping out"—that cut across subcultural lines. The radical core of the Anti-Globalization movement, by contrast, generally failed to get beyond abstract expressions of solidarity with struggles elsewhere in the world to provide concrete ways for people in the US to solve the problems of their own lives. When Anti-Globalization activists did attempt to do so, it was often by attempting to help others according to the charity model, not finding common cause with them on an equal footing. The exception to this, the wave of anti-work dropout activity that accompanied the Anti-Globalization movement (which some attribute to or blame on the CrimethInc. ex-Workers' Collective), failed to popularize practicable tactics beyond a couple subcultural milieus. To profit from the example of the Poll Tax rebellion, radicals in the US must demonstrate and publicize effective strategies for self-liberation and set up infrastructures like the Anti-Poll Tax Unions that enable massive numbers of people to make use of them.

Unlike the Anti-Globalization movement, on the other hand, the Anti-Poll Tax movement was essentially a single-issue campaign, and such campaigns have inherent limitations. Though they can mobilize massive numbers of people, they often fail to connect the participants beyond the specific matter in question or address other forms of injustice; likewise, they provide few points of departure for broader struggle or perspective and they tend to subsume larger revolutionary projects to their own ends. In contrast to most single-issue campaigns, the Anti-Poll Tax campaign addressed an issue that affected just about everyone, so it was ideal for building a nationwide mass movement; but once the Poll Tax was called off, the movement addressing it passed on as well, and its momentum was only partially salvaged by subsequent movements. It is important to accomplish concrete goals—if we don't, we'll never build up the morale for revolution; but in struggling to do so, we shouldn't suppress or postpone the greater project of building the communities and consciousness necessary to go beyond mere piecemeal defensive actions to a full-scale assault on hierarchy itself.

* One might trace a direct lineage from the anarchists who participated in the Anti-Poll Tax campaign to the activists of the British anti-roads movement of the following years, which blossomed into the Reclaim the Streets phenomenon—the immediate predecessor to the explosion of the Anti-Globalization movement at the Seattle protests.

Appendix: Two Testimonials

Taken from ACAB Press' Poll Tax Riot *pamphlet, which features several more such accounts; for further reading, try Danny Burns'* Poll Tax Rebellion, *an insightful and exceptionally thorough recounting of the campaign against the Poll Tax.*

It was only the second demonstration that I'd been to and I didn't really know what to expect, but I decided that I was not going to miss it, so I booked a babysitter for the weekend and got a train down to London. The atmosphere on arriving at Kennington Park was like a carnival. Bands were playing, the sun was hot, thousands of people were out to demonstrate their united opposition to the Poll Tax. It looked like it was going to be a good day!

The sound of a band of drummers drew me like a moth to light, a stick and an old discarded beer can to mark the rhythm and we were off. It was a joyful experience, dancing and shouting through the streets virtually all the way to Trafalgar Square. When we reached the Parliament end of Whitehall, a line of police had blocked the road and the crowd was diverted towards the Embankment. We could see behind the police lines rows of mounted police, ominously still and waiting. That's when I felt my first pangs of fear and anger. I remember thinking that they had some nasty plans for us, visions of being fodder for exercises in crowd control. The police in the lines looked incredibly smug.

I continued with the crowd, marching up Northumberland Avenue, the excitement and tension increasing as the band came to a standstill as we entered Trafalgar Square. The energy became warlike, the beating of the drums and the chanting seeming to get louder and louder and the crowd more and more dense as thousands more swept up Northumberland Avenue. I pushed my way through to the Whitehall junction where it became apparent that something had already started. A man was fighting his way back through the crowd—a real sense of panic hit me as I heard him shouting, "Get any kids out of the way, they're going to charge." Images sped through my mind of the mothers with young kids, old people, disabled people that I had seen on the march. They were all here in the Square, the bastards were going to charge us and there was no way out! Bloodbath! Severe panic.

I pushed my way towards the junction with the Strand, shouting the warning for those more vulnerable to try to get out. There was another police line across St. Martins Lane and the only road free for exit was the Strand. As I looked up the length of the road, I saw a police van speeding towards us. I got out of the road and watched in horror as it sped in towards the crowd and screeched to a halt as an unsuspecting body flew through the air on impact and landed in a heap on the side of the road. This was too much! My anger exploded and I ran towards the van screaming and shouting and pulled open the door on the driver's side, screaming blue murder as the terrified officer inside wrenched the door closed. I spat, banged on the windows, thought of broken glass, didn't want to cut my hands, looking for something to throw, something to hit with.

Everything was happening at once, the man in the road with people bending over him, people crying, me shouting, spitting, furious at the police. A woman gently rocking her baby, rhythmically, protectively as she made her way across the road away from the violence. I shouted at a policewoman in the lines to let her through with her baby, realizing as I did so that it was the same policewoman I had just been screaming and spitting at when the van had hit its victim. I swallowed my fear as I walked with the woman right up to the police line, stopping just long enough to see that she got through to safety, then racing back to where the van was, thanking my fate they hadn't grabbed me.

There was a frustrating lack of anything to smash the van windows with; I pulled at something at the side of a building, it wouldn't come loose. Wires attached, a light of some kind, leave it! Hands banging the glass again, feet kicking, not enough people! Things being thrown, we need more people, shit why wouldn't the fucking glass break! Break away for a minute, I want a good hard brick. Nothing around. I see a woman sobbing on the curb, uncontrolled sobbing helplessly. I had to get her out of the crowd, she'd be trampled. I remembered being in a similar state on the tube once and home seeming like a million miles away. I managed to get her to her feet and then some other people with her took over and led her down the edge of the crowded road away from the battle zone.

A man was fighting his way back through the crowd—a real sense of panic hit me as I heard him shouting, "Get any kids out of the way, they're going to charge." Images sped through my mind of the mothers with young kids, old people, disabled people that I had seen. They were all here in the Square, the bastards were going to charge us and there was no way out!

I was at the back of the crowd now and couldn't get back near the van. I pushed my way through. The mounted police had already charged and the police now had some measure of control and were moving people out of Trafalgar Square down the Strand, telling everyone to "Go home, go home." A young black boy, about twelve or thirteen years old, yelled back at them "We ain't got homes to go to mate!" I smiled, I didn't want to go home either. I managed to get down a side street and back onto Northumberland Avenue. At the back of the crowd again, a crowd buzzing with its own energy. Occasional bursts of electricity as the riot cops charged at the front and the whole crowd swarmed back in a panic then closed up again. I was terrified of being trampled and made my way towards the side of the road where the crush was less intense when the panic-stricken running broke out.

Next thing I was up against the wall and riot cops were charging straight at us. I couldn't move anywhere and was terrified as they came within a few feet, truncheons raised, manic frenzied looks on their faces. A moment later they were gone, swallowed from my view as the crowd stood its ground and surged forward again. That was my first view of riot cops in action and I realized how frightened I was. No questions asked before the truncheon came down on your head. I started looking for missiles to hand to those who were taller, could see where they were aiming, and were better shots.

Another rush from the crowd, running madly. Somebody grabbed me from behind. I spun around. "It's all right, it's only me." A friend, thank god. Hands held. "Don't run, that's what they want." I'm running because I don't want to get trampled. We get out of the crowd for a breather, talking excitedly, then look down the road to see smoke billowing out, something's on fire. The news spread quickly down to us: "What's burning?" "South Africa House," "South Africa House has gone up in flames." Sheer ecstasy. The joy on people's faces as this news spread.

After this, we made our way back up Northumberland Avenue and tried to break through the police lines. I got thrown back, separated and stayed on the outskirts 'til I spotted some friends again. We decided to go and have drink 'cause we all needed a break.

We made our way to Covent Garden and were amazed to see, as we ordered our tea, hundreds of coppers swarming through the place. We thought we'd just left the riot! "Look through there, broken windows." We crossed over and couldn't believe our eyes, the whole street had been wrecked. Glass everywhere, police everywhere, the banks smashed, the shops smashed. We'd arrived in the wake of a frenzy of ecstatic smashing and looting. It was the perfect scene to end the day with, as exhaustion overtook us and we headed home to watch the news on the telly.

RT

Hang around in Kensington Park watching the march go by. After a few thousand have passed we see some friends and join them. Excited talk: "Have you seen the route?" "Yeah. Goes past Downing Street!" "Nice weather for it!" Five minutes into the march we hear a loud crash. "Ladbrokes' windows have gone through," somebody says. *Christ, already!* I think, but it turns out to be the sound of the cops' traffic markers being tipped over. For about twenty minutes every marker is pushed over. Lots of noise. Cheering and stuff. The cops lose control and people march on both sides of the road. A cop chases our mate for knocking another cone over. The cop gives up. Just past Lambeth railway bridge, the cops try to take an anarchist flag from the march. A few scuffles. I think someone got arrested. Couldn't see clearly though. Keep on marching.

We cross Lambeth Bridge and go towards Parliament. Nothing much going on. A few angry chants. Take a quick rest on the grass before Whitehall. Going down towards Downing Street was slow as the crowd was thick. We decide to rest again as we get to the Ministry of Defense opposite Downing Street. Nice bit of greenery to sit down and see if anything happens. By the line of coppers protecting Downing Street is a group of about two hundred people who are shouting and occasionally throwing cans and bits of placard. This goes on for about thirty minutes. More people stood by the M.O.D. Eventually the cops block off Whitehall and divert the march. A friend and I piss off a Sky TV crew who are trying to film the trouble by shouting rude things about Rupert Murdoch over each attempt they make to film their reports. They fuck off to Trafalgar Square.

The trouble is getting heavier and more people are either stopping or getting involved. The police bring in some riot cops—some mounted, others in little snatch squads. The next twenty minutes is pretty confusing. There's some hand to hand fighting and some missile throwing. A few charges by the cops. A big cheer goes up when a massive Class War banner arrives. Our lot get split up a few times. The horses charge the crowd and push us behind the M.O.D. building. Immediately a small barricade is built out of building rubbish from skips [dumpsters] in the yard. A roll of barbed wire (!) is dragged across the top of the barricade. The mounted cops don't charge again. By this time the adrenalin is flowing pretty neatly. I pick up a piece of masonry from out of a skip and smash it smaller. A cop sees me doing this but I don't care. The M.O.D. windows start to get trashed. I love it. The M.O.D.!

My first shot hits a window frame then the second one hits the wall. Oh well. More windows get done. My friends regroup and I moan at them to find some food. Convinced that we won't miss much due to the likelihood of it getting much harder we wander off. At Charing Cross Road we lose one of our group when she heads off to go to the toilet. We walk into the punch-up that's happening down by the South African Embassy. I throw a bottle at a passing riot van and miss. Shit. I hope my luck gets better. When we reach the Strand entrance to Trafalgar Square it's just a fucking riot. The cops have driven two vans into the crowd and have been surrounded. Very brave people are right next to the van bricking the windows and shoving metal barriers underneath the wheels to stop it from moving. A snatch squad charges us and we scatter in all directions. I lose contact with everyone. Walk around for a bit. Shit! Lost'em.

Trundle back to the fighting and see that the Army Careers' shop has had its window smashed. So nice. I want to do something now. Chaos everywhere. I get a rock and wait by Midland Bank for the crowd to clear a path and then turn around and chuck the rock into the plate glass. Bang. The rock splinters everywhere and the window is even dented. I apologize to a woman who had jumped at the unexpected noise. Walking off I see the need for keeping my head in the next few hours. About a hundred yards down the Strand is a large group of spectators. One woman says to me after I chuck a stone at a riot van, "That was pointless." I don't argue. I suppose I'd rather do what I can than just watch. At the South African Embassy some people pick up a crash barrier. I take hold of one end and we push it through an Embassy window. I shout at them to do the next one but they walk away. A punk guy tells me to "just attack the cops, not property." I ask him why. "Because I said so!" he tells me.

At Trafalgar Square someone I recognize tells me that one of the group has been injured by a badly aimed rock. I walk around the crowd and find him. Luckily he's not seriously injured. Just

We couldn't believe our eyes; the whole street had been wrecked. Glass everywhere, police everywhere, the banks smashed, the shops smashed. We'd arrived in the wake of a frenzy of ecstatic smashing and looting. It was the perfect scene to end the day.

a bit dazed and pissed off at having to piss the rest of the fun. After chatting for ten minutes we see black smoke in the air. Hum! What's on fire? I say goodbye and walk back to Trafalgar Square. Jesus! The portakabins on Grand Buildings have been set ablaze. Massive fires climb up the side of this office development. I wonder how much more mental it's gonna go. I still can't see any of my friends in the area but over on the left I can see that somebody's set light to the South African Embassy. I love the person who did that!

Spend an hour looking all over the Square for someone I know. I must have walked past all the serious hand-to-hand fighting down by St. Martin's In The Fields, completely oblivious to what was happening. I see a police coach leave its post at the South Africa Embassy and immediately a group of twenty people rush over and attack the embassy with sticks and rocks. Still can't find any friends. I leave the area to get some food as I'm really hungry and knackered. Couldn't get back from Charing Cross Road to the National Gallery so I have to take the long way round. Eventually I rest up on the grass opposite Canada House. Watching the policing while eating my grub reveals that the police are like headless chickens. They are attempting to clear the area but instead of pushing us south to the Thames, they are pushing people into the West End. After about ten minutes the police send mounted cops into the crowd in front of Pall Mall. Really stupid. The crowd is incensed. Some people drag metal crash barriers into the road to barricade it off. A few gaps are left to let people get through. I drag another barrier into the road and hang around. Someone then pulls all the barriers back to the side of the road. Anyway the horses don't charge again.

In Pall Mall the crowd is drifting off. I watch groups of people make their way out of the riot area. The cops are still pushing them along. Suddenly a group of about five hundred people are forced together at the bottom of Haymarket and my imagination is on overtime. Why are the police pushing us into the heart of the West End? We are a stone's throw away from the capital's most luxurious stores! We weave in and out of the traffic and reach Piccadilly Circus. All the time the chanting continues: "No Poll Tax . . . No Poll Tax." This is so good. Some people sit down but such protest isn't really in many people's minds. One step, two steps and we walk into Regent Street. This is unbelievable. More chanting, traffic still flowing. We are three hundred yards into Regent Street. Someone says "A chance to do some real shopping." I don't know anyone here but exchange a few smiles with a group of casuals.

Smash! The first window goes in. So excellent. The cops are at the back of us. They charge, but this just pushes us further and faster. More plate glass goes through. I must do some. I run down a side road to a skip and put some large bits of masonry in a carrier bag. Back to Regent Street and I dump them in the road. Take one for myself and pull my hood up and scarf over my face. Take aim. I can't miss this time. Whack! A big hole appears in the fancy shop window. Keep on going. Up to the traffic lights at Oxford Circus. Pick up a paving stone and break it up in front of the cars parked at the lights. I don't care. Turn around and crack . . . plate glass windows. Keep on moving. I look in a skip for more rocks but it's full of plastic and wood. A man comes down the road and sees me all masked up and frantically looking for rocks in black sacks. He says something but I can't understand his accent. He turns into Regent Street to witness the trashing.

Further . . . a cop van drives round to the top of the crowd and passes. It stops then reverses and retreats. The sound of breaking glass continues. At Portland Place after the BBC and the BBC Shop are smashed up, we run out of shops to trash. I mill about and am amazed by how most of the crowd have disappeared down side roads. It's like the riot popped up, did its stuff, then became invisible at the click of a thumb. I take a side road to head for the West End again. Even here a bank has been attacked. I sit for a while but get a cramp in my leg. About twenty cops walk past. I'm hopping on one leg trying to unlock the cramp and appear as normal as possible. They walk past towards Regent Street. Round the corner in Goodge Street someone attacks the Iran Airlines shop with a rubbish bin but the windows don't smash. I catch a tube to Charing Cross but the police have sealed off three stations and I have to get off at Tottenham Court Road. One stop down the line! As I walk into Cambridge Circus I find the riot again. I thought that Regent Street was the only thing happening but the cops are using horses up here. Tourists and theater-goers are confused . . . and interested. I sit by a totally trashed bank and talk to someone who is loving it also. Smiles all around. Talk to a tourist who is lost. Explain about the Poll Tax and the riot. She's really excellent about it.

Stroll to Charing Cross Road. Fuck, some serious looting is going on here. Loads of shops attacked. At a music shop I join a group of people pulling stuff from the window. I pull the shutter up a bit and see what's left. Very little. Where are the cops? I talk to an Irish bloke who's had his foot stepped on by a cop horse. Talk a bit more then I leave the area as I've hung around for too long and feel conspicuous. Up to Tottenham Court Road where the police are chasing people around. They push the crowd into Oxford Street to give them new shops to smash and loot. A small fire is burning by the tube entrance. More cops arrive. It's obvious that the police have lost all control. Their numbers are small and the cops that have been on duty since this morning have yet to be replaced. They've lost.

Really tired now and my leg still hurts. I go down Charing Cross Road again. Past the fucked up shops. Past the wrecked TransAm sports car. Must get a train. Get back to see the news.

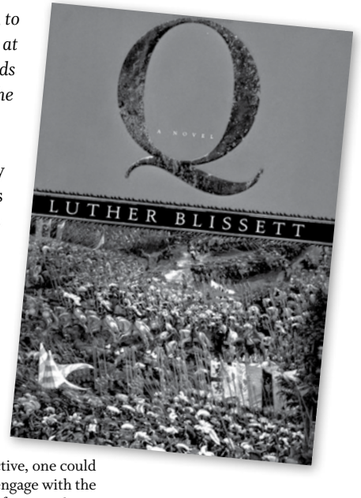
That night I am out drinking and dancing, but it's only a few days later—when no one I know has been nicked yet—that I realize what a good mood I've been in. This lasts a couple of weeks, and during that time I have several "political" conversations of a kind I thought I'd given up. Maybe it's coming back into fashion.

Q

*by Luther Blissett**

Harcourt, 2004

It is 1519, the opening of a century of religious upheaval, peasant revolt, heresy, and Inquisition.† A student in Wittenburg meets radical theologian Thomas Müntzer, just two years after Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the door of the cathedral there and began the Protestant Reformation.‡ In the same year a mysterious papal agent sets in motion a project of espionage and disruption against Luther and those who took Luther's challenge to the Catholic Church even further. So begins the story told in *Q*.



It is my destiny to survive, always, to go on living in defeat, taking it a little at a time . . . This is a game that demands to be played to the end; if that is the case, then so be it.

The student, who adopts many names as he traverses Europe, goes on to participate in the upheavals and narrowly escape the inquisitions and massacres of the 16th Century. Like Emmett Grogan in his exaggerated autobiography *Ringolevio*, one can almost read this character as the trans-historical ghost of revolt, surviving impossibly from one conflagration to take this on; from a historical perspective, one could charge that this amounts to a refusal to engage with the radicals of that day on their own terms. Of course, *Q* was intentionally written as an action novel, which limits its philosophical and historical potential but perhaps opens up other possibilities.

* Luther Blissett is a "collective identity" used here as a nom de plume by four Italian authors, who've since continued writing under the name Wu Ming. For details about the exploits of those who took on the name Luther Blissett and now Wu Ming, try www.lutherblissett.net and www.wumingfoundation.com.

† Of the numerous historical accounts of this period of revolt and radicalism, Norman Cohn's *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, Friedrich Engels' *The Peasant Wars*, and George Huntston Williams' *The Radical Reformation* offer good starting places—though Cohn and Engels especially view these events through authoritarian lenses of their own.

‡ Having read a little on the metaphysical controversies of that era, your grumpy editor fears that *Q* does not adequately explore the religious beliefs of the rebels it depicts. From a philosophical perspective, this is a missed opportunity, though it would take a very different book

to another.* Alongside his story appear the letters and diary entries of his lifelong foe, the papal spy Qoelet, who participates in all this as well, albeit fighting for the other side. Together they provide a fictional firsthand account of over three decades of European history.

In addition to retelling the radical events surrounding the Reformation, *Q* functions as a critical allegory of the social movements of the 20th century. The book should be read with this in mind, though the metaphor can be thin at times,† and a critique of machismo and sexism is also lacking.‡ One could interpret passages such as Chapter 54, which consists almost entirely of male characters conversing while being fellated by women described only by the size of their breasts, as biting caricatures of the worst sexism reproduced by supposed radicals; but these make for unpleasant reading all the same, and the absence of the women's liberation movement from the allegory speaks to a sexism that runs deeper than a merely narrative weakness in the story. Strong female characters like Ottilie Müntzer and Ursula Jost do not offset this.

Like Balestrini's *The Unseen*, reviewed in the previous issue of *Rolling Thunder*, *Q* details the horrors and defeats that frequently are engendered as much by our own actions as by those of our enemies; in view of these, it offers proposals as to how we can advance our projects of revolt today. There are two main strategic proposals put forward. The first is an individual and subjective proposal: we should throw ourselves into the struggles of our time consciously and strategically, so that even in defeat we still have a trajectory or life project to see through to the end. The second proposal regards how we might use the novel itself.

The mirror reflects the years all at once, but there's still a quickness in the eyes. Something that must have flashed on the barricades of Münster, or among the peasant armies of Thuringia. Something that wasn't lost along the journey, because the journey couldn't kill it. Madness? No, but as Perna put it: the desire to see how things will end.

* Editing this review late at night in the convergence center for the protests at this year's Democratic National Convention, I can imagine the protagonist stumbling in unnoticed, white-haired and wizened, to witness the foolishness of the latest generation.

† Discussion of the protagonist's relationship to various wealthy merchants, and what this means in the context of both the metaphor and story itself, is beyond the scope of this review.

‡ The authors are reported to have taken steps to remedy this in their more recent work.

Agency is a difficult thing. It can fall into your lap when you least expect it and evade the most fanatical who desire it. The protagonist of *Q* is thrown into a historical situation beyond his choosing and control, but within that space he finds opportunities to act. His choices, however, lead to horrors just as often as to liberating experiences; every night he is haunted by the ghosts of his slain comrades. It is not until the end of the novel that he is able to reflect on his past and choose his battles and actions consciously, carrying on his life project even into old age to "see how things will end" in a way of his choosing. The stories of the Münster commune and Jan Van Batenburg offer a sobering warning to radicals who fixate on violence and destruction as ends in themselves. We can reject the degeneration of revolt to a matter of mere military force without dismissing our desire for a new world or rejecting the need for force to make that desire reality.

In the fog of diffuse dissent you can really cover some ground.

In the final section of *Q*, the protagonist and his comrades begin distributing a book called "The Benefits of Christ Crucified": "a cunning little book, designed to stir up endless hornets' nests, because it's ambiguous in its content and expressed in a language anyone can understand. A masterpiece of dissimulation, and it's already causing all manner of dissent." Though the content of the book is not particularly radical, they breathe radical life into it by presenting it in heretical sermons and putting it into the hands of the right people. They use the book to spread revolt, draw out their enemies, and give themselves space to avoid and escape the Inquisition. This book, of course, is a metaphor for *Q* itself. Mirroring its ambiguity and cunning, *Q* is written in the simple style of an action novel and published by corporate publishing giant Harcourt, yet it contains an undeniable glimmer of radicalism that makes it perfect for us to use for our own ends.

I smile. No plan can take everything into account. Other people will raise their heads, others will desert. Time will go on spreading victory and defeat among those who pursue the struggle… We deserve the warmth of baths. May the days be aimless. Do not advance the action according to a plan.

When the Prisoners Ran Walpole:

A True Story in the Movement for Prison Abolition

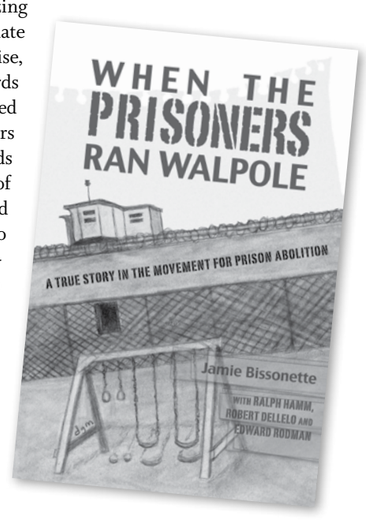
by Jamie Bissonette

South End Press, 2008; www.southendpress.org

This book tells the powerful story of a prisoners' union in Walpole, Massachusetts; struggling for dignity, self-organization, and self-defense, they won control of the prison for two months. The story is meticulously researched and well presented; it draws heavily from interviews with prisoners who took part, supporters on the outside, civilian observers inside the prison, and politicians and bureaucrats who were trying to save their careers while all this was going on.

This struggle, which began for the politicians and outside supporters as an attempt at reform and for the prisoners as a fight for their humanity, makes the most convincing testament for prison abolition I have ever encountered. With the impartial grace of a documentarian but a clear sympathy for the prisoners, Bissonette maps out the specific history and all the contextual factors and power plays. In the process, she brings up a wealth of related themes that deserve consideration; these include the importance of building racial equality in order to challenge authority, the necessity of a commonly held discipline in the face of severe repression, the privileged and recuperating role that outside support activists can play, the conflict between fighting for legal rights and fighting for freedom and dignity, and the ultimate futility of attempts to reform the state or any of its institutions. In this latter point, Bissonette has the sensitivity to treat reformist politicians and bureaucrats as human beings, exploring their desires, motivations, and conflicts and showing their sincere hypocrisy as they ultimately fail to change the system from within. Rather than a monolithic view of a uniform state, the reader receives a complex introduction to the power struggles between the various institutions, and thus a more nuanced understanding of the impossibility of reform. In the conclusion, Bissonette leaves no doubt that her personal approach is not a soap opera analysis of politics. She answers liberal hand-wringing about the failure of the prison system by arguing that it works extremely well at achieving its real purpose, which she describes in clear terms.

One important theme the author does not address is the question of nonviolence. The outside activists interviewed for the book listed one of their top priorities as injecting nonviolence into the prisoners' struggle, whereas the prisoners' objective was to win the struggle by any means necessary. To be fair, some prisoners expressed an appreciation for nonviolence, but one can't help but be puzzled at hearing outside activists call the Walpole struggle a triumph for nonviolence when in addition to the use of peaceful protests and non-cooperation tactics the "hard core" prisoners guaranteed the general truce necessary for their organizing efforts via a promise to assassinate any prisoner who broke it. Likewise, prisoners set fires, attacked guards and flung shit at them, and dropped huge steel plates down three tiers into a corridor to chase the guards out of the block—and the leader of the black prisoners walked around with a huge machete strapped to his chest. The reader can imagine Bissonette was reluctant to rebuke the activists who helped her by providing interviews and archived materials, although at times she reasonably criticizes outside supporters who saw themselves as the center of the struggle. In any case, plenty of anecdotes regarding nonviolence and its contradictions are included, and the reader can draw her own conclusions.

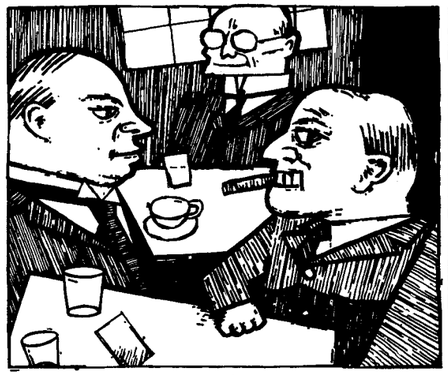


Insurrectionary anarchists should make this book required reading. It supports many of the conclusions they preach: reformist activism is a dead end, we need to support ongoing struggles and rebellions, the purpose of state institutions is to dominate and incapacitate, people can uncover their ability for self-organization by going farther than what seems pragmatic and entering into conflict with authority. But the path this narrative takes, and the path taken by the Walpole prisoners, shows far greater maturity than I see in most US insurrectionists today. Then again, the stakes are higher in the prison struggle than in many other struggles. I hope stories such as this one bring greater attention and support to prisoner resistance. Those of us with pen pals in prison might try to get this book into every prison in the country to see what conversations it starts.

THE BLACK FREIGHTER

WORDS-BERT BRECHT ART-CLIFF HARPER

You gentlemen can gawk while i'm scrubbing the floors
and scrubbing the floors, why are you gawking?



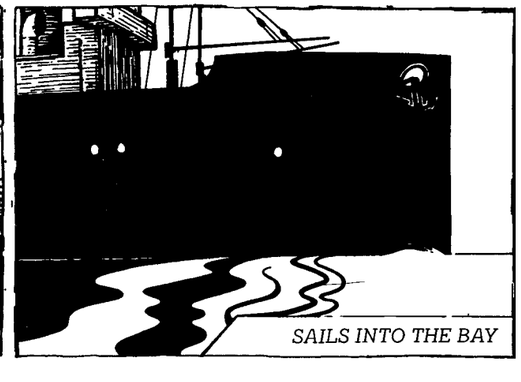
And maybe once you tipped me, and it made you feel swell
In this ratty water pub in this ratty hotel

And you'll never know to whom you're talking
You'll never guess to whom you're talking

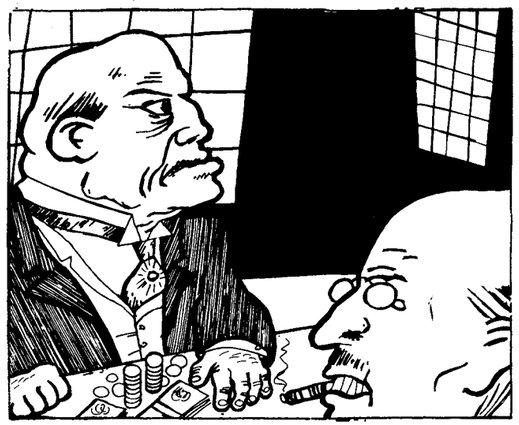
Suddenly one night there's a scream in the night
And you yell what the hell is that din?

And you see me kinda grinning while i'm scrubbing
And you say what she got to grin?

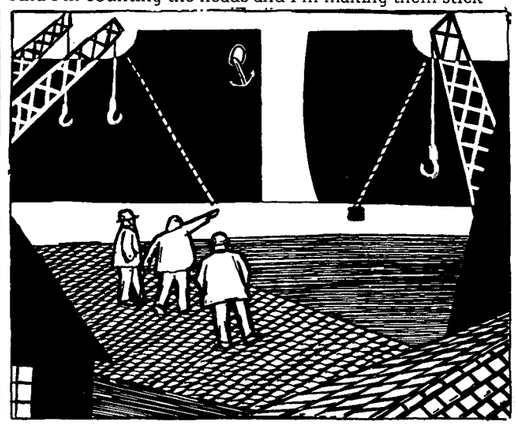
AND THE SHIP, THE BLACK FREIGHTER
WITH THE SKULL AND THE CROSSPATCH



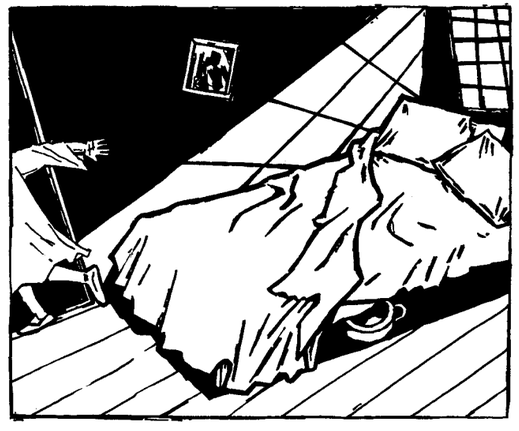
Then you gentlemen can say, hey girl scrub the floor
Make the beds, clean down the stair, earn your keep here



And you pass out of the house
and you look out at the ships
And i'm counting the heads and i'm making them stick



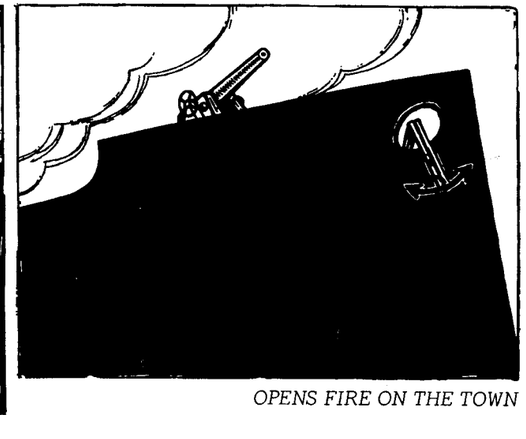
Cos tonight none of you will sleep here
Tonight none of you will sleep here



Then on that night there's a bang in the night
And you yell what the hell is that row?

And you'll see me kinda staring out the window
And you'll say whats she got to stare at now?

AND THE SHIP, THE BLACK FREIGHTER
WITH THE 51 CANNONS



OPENS FIRE ON THE TOWN

Then you gentlemen can wipe all the grins off your faces
There'll be burning in the town, there's a flap on

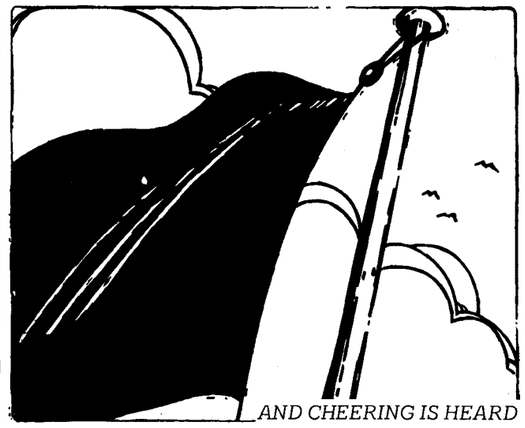
The whole stinking place will be down to the ground
Only this cheap hotel will be standing safe and sound

And you'll say why did they spare that one?
You'll say why did they spare that one?

Then all night through all you can do
You'll wonder who's the famous person there

And you'll see me stepping out into the morning
Looking nice, with a ribbon in my hair

THEN THE SHIP, THE BLACK FREIGHTER
RUNS A FLAG UP THE MASTHEAD

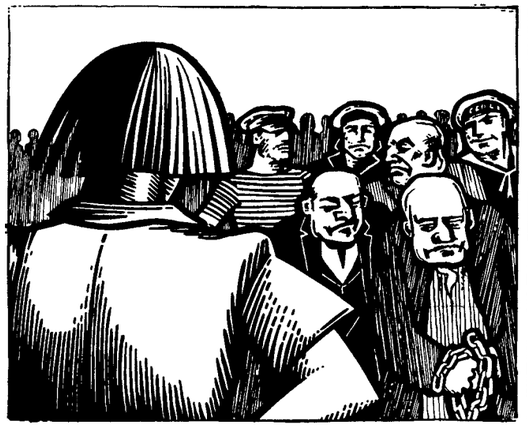


AND CHEERING IS HEARD

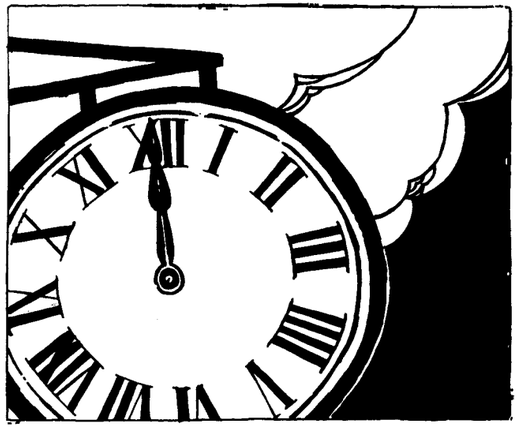
Then just before noon, there'll be hundreds of men
Pouring out of that dirty black freighter

And they're moving in the shadows, where no one can see
And they're chaining up the people
and they're bringing them to me

Asking me—kill them now or later?
Asking me—kill them now or later?



Noon on the clock, it's so still on the dock
You could hear from miles away



In the quiet of death i'll say—kill them now
And they'll pile up the bodies and i'll say: Hoopla!

AND THE SHIP, THE BLACK FREIGHTER
SAILS AWAY OUT TO SEA

AND ON IT IS ME.

The Money Machine

Every once in a while I remember events from my childhood, and it's as if I'm only fully comprehending them for the first time. You know, things which were obviously absurd, but which you never questioned in the flurry of youth. Lately I've been thinking about *the Money Machine*.

My high school had this weird tradition: every year a representative of a magazine sales company would arrive and turn the entire student body into his personal sales force. This guy reeked of the "salesman" persona; without fail, every year he would appear on stage to get us all fired up about selling magazines for him. I'm sure the school allowed this because they got a cut of the sales, but the rewards he offered us students were almost comically pathetic. Like if you sell a certain number of magazines you get a pen light. Or a Kit-Kat bar. But even with such desperate prizes, he managed to create an atmosphere of competition with . . . the Money Machine.

The Money Machine was a clear box about the size of a phone booth with an little fan duct-taped to the side of it. The number one magazine sales student—the kid who had sold more magazines than anyone else—would get something like forty seconds in the Money Machine. They'd put you on stage in front of everyone, load it with one dollar bills, and then turn the fan on while you frantically grabbed as much of the money whirling through the air as you could.

Even the Money Machine, though, was a racket. There were rules: you couldn't pick money up off the ground, you couldn't trap money in your clothing, and so on. After you'd maniacally grabbed as much money as you could, the sales guy would ceremoniously take you out of the Money Machine and ask you to count how much you'd made during that incredible opportunity. It would always be like 23 dollars, never more than 30. But he'd announce it as if it were a small fortune. "THAT'S RIGHT! SHE CAME OUT WITH . . . TWENTY-TWO DOLLARS!!!"

Anyway, the whole thing was disgusting. But when I was a freshman in high school, there was a kid in his senior year named Joey Allegra. I didn't know him at all, but I always perceived him to be an anti-authoritarian slacker type who was generally nauseated by most of what occurred in school. So I was pretty surprised when, with great fanfare, they announced the top magazine selling individual in the entire student body to be Joey Allegra. I couldn't believe it. "That kid?" I wondered. "Maybe my entire perception of him is wrong," I thought with disappointment.

But Joey Allegra calmly got up, walked on stage, and took his place next to the Money Machine. The sales guy was bouncing around hysterically, trying to get everyone riled up, but Joey didn't look particularly excited. At last, the doors opened, and he was put inside. The sales guy counted down with great fanfare: "THREE . . . TWO . . . ONE . . . GOOO!!!" The fan was switched on, and the money began violently whirling around. But Joey Allegra didn't make a move for any of it. In fact, he just sat down on the floor inside the money machine and stared out.

The sales guy looked like he was going into a panic. He didn't understand what was going on. "But you've only got thirty seconds left!" Things got worse and worse for him as he tried in vain to encourage Joey to go for the money. "COME ON MAN YOU'VE ONLY GOT TWENTY SECONDS! TWENTY SECONDS MAN!" At last the time was up and the sales guy had no choice but to turn off the money machine. As the fan wound down, the whirling money all fell to the floor around Joey, except for a single one dollar bill that landed on his head. Everyone was absolutely silent as the sales guy shamefacedly opened the door. As Joey stood up, the one dollar bill that had landed on his head fell off and fluttered to the floor.

The sales guy didn't know what to do. He couldn't proceed with his usual shtick of getting Joey to count the money and announcing it triumphantly, because Joey obviously didn't have any money. What was he supposed to do, announce "That's right! ZZEEERROOO dollars!" He looked confused, almost broken. Joey didn't wait around—he just went straight back to his seat without a word.

Like I said, I didn't know him, and I never did get a chance to talk to him about it. My assumption has always been that the whole thing was calculated from the beginning. That he had such a great disdain for the whole thing that he resolved to sell more magazines than anyone—a pretty big feat, considering how into it some kids got—just so he could have that moment in the Money Machine.

I don't know what the real story is, and I don't know what happened to Joey Allegra after that. But Joey, wherever you are, I hope you're still bringing hope to those staring down the money machines of the world.

. . . they think everyone has a price


BUY