Capitalism presents us with two paths to defeat:

Either to accommodate ourselves to every injustice,
   Taking each imposition lying down
   As if we could sleep on its bed of nails,
   Or else to throw ourselves away
   In useless gestures of isolated defiance—
   To take arms, as they say, against a sea of troubles,
   Not so much to end them
   As to be done with our miserable existence.

Hardest of all
Is to fight where we stand, for ourselves and together
   As if we might even triumph:
   Not to die fighting, but to live that way—
   Courageously, graciously, joyously.

“One of the advantages of being disorderly is that
one is constantly making exciting discoveries.”

—A.A. Milne
Table of Contents

1   Prolegomena
3   Cautionary Tales
4   Glossary of Terms
10  Naming the Journey

Features
12  Say You Want an Insurrection: Putting the “Social” in Social War
36  Thinking through Perpetrator Accountability

From Our Overseas Correspondents
44  Chile: From Popular Power to Social War

Scene Reports
62  San Francisco

Reviews
82  La Commune 1871,
86  De Stad Was Van Oor, Oor Cangaceiros

Old News
88  The Blurred Trail of the Cangaceiros in the Social Pampas

Fiction
94  Madge & Pansy

Let every wasted seed of desire
Become a beautiful flower
Watch it unfold hour by hour
And rise higher and higher
We pay for our lives with our deaths
Everything in between should be free

— Lack, “The Gay Revolutions”
Cautionary Tales

Anarchists have a reputation for running the red lights of history—a practice that can get you where you’re going faster, but can also get you killed. We’re not sure we believe in history, let alone in red lights, but there’s something to be said for looking both ways before you take the street.

Much of the material in this issue deals with the risks and pitfalls of violent confrontation with the state. This is not because we want to talk anyone out of confronting the state—or, the contrary, the reason to talk about it is to make sure that it goes as well as possible. We address ourselves to the few who risk throwing their lives away gratuitously not because they are fools, but because in many respects they are the best of us. In a world even our oppressors admit is unjust, unsustainable, and headed for catastrophe, it makes sense to seek out the others who have already made up their minds to act regardless of the consequences—who have made their peace with the possibility of prison time as well as the inevitability of death, for whom the only remaining question is how to get the most out of their lives.

If only there were more of them—if only our most pressing task were simply to restrain each other! This is a magazine for those who have made up their minds to act, for whom all that remains is to work out the question of how. Revolutionary action can take many forms, from street fighting and sabotage to long-term infrastructural projects and accountability processes; there are as many forms of struggle as there are hierarchies to oppose. We hope to cover a wide range of options in these pages, to equip readers at different places in their lives and also to emphasize that no one approach can succeed in a vacuum.

This is also a magazine for people who haven’t finished making up their minds, who are still trying to work out where they stand. Chances are you’re getting one side of the story loud and clear from the ones who own practically everything. Perhaps you can find the other side of the story here.
Glossary of Terms
part the eighth

Apparatchik - Professional revolutionaries are to revolution as professional wrestlers are to actual wrestling. To take the analogy further, episodes such as the Spanish Civil War show that, as in professional wrestling, the outcomes of struggles involving professional revolutionaries are typically fixed in advance.

Applause - A time-honored means of politely silencing a person who has made sufficient demands upon the attention of the public; a white noise for disturbing today's political discourse.

Class - Class is not a static identity, but a relationship; it is the intersection of ethnicity, culture, and privilege, also determining a person's standing in hierarchical society, and consequently how likely he is to associate his interests with the interests of those in power.

Closure - Ninety years after his betrayal and murder at the end of the Mexican Revolution, Emiliano Zapata returns to life somewhere north of the Rio Grande. Immediately, he sets out to raise another army and resume the struggle for agrarian reform. He accosts the first mestizo he sees, an affable grad student at the nearby university: “Discípuleño, señor. ¿Dónde se encuentran los campesinos del pueblo?”

Coup du Fond - Campesino? I'm not sure we have any campesino around. Actually, it could be the painting that ages, rather than the innocent young protagonist, presented in professional wrestling, the outcomes of struggles involving professional revolutionaries are typically fixed in advance.

Draconian - In Oscar Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray, the innocent young protagonist, presented with a lovely painting of himself, wishes that it could be the painting that ages, rather than he. His wish is granted, and as he descends into debauchery, the visage in the painting grows more and more dreadful, while he continues to appear unblemished, above reproach.

Zapata - Today, comparing Brussels to Kinshasa, one might discern a similar phenomenon, even though Belgian rule (see figure ii.) ended long ago—in 1960.

Colombia - In Óscar Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray, the innocent young protagonist, presented with a lovely painting of himself, wishes that it could be the painting that ages, rather than he. His wish is granted, and as he descends into debauchery, the visage in the painting grows more and more dreadful, while he continues to appear unblemished, above reproach.

Zapata - Today, comparing Brussels to Kinshasa, one might discern a similar phenomenon, even though Belgian rule (see figure ii.) ended long ago—in 1960.

Coke - A solid fuel made by heating coal in the absence of air; an illegal stimulant derived from coca leaves, a corporate beverage containing coca ingredients.* Comparable addictive and deleterious in all three instances.

Couple - A non-reactionary romantic configuration. Chlorine is a poison gas and sodium an explosive metal, but together they make table salt. In anagamous circles, singles are seen as unpredictable elements: lacking something, they may take dangerous steps to get it. Even the government appears to regard singles as a potential liability—there are financial incentives for getting married. Couples, on the other hand, can be trusted to keep each other in check.

Drapetomania - A mental illness causing African slaves to attempt to escape, described in 1853 by physician Samuel Cartwright in his report “Diseases and Peculiarities of the Negro Race.” Not surprisingly, Cartwright prescribed whipping as the most beneficial treatment. One can’t help but wonder what perspective the passing of time may give on the disorders diagnosed in our own era.

Faction - One might speculate that there is an inverse relationship between the momentum of a movement and the number of distinct factions within it. In times of upheaval, radicals focus on what they are doing, arguing about tactics and strategy; in such periods, sweeping tides often wash people from one camp into another, blurring boundaries and shifting stances. On the other hand, when there is little going on, all the exciting verbs of resistance stabilize into nouns; then, radicals differentiate themselves by adopting static ideological positions. Such positions serve as a sort of compensation: unable to live out the resistance they desire, frustrated revolutionaries satisfy themselves by constructing speculative taxonomies of utopia (see Hypertropy). Yet this tends to put off the general public, who know that the vast possibilities of life cannot be encapsulated in mere ideas.

Sephasticianism - Such factionalism was famously satirized in the March 1913 issue of The Masses:

* Provided by Stepan Company, the only corporation authorized to import coca into the US.
it is unbecoming to hate them, let alone slaughter them after the fashion of the gods. As soon as he was safely in Japan, Bakunin sent a letter to General Korsakov, the governor of Siberia, acknowledging that his escape was bound to be a setback to the governors’ career and emphasizing that he did not mean it as a personal slight. He apologetically explained that there was going to be a revolution, and it would be irresponsible for him to sit it out in exile in Siberia where he could not be of use.  

Handout  
Individual private property quintessentially used to obscure the misfortunes caused by the institution of private property  

Home Demo  
In activist argot, a demonstration at the home of a corporate executive or otherwise offensive personage. In carpenters’ trade jargon, the act of demolishing everything in preparation for building anew. May the twain meet.  

Hypertrophy  
When an organ or a capability atrophies, it degenerates from lack of use: for example, those who rarely speak about their desires may lose the ability to frame questions about what they want, just as those who avoid conflict may not be able to defend themselves. When an organ or a capability hypertrophies, it grows in proportion to other organs or capabilities at their expense; for example, those who speak more often than they act may find that their entire lives recede into theory, just as those who focus on confrontation at the expense of building ties may one day look around in desperate need of comrades only to discover that they are alone.  

Indian Giver  
Talk about adding insult to injury!  

Late Fee  
The penalty for refusing to pay in advance (see Landlord, Interest-Free Loan)  

Marketplace of Ideas  
Like human beings, ideas must compete on the uneven terrain of capitalism. Some are backed by academies and media moguls, dollars by the billion, entire military-industrial complexes; others are literally born in prison. Of course, despite this, the ones that rise to the top are Iowans to the front—just as the human beings who rise to the top of the capitalist economy are superior to the rest. Hence, in universities, it’s taken for granted that people develop ideas and then live according to them, rather than adopting the ones most convenient to their current lifestyle. If every idea gets a chance, at least in theory, that proves the equality of idea. If every idea gets a chance, at least in theory, that proves the equality of idea. Meanwhile, ideas that are not concretely superior to the rest.  

Mass Production  
A social disorder in which objects crowd their makers out of the world, famously depicted in the Disney remake of Goethe’s poem “The Sorcerer’s Apprentice”  

Megadeath  
A unit quantifying the casualties of nuclear war, signifying the deaths of one million people. RAND Corporation strategist Herman Kahn coined this term in 1953 and later utilized it in arguing that nuclear war, far from unthinkable, could be a realistic policy decision for the US government. By the 1980s, the idea that human beings might obliterate themselves by the hundred million had become so utterly mundane that “megadeath” came to be better known as the name of a heavy metal band.  

Mega fauna  
Until ten thousand years ago, North and South America were populated by enormous mammals: saber-toothed cats, ankylosaurid glyptodonts, ground sloths twenty feet tall. The Mapu-i, a feline beast described in the folklore of various Amazonian indigenous peoples, is presumably one such creature, just as wooly mammoths linger on in a string game played by Inuit children. If even the progeny of the urban middle class tend to be fascinated by stories about dinosaurs and prehistoric mammals, perhaps this indicates that they sense the absence of the animals with whom millions of years of evolution prepared them to share the world.  

Microbes  
Our only remaining natural predators are the ones too small to exterminate (see Megadeath), in place of the risk of being eaten by coyotes, we have the certainty of dying in hospital beds  

Mystic  
One who goes on and on about incommunicable experiences  

News  
Every night the overtaxed employees of news networks scramble to distill stories from the infinity of the day’s events. Such a task would be practically impossible were it not for their biases and the agendas of their masters. One must not look at corporate media reports as “the” events of the day, then, but as strategic maneuvers on the field of public attention (see Propaganda). Such broadcasts can still be quite informative, of course, providing one approaches them as machinations to be decoded: efforts to lay the grounds for repression, attempts to discredit or distract, admissions of fear and confusion.  

To name a single example, reports of a Swine Flu epidemic originating in Mexico dominated the media during the composition of this issue. Between 1918 and 1920, a bona fide flu epidemic killed well over 50 million people worldwide, and even today more than 50,000 die of flu-related complications every year in the US; Swine Flu, on the other hand, claimed only a couple hundred lives worldwide. Fears about looming pandemics notwithstanding, the Swine Flu coverage would be nigh incomprehensible were it not for the implication that immigration from Mexico poses threats that must be countered. More people die every year trying to cross from Mexico into the United States than Swine Flu has ever killed, as usual, capitalist treatments are more virulent than the ailments they purport to cure.  

Nom de Plume  
A nom de guerre for one who gambles on the pen rather than the sword (see Pseudonym)  

Overpopulation  
A crisis thought up by Western scientists and intellectuals, perhaps to distract from the more pressing matter that any one of them consumes more resources than a dozen people in so-called overpopulated nations (see Mass Production). One might hypothesize that if there is too many of anyone, it is first and foremost the former.  

Private  
Pertaining to or characterized by privation  

Pseudonym  
A prudent acknowledgment that the names signed to works have lives of their own apart from those of the authors. Fernando Pessoa, a Portuguese poet whose alter egos knew no bounds, wrote as some seventy different personas, each characterized by a distinct personality, style, and relationship to the others—with the effect that when he signed his own name to a text, that too appeared as a persona, a mere artistic convention. This is less obvious in the case of authors who sign only with their own names, but no different. Just as once upon a time, while wizards slept through the witching hour of the night, their staffs would silently slip out to dance in the starlight, so the names and pseudonyms of authors run riot around the world, accruing reputations and associations without regard for the intentions of those who thought they possessed them.  

Rational  
Pertaining to or characterized by rationalization  

Rorschach Test  
Although astrology has been scientifically discredited, it persists as a form of self-deception, a mere artistic convention. This is less obvious in the case of authors who sign only with their own names, but no different. Just as once upon a time, while wizards slept through the witching hour of the night, their staffs would silently slip out to dance in the starlight, so the names and pseudonyms of authors run riot around the world, accruing reputations and associations without regard for the intentions of those who thought they possessed them.  

Semiautomatic  
The science of evading the point  

Theory and Practice  
In theory, they’re the same; in practice, they’re different  

Typeface  
An alphabet in a straitjacket  

Uncertainty  
When an equation balances, when an action is free of irony, uncertainty is there. In an utterly dominated world, in which causality itself appears incoherent, the very notion of fighting on behalf of those who are usually set up as victors (see Megadeath), in place of the risk of being eaten by coyotes, we have the certainty of dying in hospital beds  

Victim  
There is no more compelling justification for violence and oppression than the need to defend or avenge innocent victims—be they the flower of white womanhood, or the casualties of cafe bombings. All who see themselves as defenders of the defenseless would do well to interrogate their motivations in this light. This goes double for environmentalists and animal liberationists—the advantage of fighting on behalf of those who do not speak your language is that you can act in their name without ever having to consult them.  

Wage  
The exploited are paid minute by minute, so not a cent is wasted on them (see Salary); of course, the most exploited are rarely paid at all (see Domestic Labor, Child Rearing, Community Service, Prison-Industrial Complex)  

Wishful Thinking  
Better wishful action!  

Writer’s Block  
Don’t even think about filling my cat’s teeth. “What about a facelift?” Like everything else, cathood involves advantages and disadvantages. If the cat gets fillings, will he want mouthwash next? I worry that he will end up with a myspace profile and a nine-to-five job; his magazine subscriptions will pile up and he’ll have no time to read them. Thanks, doc, but my cat’s teeth are fine.  

Veterinary Medicine  
The only remaining natural predators are the ones too small to exterminate (see Megadeath), in place of the risk of being eaten by coyotes, we have the certainty of dying in hospital beds. Our only remaining natural predators are the ones too small to exterminate (see Megadeath), in place of the risk of being eaten by coyotes, we have the certainty of dying in hospital beds. Our only remaining natural predators are the ones too small to exterminate (see Megadeath), in place of the risk of being eaten by coyotes, we have the certainty of dying in hospital beds. Our only remaining natural predators are the ones too small to exterminate (see Megadeath), in place of the risk of being eaten by coyotes, we have the certainty of dying in hospital beds. Our only remaining natural predators are the ones too small to exterminate (see Megadeath), in place of the risk of being eaten by coyotes, we have the certainty of dying in hospital beds. Our only remaining natural predators are the ones too small to exterminate (see Megadeath), in place of the risk of being eaten by coyotes, we have the certainty of dying in hospital beds.
In the third ditch of the eighth circle of hell, Pope Boniface VIII was crammed into a burning pit on top of Pope Nicholas III. Both were stuck upside down, so that Boniface's feet protruded from the top of the hole, where flames licked them continuously. Nicholas, smothering at the bottom, lacked against the other's face, who in turn bit at him and kicked his own feet desperately in the blaze.

From time to time a reformer would come by with a representative of the management, decrying the harsh conditions and suggesting various improvements. "Is it really necessary that they be upside down?" he'd inquire, standing just out of range of the flames. "What about a review board? Do they have any recourse if they feel mistreated?" His companion listened gravely, nodding from time to time but saying little. Occasionally the reformer grew imploring, wringing his hands: "These are human beings, man! Surely you can't be utterly heartless?"

One day, after years of this, horned custodians came and removed Nicholas and Boniface with pitchforks, then pushed them back into the hole right side up. The reformer was greatly pleased with this; he came around to congratulate Boniface, extending his hand gingerly into the smoke. Of course, the mouth of the pit was still engulfed in flame, so the old pope could only choke and wail while Nicholas gnawed his toes. "We can't do anything about the fire," the reformer explained ruefully, "or else all the other simoniacs will want to know why you get special treatment!" On later visits, the reformer commented on the hardships associated with the new arrangement, and eventually the two were returned to their original position. The popes differed as to the reformer's role and influence. "He means well," Boniface opined between blows from Nicholas's feet; "He just can't do anything for us. His hands are tied by all the bureaucracy down here."

"You're wrong there," Nicholas shouted up in a muffled voice. "Think of Martin Luther, another reformer. Everyone will think he's going to bring about the end of Christianity, when in fact he'll buy it another five hundred years!" He howled in agony as Boniface sank his filthy teeth into his ankle. "If you ask me, he has an essential role, perhaps higher up than the ones supervising our punishment!"

Word of the Issue: Reformism

No one is more passionately invested in the system than those who believe it can be improved. For policemen and reactionaries it is a necessary evil, an awkward means to the desirable end of holding power; the oppressed may nihilistically accept it without approving or disapproving. Only the reformer considers it a good in itself—the essential premises must be beyond question, or the whole project is a mistake. Thus many who set out to transform right wrongs end up fighting to impose them upon eternity: the judge who began her career as a conservationist sentences Muslims to death for he has a simple goal in mind, while the radical who wishes to overthrow a regime of anarchy and abuse, but feel it to be impossible at the present time; consequently, they hit upon schemes more utopian than any revolutionism. Petroleum is spurring wars around the globe, so the reformer wonders if it is a necessary evil, an awkward means to the desirable end of serving as foot soldiers in reformists' crusades; countless reforms, from women's suffrage to the eight hour workday, have been won with their blood. But let radicals stand half a chance of upending the whole business, and every sincere reformist will fall in with them; perhaps then we'll see some real "hope" and "change."

“A soldier who disobeys an order to fire breaks that oath which he has taken and renders himself guilty of criminal disobedience, I cannot ask officials and soldiers to disobey; for when I am in power I shall in all likelihood make use of the same officials and those same soldiers. If I taught them to disobey I should be afraid that they might do the same when I am in power.”

—Mohandas Gandhi, to French journalist Charles Petrash in Le Monde, February 20, 1932, defending his choice not to support the Garhwali soldiers who had refused to fire upon Muslim civilians in Peshawar
Naming The Journey
Ona Kalima Mirkinson

Last December, during my annual trip home to San Francisco, my mother and I drove up the coast to visit my godfather Kalima, who has been incarcerated for 40 years in the California prison system.

“This is good for you,” my mother said.

“I heard something else. “Move through this. Face it yourself. Remember who you are.” I heard,” “It’s about time.”

I spent my childhood visiting many of my parents’ friends—underground radicals who had been captured by the FBI during the Reagan-era dragnet of the 1980s. They were Black Panthers, Puerto Rican Independentistas, and white anti-imperialists from the 60s and 70s. They faced long sentences for crossing real lines in an attempt to build revolutionary change in the United States. My parents refused to allow them to be forgotten, buried alive though they were in America’s vast network of high-security prisons. They wanted me to know them and to know me.

I told Kalima about college, the rejection of political responsibility out of my family, and my former selling of the developmental effect. I brazen out these would-be theories with my own experience. These visits and these relationships enriched my life; they continue to deepen my understanding of what it means to oppose imperialism and of the definitions of solidarity, forgiveness, courage, and principle. These visits removed what I was and why. In a society that encourages us to look constantly inward—at our faults, our bodies, our individuality—these visits pulled me out and re-rooted me, focusing on something bigger and more real.

Today these people are labeled criminals, terrorists. Their names and memories are exploited, becoming decontextualized missiles launched during presidential debates, public for the campaign mill. Or, they are once romanticized and vilified. We called them Freedom Fighters. I call them family.

On the drive up to visit Kalima I tried to pinpoint the exact moment that I had begun to resist my identity as a daughter within a revolutionary community. How had I moved from being a politically radical kid to a prototypical white, educated, entitled, probably middle-class white child? My first experience as a student teacher revealed the reality of what progressive education without a deep anti-racist foundation meant for students of color in the New York City public school system—it wasn’t for them. My master teacher told me about how she hated teaching up in Harlem, because the students had the attention span of goats. I scoffed at white students searching to identify their own privilege. I refused to engage in political discourse.

I thought about what Kalima would say to me after ten years. “Where the hell have you been?” or “What was it like?” or “Aren’t you good?” or “I’m glad you’re home. It might be a good start. How could I tell him anything about myself, my life? My struggles returned to catch me. I told him about the time I was in prison. I told him anything about who I was and where I had been. I told him about the time I was young. I told him about the time I was in prison. I told him about the time I was young. I told him about the time I was young.

I told him about the time I was young.

Kalima rolled through the door in a wheelchair. It was him. The visions I held in my head came true. I held my hand out to Kalima and he took it up. My entire fist fit in his palm. Goldmann this, I thought. He is 72 years old. Kalima held on to my fist and nodded.

“Of course, ” she said. “I was pregnant with Ona, ” she nodded at me, “and living in Los Angeles. You were editing Jews the Spirit and organizing with the Panthers. After that visit, I decided that I would name my child for you.”

When it was time to go, I held my hand out to Kalima and he took it up. My entire fist fit in his palm. Goldmann this, I thought. He is 72 years old. Kalima held on to my fist and nodded.

My mother and I turned our backs and moved toward the gate we had come through. I didn’t want to leave Kalima there. I wanted him with us, back down the exact, free. I started to say, “I had it.” I hadn’t felt it coming on. My mother, who had visited her friends in jail for nearly thirty years, put her arm over me and said, “I know.”

“I named you Ona for a little girl I met in Okinawa,” my mother said, breaking the silence on our drive home. “Her name was On, which meant light, and I thought about how you would be light in your life. What had my mother wanted to give me along with it?

It was dark when we got back to my mother’s house. I walked down the plank-framed hall to my brother’s room where I had been staying. In the bottommost corner of a cardboard box, my brother had tucked an old Polaris. My mother, in batik blue cotton pants, smiled through thick glasses. I was right next to her, ten years old. Then there was Kalima towering over both of us, smiling. I thought about how in Arabic our shared name meant, “Witness and Speaker, Messenger of the Word.” I thought about my children out of the school and I heard my professor and cooperating teacher justify this decision with what would become a familiar adage, “it just wasn’t a good fit.”

I began to understand why my parents had enrolled us all in public schools and why they had been so adamant about our anti-racist education. I did not want to become another missionary-minded white girl looking to save the world through the classroom. I was forced to confront and assess my own conceptions of intelligence and educational theory. And I spoke up. I sought my way through that program and found myself.

My mother and father had been loaders in Fresno Fire, an anti-imperialist organization that developed from the formation of study groups around the Weather Underground’s famous communist underground namesake. Part of their work had consisted of political prisoner solidarity, including with the Panthers in San Quentin. Through this work, my mother had met Kalima.

“I met your mother in San Quentin,” Kalima said. “You remember, Minka?”

“I met your mother in San Quentin,” Kalima said. “You remember, Minka?”

“I met your mother in San Quentin,” Kalima said. “You remember, Minka?”
Over the past few years, a small current has gained visibility in US anarchist circles prioritizing the themes of insurrection and social conflict. Like any ideological milieu, it’s a lot more diverse than it appears from a distance. Some strains emphasize confrontation for its own sake, rather than as a means of achieving reforms; others frame revolt as a means of building the power of the oppressed outside static organizations. The common thread is that all are critical of formal institutions and focus on attack as their central theme.

How effective are these strategies at achieving their professed goals? To answer this question, we can’t simply study insurrectionist theory in a vacuum; we have to look at the activities associated with it in the US context. In practice, it’s not always easy to tell where strategic considerations leave off and matters of emotional and psychological temperament begin; in this case, both are relevant. Much of what we will discuss below is not so much a matter of what insurrectionists say but of what they do.

This subject is of particular interest to us because we are insurrectionists of a sort, whether or not we use that adjective. For well over a decade, we’ve focused on confrontational struggle based in individual initiative, informal networks, and ad hoc organization. Starting with shoplifting and vandalism and working up to streetfighting and clandestine direct action, we’ve learned the advantages and disadvantages of this approach on our own skin. One is always most critical of what is closest to one’s heart: most eager to see it succeed, and most concerned about potential errors.

In some ways, this is a very old line of thinking—perhaps older than some of its adherents realize. One genealogy traces its origins to the dispute between Marx and Bakunin over the organizational forms of the Paris Commune. Some insurrectionists see precedents in the propaganda of the deed carried out by Nineteenth-century assassins and the illegalism associated with Jules Bonnot and his fellow bank robbers. We can trace the lineage of current insurrectionist theory from Errico Malatesta and Luigi Galleani through the works of Alfredo Bonanno, Jean Weir, and others who attempted to distill lessons from the social struggles of the 1960s and ’70s.

At the same time, the latest wave of insurrectionist ideas is something of a new phenomenon in the US, where the high turnover rate in most anarchist communities often dooms them to relearn the same lessons over and over. One can hardly blame the new generations for this—if anything, the older generations are to blame for dropping out or refusing to communicate. Seasoned anarchists have to be especially cautious not to be dismissive and hostile about the enthusiasms of their young comrades. Ten years ago, we were the upstarts whose new energy and muddled ideas provoked all the testy veterans; we were able to learn from some of their criticisms, no thanks to them, but their disdain contributed to our defensiveness and their marginalization. If we accept roles on the opposite side of this dynamic now, we may doom those who come after us to repeat the same pattern.

In that spirit, let’s start with the advantages of insurrection as a point of departure.

But how do we bring about these confrontations? How do we ensure that they strengthen us more than our enemies? What pitfalls await us on this road? And what else do we have to do to make our efforts effective?

So do we—a total break with domination and hierarchy in all their forms, involving an armed uprising if need be. Until that’s possible, we’ll settle for recurring clashes in which to develop our skills, find comrades, and emphasize the gulf between ourselves and our oppressors.
STARTING FROM REVOLT . . .

"Attack is the refusal of mediation, pacification, sacrifice, accommodation, and compromise in struggle. It is through acting and learning to act, not propaganda, that we will open the path to insurrection, although analysis and discussion have a role in clarifying how to act. Waiting only teaches us how to follow the voice of the community, in acting one learns to act."

“Insurrectionary Anarchism: Organizing for Attack,” in Do or Die #10

Many organizations and movements, including some that are explicitly anarchist, promise to challenge powers that be as soon as the groundwork has been prepared, but the world is always changing, and one may lay a foundation only to discover that the terrain has shifted. Once one gets used to waiting, even if it is only a matter of months, it always seems easier to go on waiting. Revolution, like parenthood and everything else momentous in life, is something one can never be adequately prepared for. Often, this preparation is framed in terms of the need to do more outreach and education. But until there is a clash, until the lines are drawn, there is nothing to talk about. Most people tend to remain aloof from theoretical discussions, but when something is happening, when the stakes are high and there are concrete differences between opposing sides, they will take a stand. In forcing such ruptures, one can compel those who hide authoritarian and capitalist allegiances to show their true colors, while offering everyone else the opportunity to form other allegiances.

Sometimes one has to aim beyond the target in order to strike it. Perhaps in the pacified US, some have grown so accustomed to compromise and delibera-
tion to resist co-optation and paralysis. By interrupting the apparent consensus and social peace, confrontations make injustice visible and legitimate the rage others feel as well. When the fog of apparently universal submission is dispelled, those who wish to fight can finally find each other, to mobilize for an insurrection in the face of allegiance for merely ideological agreement.

The form of one’s immediate actions should match one’s long-term goals. Theoretical elaborations give rise to more of the same. Focusing on winning reforms tends to contribute to the development of reformist logic. If you want to destroy all forms of domination, it’s best to confront them all from the outset.

. . . AND SPREADING TO RESISTANCE

“Insurrectionary anarchism, therefore, places particular importance on the circulation and spread of action, not managed revolt, for no army or police force is able to control the spontaneous, unmediated and uncontrollable outbursts of such autonomous activity… What the system is afraid of is not just these acts of sabotage themselves, but also them spreading socially.”

Almost all strains of insurrectionist thought emphasize the importance of revolt spreading. This is one of the best standards, together with which to evaluate insurrectionist efforts.

If both postponement and action tend to give rise to more of the same, then in acting oneself, one extends an invitation to others. This is an argument for carrying out actions that others can easily emulate, in hopes that they will take the lead. That’s the idea, anyway. Sometimes, of course, anarchists carry out an action others could easily emulate, but no one does. What other factors enable an action to inspire more actions?

EVEN IF THE TIME IS NOT RIPE

“We are insurrectionalist anarchists . . . because rather than wait, we have decided to proceed to action, even if the time is not ripe.”

-Alfredo Bonanno,
The Insurrectional Project

It is an article of faith among most insurrectionists that one should not wait for the appropriate material conditions, but should attack immediately. As a defense against the sort of postponement described above, this makes perfect sense; as a moral obligation or an axiom to govern every decision, it can be dangerously counterproductive.

Insurrectionist theory allows for this, but in practice insurrec-
tionists do not always make the wisest choices. This is one of the cases in which it can be difficult to differentiate between insurrectionism as a program with concrete goals and insurrec-
tionist theory as a matter of disposition. To react in apathy without thought for the consequences is beautiful, and perhaps a way to recover one’s humanity in a desensitizing world—but it is not always strategic. This does not stop some from positing it as strategic. People who grew up in a society founded on Christian notions of moral law often argue for their own preferences as universally valid prescriptions. It’s surprising how judgmental people who claim to reject morality can be!

Is insurrectionism a religion, or a strategy? If it is a reli-
gion, its precepts are timeless and unconditional: categorical imperatives. If, on the other hand, it is a strategy, developed under specific conditions, we should think hard about how those conditions might be different from ours, and how we should adjust it accordingly.

When Bonanno originally formulated his analysis in the 1970s, Italy was in the midst of an upheaval that threatened the entire social order; authoritarian and anti-authoritarian currents mingled and contended in the course of struggling against the government. He was not making an argument for precipitating clashes where there were none before, but rather as a provocation. Sometimes, when something is happening, there are no issues to differentiate from ours, and how we should adjust it accordingly.

If “proceeding to action even if the time is not ripe” doesn’t work, then perhaps it is saying something other than “proceed to action”, but rather that things are so bad, that we must proceed to action, even if we are not sure that the time is ripe.

ON MAYDAY

Several dozen masked hoodlums ransacked through an upscale shopping district in downtown San Fran-
cisco, smashing windows and setting off fireworks. Afterwards an anonymous statement on Indymedia reads, in part: “De Beers, Prada, Coach, Tumi, Wells Fargo, Longchamp, Mary’s, Armani, Crate and Barrel, Moncler, Urban Outfitters and Guess were all targeted for all kinds of boring as political shit, but primarily because they hide the system of economic activity, not the suppression. We see no need to reveal our laundry list of grievances and solidarity.”

Much has changed since the communiqué from the ACME collective following the WTO protests in Seattle. In 1999, the ACME statement was widely read and debated, influencing the politics of a new generation that saw more sense in opposing corporate power with couchwars than with signs or lockboxes. A decade later, black-clad anarchists are miraculously still finding ways to smash windows, despite ever-increasing surveillance and repression—but the con-
muniqué, if not the action itself, seems to be directed only to those who understand and approve of the tactic.

Elsewhere in the US, local media outlets report that a smaller number of “suspected anarchists” have smashed the windows of four downtown businesses. One of these actions has occurred repeatedly in this city, causing much mer-
riment among radicals and resulting in no serious convictions. But immediately afterwards, police arrest a young man, alleging that his car was seen leaving the scene of the vandalism. He is released without charges, but rumors circulate of investiga-
tions, grand juries, trouble on the horizon. Local anarchists are already facing felony charges from actions in other cities, and the strain is starting to take its toll.

AGAINST SUBCULTURE

“Particularly to be avoided are the cultural and activist cir-
cles. . . . All milieus are counter-revolutionary because they are only concerned with the preservation of their sad comfort.”

-The Coming Insurrection

Historically, insurrectionist anarchism has centered around a rejection of static organizational structures. In the US, where long-standing anarchist organizations are not particularly common or powerful, it has recently come to be framed more as a reaction against cultural factors. Some insurrectionists conceptualize their position as a break with what they consider to be hopelessly passive and assimilated anarchist subcul-
tures—bicycling as an end in itself, potlucks that never end in streetfighting, and so on. Some take this further, dismissing

The answer is always no.

24 – Features – Issue Eight, Fall 2009 – Rolling Thunder

Rolling Thunder • Issue Eight, Fall 2009 • Features • 15
the very idea that subculture could have any radical potential. What does it mean to dismiss subculture? Culture is as ubiquitous among human beings as language, you can challenge it, you can even destroy it, but you generate new culture in the process. In general, this dismissal does not seem to proceed from some mystical doctrine that we could escape culture per se, the way that John Zerzan preached a primitivist utopia without language, but rather from a reaction to the subcultural identifications of the preceding generation of anarchists. As explored in the previous issue of this magazine, by the points of reference in the course of attempting to put the idea into practice. Cultural insurrectionists tend to be a matter of points of reference, and the more obscure they are, the more “subcultural”—in the sense of calling social circles that are only concerned with preserving their comfort “milieus.” Is there a positive role that subculture could play in fomenting insurrections? Let’s return to the question of how action proliferates. As pointed out above, simply doing things that “anyone else can” do is not itself enough to spread resistance. The premise of this approach is that others who share similar frustrations will see the actions and understand the strategy embodied in them, and that this alone will move them to action. But this takes for granted that the actions will be visible and the strategy comprehensible across cultural lines; it also disregards the ways that desire is determined by culture as well as class. Many of the assassins who killed presidents and Nazis over a century ago passionately believed that these actions would inspire the oppressed to rise up. Clandestine “armed struggle” groups have sometimes used the same logic. One common insurrectionist critique of these groups is that their actions are too specialized, but this does not explain why more easily reproducible tactics often fail to catch on. Another critique of armed groups is that they separate themselves from others; energy and ideas cease to flow; this seems more to the point. One could argue that the circulation of insurgent desire—particularly a cultural phenomenon—is as indispensable for the proliferation of revolt as gasoline is to a Molotov cocktail. For example, over the past few years, North American anarchists have carried out clandestine attacks on ATMs, banks, windows, and other targets; this is currently one of the best-known templates for insurrectionist activity. Such nighttime attacks don’t seem to have spread widely outside the anarchist subculture in most of the cities in which they have occurred, but they have given rise to copycat actions in other anarchist communities. This indicates the importance of a common cultural landscape—shared values, points of reference, and venues for communication. Acting sincerely can be contagious, but our actions are always modeled on the examples we know and driven by the values fostered by our communities. People seem to be most likely to join revolts when doing so can help them meet their needs. But needs themselves are socially produced: nobody needed cell phones to maintain contact with their friends until a decade ago, for example, and countless indigenous communities had to invent new social forms of resistance over time. This dispute about culture parallels the much older dispute between insurrectionists and anarchists who believe in building long-term institutions. The latter argue that insurrectionist criticism of institutions is founded on the notion that formal structures are inescapably hierarchic and that other molecules by sharing electrons with them. If it has loose electrons, it is prone to creating new connections or disruptions; on the other hand, if all of its electrons are in stable bonds, it is unlikely to introduce new dynamics to the molecules around it. Similarly, anarchists who seclude themselves in the company of committed ideologues tend to become static and predictable, while those who limit their participation in explicitly anarchist circles to open to other relationships can sometimes catalyze waves of transformation. At the same time, organizing on the basis of a social rather than ideological position—for example, as queer youth, as a neighborhood, or as working class people who like to break things—can be extremely challenging. Anyone who has worked in coalitions knows how hard it can be to accomplish anything in the face of massive internal differences in goals and values. This is true even when there is a centralized decision-making body. —think of the instances when prisoners on hunger strike were pulled Naval helicopter burrows back onto the sidewalk during street confrontations. Perhaps the best approach is to organize at some intersection of social position and ideology: for example, a gang who grew up together discovers anticapitalist resistance, and sets out to introduce the possibility to other gangs. Often the ones at the forefront of clashes with the authorities are not self-identifying anarchists at all, while anarchists with carefully articulated political positions avoid conflict or even sabotage resistance. People adopt political stances for all sorts of reasons, and that is precisely why we have to do with how they actually conduct themselves. This phenomenon corroborates insurrectionist skepticism about the importance of ideological positions, but it also means that those who identify as insurrectionists are no more likely to practice what they preach than anyone else. Despite the fact that avowed anarchism does not always correlate with active resistance, there is no reason to believe that other movements that are not identified as anarchist are any more likely to produce anarchic situations or relationships. If you’re opposed to all forms of oppression, you may as well say so from the outset, lest you leave an opening for authoritarians to hijack your efforts.
NOT JUST INSURRECTION, BUT ANARCHIST INSURRECTION

“Armed struggle” is a strategy that could be put at the service of any project.*

-Diggers Down

In the US, where militant political conflict is rare, it’s tempting to assume that clashes with authority are inherently authoritarian. Insurrectionist websites and magazines appropriate images from a wide variety of contexts, some had all sorts of antisocial crime as manifestations of social war, without knowing the motivations of the protagonists.† But rebellion and street violence are not necessarily anarchist. Resistance to oppressors is praiseworthy in itself, but much resistance takes place in support of other authoritarian projects. This is also true in other parts of the world, where violent illegal violence on the part of fascists, paramilitaries, gangs, drug cartels, mafias, and authoritarian revolutionary movements is an existential aspect of domination. Aspiring authoritarians often take the lead in attacking reigning authorities precisely in order to absorb and co-opt popular unrest. Rioting per se is not always liberating—Kristallnacht was a riot too. Even if some participants have the purest intentions, insurrections can go any number of directions: remember what happened to the Russians following the insurrection of 1917, or the Iranians following the insurrection of 1978-79.

So anarchists must not only provoke confrontations, but also ensure that they contribute to a more horizontal and decentralized distribution of power. In this regard, glorifications of the superficial details of militant confrontations—black masks, Molotov cocktails, and so on—are largely beside the point, if not actively distracting. The flow of initiative among the rebels, the ways decisions are made and skills are shared, the bonds that develop between comrades: these are much more important. Likewise, one must strategize as to how social uprisings will contribute to long-term revolutionary momentum rather than simply enabling reactionary forces to consolidate power.

AGAINST ACTIVISM

A great deal has been said against activism: it is a specialized role that frames social change as the domain of experts; it is predicated on dialogue with the powers that be; it promotes inauthenticity and limits the scope of change. A lot of this is mere semantics—many people who do not deserve such accusations see themselves as activists. Some of it is projected class resentment: those who have time to mess around in everyone else’s business, “changing the world” rather than solving the problems of individualized survival, must have privileged access to resources, as the right wing has always alleged. It’s not easy to distill the kernel of truth in this flood of vitriol, but one thing is certain: activism that does not explicitly challenge hierarchy fortifies it. Reformist strategies can win adjustments in the details of oppression, but they ultimately help the state maintain its legitimacy in the public eye—not only by giving it the chance to redress grievances, but by reinforcing the notion that the power to effect meaningful change lies in the hands of the authorities. It is better to struggle in such a way that people develop an awareness of their own capabilities outside all petitioning and bureaucracy. Reformist activism also tends to build up internal hierarchies: as if by chance, the best negotiators and media liaisons often turn out to be college-educated white people with good skin and conciliatory tones. Of course, certain insurrectionist practices may simply build up hierarchies according to different criteria.

SUSTAINING CONFRONTATIONS

The other lesson we can derive from a close study of activism is the importance of not overestimating. Some activities produce more energy and resources than they consume; others cost more than they produce. Many activist projects ultimately founder because they fail to recoup the resources invested in them: one cannot carry on an exhausting undertaking indefinitely without deriving the wherewithal for it from somewhere. Of course, these resources can take a wide variety of forms: a Books to Prisoners group may consume a great deal of labor hours, but persist so long as the social connections it provides are rewarding; traveling around the country to participate in riots may be expensive in terms of gas and bail money, but if it is exciting and empowering enough, the participants will come up with the cash somehow. On the other hand, if a million dollars must be raised for court costs following every demonstration, this project is inherently prohibitive, unless each demonstration wins new allies with deep pockets. Activities that cost more resources than they produce are not necessarily bad, but you have to strategize accordingly if you wish to participate in them. Ironically, despite insurrectionist hostility to activism, strategies that focus on confrontation are often at least as costly in this regard as traditional activist organizing in diminishing goal-oriented interests in favor of confrontation for its own sake, some US insurrectionists set themselves up for bust. Symbolic clashes can help develop the capacity to fight for more concrete objectives, but not if they are so costly that they drain their social base out of existence.

UNLESS IT PROVIDES FOR THE PRACTICAL NEEDS OF THE PARTICIPANTS, INSURRECTIONISM IS JUST AN EXPENSIVE HOBBY: ACTIVISM WITH FELONY CHARGES AND A SMALLER BASE OF SUPPORT.

It’s not easy to distill the kernel of truth in this flood of vitriol, but one thing is certain: activism that does not explicitly challenge hierarchy fortifies it. Reformist strategies can win adjustments in the details of oppression, but they ultimately help the state maintain its legitimacy in the public eye—not only by giving it the chance to redress grievances, but by reinforcing the notion that the power to effect meaningful change lies in the hands of the authorities. It is better to struggle in such a way that people develop an awareness of their own capabilities outside all petitioning and bureaucracy. Reformist activism also tends to build up internal hierarchies: as if by chance, the best negotiators and media liaisons often turn out to be college-educated white people with good skin and conciliatory tones. Of course, certain insurrectionist practices may simply build up hierarchies according to different criteria.

Activities that cost more resources than they produce are not necessarily bad, but you have to strategize accordingly if you wish to participate in them. Ironically, despite insurrectionist hostility to activism, strategies that focus on confrontation are often at least as costly in this regard as traditional activist organizing in diminishing goal-oriented interests in favor of confrontation for its own sake, some US insurrectionists set themselves up for bust. Symbolic clashes can help develop the capacity to fight for more concrete objectives, but not if they are so costly that they drain their social base out of existence.

Breaking windows is a dead end unless it helps to generate a widespread social movement—or at least provides access to enough of the commodities behind the windows to fund the vandals’ eventual court cases. The most sustainable forms of confrontation seize resources which can then be employed for a further struggle. The classic example of this is the European squatting movement of thirty years ago, in which the occupied buildings were used as staging areas for further social struggles. This approach supersedes both self-defeating reformist activism and self-destructive insurrectionist Dogma. Unless it provides for the practical needs of the participants, insurrectionism is just an expensive hobby: activism with felony charges and a smaller base of support. Insurrectionists of other eras have recognized this and robbed banks rather than simply smashing their windows. Revenge is itself a need, but it is hardly the only need. People who face enough challenges just getting by will not be much more attracted to gratuitous vandalism than they are to activism that has nothing to do with their daily lives; on the other hand, tactics that enable them to sustain themselves may be more appealing. Insurrectionists are frustrated with the lifestyle-oriented anarchism of those they perceive as “subcultural” actually stand to learn a lot from them. The latter remain involved in their version of anarchist community not because of moral or ideological imperatives, but because it sustains them. For insurrection to spread, it must do the same.

MAKING A VIRTUE OF REPRESION

In the US, militant struggle means taking on the most powerful state in the history of the world. It demands a strategy that takes into account the repression, legal support, and prison sentences that will inevitably result, and somehow turns them to our advantage. The absence of such a strategy is perhaps the most significant defect of modern insurrectionism. Revenge is itself a need, but it is hardly the only need. People who face enough challenges just getting by will not be much more attracted to gratuitous vandalism than they are to activism that has nothing to do with their daily lives; on the other hand, tactics that enable them to sustain themselves may be more appealing. Insurrectionists are frustrated with the lifestyle-oriented anarchism of those they perceive as “subcultural” actually stand to learn a lot from them. The latter remain involved in their version of anarchist community not because of moral or ideological imperatives, but because it sustains them. For insurrection to spread, it must do the same.

It’s embarrassing to acknowledge, but the activists who practiced non-violent civil disobedience in the US during the 1960s and ’70s were miles ahead in this regard, integrating activities that cost more resources than they produce are not necessarily bad, but you have to strategize accordingly if you wish to participate in them. Ironically, despite insurrectionist hostility to activism, strategies that focus on confrontation are often at least as costly in this regard as traditional activist organizing in diminishing goal-oriented interests in favor of confrontation for its own sake, some US insurrectionists set themselves up for bust. Symbolic clashes can help develop the capacity to fight for more concrete objectives, but not if they are so costly that they drain their social base out of existence.

* Assuming common cause with others of unknown politics is an essential aspect of domination. Aspiring authoritarians often take the lead in attacking reigning authorities precisely in order to absorb and co-opt popular unrest. Rioting

† “It is better to loot than to shoplift, to ambush than to snipe, to walk out than to phone in a bomb threat, to strike than to call in sick, to riot than to vandalize... Increasingly, the role is to combat the world of coercion and isolation aren’t solely a matter of effectivity, but equally a matter of sociology—of community and fun.” -War on Enemy #3

1 Of course, certain insurrectionists who face enough challenges just getting by will not be much more attracted to gratuitous vandalism than they are to activism that has nothing to do with their daily lives; on the other hand, tactics that enable them to sustain themselves may be more appealing.
their arrests, court cases, and prison sentences into their campaigns as strategic moves. Their approach was predicated on privilege and glorified victimhood in the most noxious ways, but perhaps we can still learn something from them in order to make the most of repression and ongoing prisoner support in our own struggle.

The current case of the RNC 8, in which anarchists have been targeted with conspiracy charges for organizing actions against the 2001 Republican National Convention, may offer one starting point. The defendants have used their case to delegitimize the government and win allies in other communities, as of this writing, they seem to have the prosecutors on the defensive, as the terrorism charges against them have just been dropped and the case is widely acknowledged to be an embarrassment. If they had simply been anonymous vandals, rather than highly visible organizers, this might not have been possible.

IS IT SAFER IN THE SHADOWS, OR IN THE SPOTLIGHT?

“No leaders to round up, no hierarchical organisation to wield power over us in our name, no membership lists to investigate, no manifestos to denounce, no mediators to meet (and then join) the power-holding elite. No public claims are made, no symbolic lines are drawn, no press statements to be deliberately misconstrued and trivialised by journalists. No platforms or programmes which the intellectuals can hijack as their exclusive property, no flag or banner to pledge a cause and sectarian allegiance.”

– Insurrectionary Anarchy: Organizing for Attack

No membership, no statements, no public face. This might make it harder for the state to single out enemies, but it also sounds a little like the invisibility and isolation that make it so attractive to many people. The street party becomes a Funeral for Capitalism, intended to make the most of repression and ongoing prisoner support in our own struggle. It often happens that in attempting to correct old errors, people commit new ones; forsaking problematic strategies, they learn the hard way what advantages led their predecessors to retreat to private scenes and cliques, leaving few opportunities; as of this writing, they seem to have the prosecutors on the defensive, as the terrorism charges against them have just been dropped and the case is widely acknowledged to be an embarrassment. If they had simply been anonymous vandals, rather than highly visible organizers, this might not have been possible.

Pedestrians on the street. They barely make it one block before a lone police officer pulls over and charges into the crowd, seizing someone at random in hopes of setting an example to scare the others onto the sidewalk. To his surprise, he meets a rain of blows. These are not the hesitant activists of the previous generation, but a fiercer new breed. His intended victim escapes; he snatches another, but the same struggle ensues. Backup has arrived by now, and eventually the police manage to capture a single partygoer.

The rest regroup at a nearby café. Almost everyone who was in the street is present; there is a new sense of common cause. Within a couple of hours, they have raised enough money to bond the arrestee out of jail; a couple weeks later, a benefit show featuring a puppet show and a bake sale draws more participants than the street party did and raises all the funds necessary for legal fees.

The force of an insurrection is social, not military. Generalised rebellion is not measured by the armed clash but by the extent to which the economy is paralysed, the places of production and distribution taken over, the free giving that burns all calculation…”

– Al Daggoye Druen

The force of an insurrection is social, not military. The power of anarchist insurrection is determined not by military confrontations, but by how pervasive resistance is, how widely
The authors understand themselves to be engaged in social war, perhaps more clearly than most insurrectionists do. They do not simply attack our bodies with batons, pepper spray, and imprisonment; they also set out to attack our relationships and social connections.

Social war requires social skills

“Property destruction is not merely macho rabble-rousing or testosterone-laden angst release. Nor is it displaced and reactionary anger. It is strategically and specifically targeted direct action.” —ACME Collective, Nyo Black Bloc Communal

Considering that insurrection depends on relationships, one would think that insurrectionists would be the most personable anarchists, the most eager to make friends and resolve conflicts. Instead, insurrectionists would offer a welcome contrast to strident pacifists and domineering reformists. It should always be clear that militant action is not a macho performance but a well-reasoned strategic decision, or at least an honest emotional expression.

It requires tremendous patience and social skills to lay the preconditions for insurrection. Unfortunately, some who gravitate to insurrectionist ideas have a predisposition for impatience and hostility. “Starting from attack” can be attractive to those who don’t want to have to talk through disagreements or be accountable. In glorifying their preferred tactics over those of their potential allies, such hotheads spread false dichotomies that cut them off from the resources and support they need to make their attacks effective, sustainable, and contagious.

One could view this tendency as an overreaction to the paranoid coalitions of the antimilitarist movement. There is nothing good about enforced unity that paralyzes the participants and discourages autonomous action. But a knee-jerk rejection of all that is not merely macho rabble-rousing or testosterone-laden angst release. Nor is it displaced and reactionary anger. It is strategically and specifically targeted direct action. Appropriating what they understand to be a term of biting abuse, the locals continue following the bloc, shouting “Bad talk! Bad talk!”

One idealistic young anarchist falls back to reason with the pursuers. “We’re not against you—we’re here to fight the same inequalities that dominate you, the multinational corporations and the neoliberal governments that—you know, the usual rhetoric.”

He is answered with a punch in the face that drops him to the ground.

This is the critical moment, in which the meaning of the whole mobilization is at stake. If the locals and the black bloc come to blows, the mobilization will have been a failure from a showdown between People and Authority to pointless fighting between Marginalized Radicals and Everybody Else. The black bloc has a reputation for machismo; many other activists doubt their maturity, if not their sincerity. Having grown up bullied and baited, having become a militant anarchist in hopes of getting revenge, the young man must feel the temptation to get even. If he doesn’t, the comrades will be onto him.

But he simply stands up and walks back to them, unchanged but deliberate.

Two blocks further, the police loom into view: row after row of armored storm troopers firing concussion grenades and rubber bullets at the narrow lines of human beings before them. Both groups hesitate. The context has shifted.

“The locales the anarchuts warily. “You’re here to thrust our city’s soul, one call at a time.”

“No!” shouts back a man in a ski mask. “To FIGHT THE POLICE!”

“The police?”

“To fight the police?”

“To fight them, not you!”

“Fook the police!”

“To fight them, not you!”

“Fook the police!”

“The police?”

“Fook the police!”

“To fight the police?”

“No!”

“Fook the police!”

“Fook the police!”

“Fook the police!”

The authorities understand that they have been drawn into social war, perhaps clearer than most insurrectionists do. They do not simply attack our bodies with batons, pepper spray, and imprisonment; they also set out to attack our relationships and social connections. It is significantly more clear than most insurrectionists do.

Features

- decision-making structures and cultural conventions that encourage horizontal power dynamics
- accountability processes to address internal domination
- conflict resolution, both internally and with potential allies
- the ability to provide for material, social, and emotional needs
- the capability to reproduce the social forms of resistance faster than they are destroyed
- the means to communicate beyond a single subculture
- the flexibility to adjust according to context, rather than remaining caught in ritual
CONFRONTING ALL FORMS OF OPPRESSION

Resistance movements have collapsed again and again amidst conflict over accountability, privilege, and internal oppression—for example, in the US at the beginning of the 1970s, and in Italy at the end of that decade. This occurred on a smaller scale during the disintegration of the Rolling Thunder movement can. Nurturing healthy relationships is not an additional task anarchists must take on. Accountability and awareness of privilege strengthen the relationships that make for meaningful struggle possible; without these, an insurrectionist group can fall apart in the same way a family does. Nurturing healthy relationships is not just the targets that make for exciting riot capitalism activity is to attack the powers that be and addressing more subtle forms of hierarchical power. Whenever anarchists fail to take the initiative for liberation on their own behalf, so long as they don’t reduce your raw anger to demands or suspend the language they use when they talk with their neighbors or relatives. You can’t expect others to step outside their comfort zone unless you are willing to do the same yourself.

STRIKING POSES VS. DECOLONIZING VIOLENCE

“We can become our own riot porn production machine, but this is less important than ‘creating the conditions where an offensive can recur, without fading, of establishing the material solidarities that allow us to hold on.’”

Total Destroy #3

By and large, people in the US—particularly white people!—have an especially mediated relationship to violence. This is not to say that we are never exposed to violence, but that proportionately, we witness representations of it more often than we experience it directly. The land beneath our feet was bought with the extermination of its former inhabitants, the commodities that sustain our lifestyles flow in on a sea of blood, but when we think of violence we generally picture stylized images on television and movie screens. Small wonder if radicals who attempt to integrate violence

LANGUAGES OF EXCLUSION

By all means, explode with rage. Reduce to address patriarchy, white supremacy, and other manifestations of hierarchy, they leave themselves vulnerable to the machinations of liberals and others eager to discredit militant resistance. Insurrectionists should take the lead to develop tools for understanding and undermining privilege, so it is clear to everyone that there is no dichotomy between confronting the powers that be and addressing more subtle forms of hierarchical power. Confrontational approaches are bound to encounter opposition at some point, but if the opposition is coming from potential comrades, it’s a warning sign that one is on the wrong path. Unfortunately, defensive insurrectionists sometimes react to this by isolating themselves further from constructive criticism, wrongheadedly telling themselves that they don’t need allies on the path they have chosen.

LANGUAGES OF EXCLUSION

By all means, explode with rage. Reduce to address patriarchy, white supremacy, and other manifestations of hierarchy, they leave themselves vulnerable to the machinations of liberals and others eager to discredit militant resistance. Insurrectionists should take the lead to develop tools for understanding and undermining privilege, so it is clear to everyone that there is no dichotomy between confronting the powers that be and addressing more subtle forms of hierarchical power. Confrontational approaches are bound to encounter opposition at some point, but if the opposition is coming from potential comrades, it’s a warning sign that one is on the wrong path. Unfortunately, defensive insurrectionists sometimes react to this by isolating themselves further from constructive criticism, wrongheadedly telling themselves that they don’t need allies on the path they have chosen.

*Some critics challenge the right of a predominantly white or male demographic to isolate contradictions in the first place, but people of all walks of life are entitled to fight for liberation on their own behalf, so long as they don’t do so in a way that compromises others. The details of initiating conversations without compromising others are complicated enough that it would demand an analysis even longer than this one to explore them.

†Not all insurrectionists fit this demographic, of course—

but there might be a few who do.
Rolling Thunder

violence into their resistance.

out programmed roles when they find themselves acting according to the extent to which it serves this project. We've recently started to realize that we exist…"

Actual sex and violence can be reclaimed from patriarchal society, but in some ways it is more challenging to reclaim representa-
tions of sex and violence.* Anyone can shoot a motherfucker, but in this society the image of the gun is almost inextricably associated with notions of male power and domination. Ant-authoritarians who think specular re-

resentations of violence can be turned against their masters are playing with fire in more ways than they think.

On the other hand, in a society in which so much privilege rests on violence that occurs outside our immediate experience, it is commendable that insurrectionists set out to establish a firsthand relationship to it. Perhaps insurrectionist activity should be evaluated according to how effectively it serves this project of deprogramming, no less than how much it costs the enemy or inspires potential comrades. To what extent does a given action enable the participants to achieve an unmediated and intentional relationship to violence? To what extent is it simply a re-use of all-too-familiar scripts? Just as we might judge erotic play or material by the extent to which it “queers” sex rather than reinforcing conventional roles and power dynam-

ics, we might assess insurrectionist practice according to the extent to which it queers violence. This could mean anything from empowering demographics who do not normally have the opportunity to wield violence against their oppressors, to dispensing with media representations of violence by replacing them with a familiarity based in lived experience, to making violence serve forbidden roles no one has yet imagined.

THE AFTERNOON of the action, one older anarchist who hasn’t participated in the organizing expresses his usual irritation: “So the idea is to get the fucking cops called, wait till they show up, and then try to arrest them? These idiots have finally come up with a way to lose the element of surprise, which is practically the only advantage of the tactic.”

Surprisingly enough, anything goes exactly according to plan. People gather in the park for food and games, then at the appointed time depart in small groups for the secret location. It turns out to be a spacious abandoned building in the heart of downtown, with a large banner hanging from the roof: “Reclaiming space to reclaim our lives: OCCUPY EVERYTHING.” Party favors are distributed at the door—and to consider them a precise political manifesto: “You see, here’s the deal. We’ve recently started to realize that we exist…” Inside, a dance party is in progress; the derelict post-industrial decór has been beautified with streamers and another banner, this one reading “PARTY LIKE IT’S 1886.” A couple gender

The afternoon of the action, one older anarchist who hasn’t participated in the organizing expresses his usual irritation: “So the idea is to get the fucking cops called, wait till they show up, and then try to arrest them? These idiots have finally come up with a way to lose the element of surprise, which is practically the only advantage of the tactic.”

Surprisingly enough, anything goes exactly according to plan. People gather in the park for food and games, then at the appointed time depart in small groups for the secret location. It turns out to be a spacious abandoned building in the heart of downtown, with a large banner hanging from the roof: “Reclaiming space to reclaim our lives: OCCUPY EVERYTHING.” Party favors are distributed at the door—and to consider them a precise political manifesto: “You see, here’s the deal. We’ve recently started to realize that we exist…” Inside, a dance party is in progress; the derelict post-industrial decór has been beautified with streamers and another banner, this one reading “PARTY LIKE IT’S 1886.” A couple gender

dissidents have taken off all their clothes. Others are explor-
ing the margins of the reclamed building in ones and twos. Unlike the Reclaim the Streets actions that swept the state a decade earlier, this is a private party, but it has the same atmosphere of wonder.

Aafter longer than expected, the news spreads from ear to ear: the police are inside! The sound system cuts out and someone pulls it out the back door just as an officer comes into sight, probing the crowd with his flashlight. Everyone tricks out the front door in a single-file line; this feels somewhat demoralizing, and the older anarchist grumbles that if they really want to have a march they should be exiting in one determined block. Instead, a hesitant crowd congeals on the sidewalk, dawdling as the outnumbered police struggle to figure out what’s going on.

The sound system reappears and people rally around it. Just as the crowd begins to move down the street, a policeman rushes over and seize it. Everyone else continues; turning the corner, they miraculously find themselves occupying the street in a world seemingly empty of authorities. There is no precise cause or rallying cry for the evening, so the participants—unable to disable themselves with activist traditions, despite some rhetoric to the contrary—find themselves chanting the first catchphrases that come to mind: “Swine f*ck!” “We Tang Clan ain’t nothin’ ta fuck with!” “Two young men out on the town join in, clearly not interpreting this as an anarchist street party.

A block later hoods go up, masks come down, and the sound of grating metal rings out as newspaper boxes are dragged into the street. Everyone else around the country is abandoning corporate print media, but anarchists are still passionately invested in their coercion that the boors prevent pursuit by police vehicles. The café district is around the next turn, and chairs are sent flying against plate glass windows, only to bounce off and fall to earth. There is an element of playacting in the demeanor of even the wildest participants: they are striking poses, acting out their favorite scenes without the grim atmosphere of even the wildest participants: they are striking poses, acting out their favorite scenes without the grim

corporate print media, but anarchists are still passionately

By and large, radicals in the US have an especially mediated relationship to violence; small wonder if they find themselves acting out programmed roles when they attempt to vilipicate violence into their resistance. the social war.

... To its credit, it looks no better than some other recent instances of riot porn, it glorifies the moment of physical atmosphere of wonder.

of the action, one older anarchist who hasn’t participated in the organizing expresses his usual irritation: “So the idea is to get the fucking cops called, wait till they show up, and then try to arrest them? These idiots have finally come up with a way to lose the element of surprise, which is practically the only advantage of the tactic.”

Surprisingly enough, anything goes exactly according to plan. People gather in the park for food and games, then at the appointed time depart in small groups for the secret location. It turns out to be a spacious abandoned building in the heart of downtown, with a large banner hanging from the roof: “Reclaiming space to reclaim our lives: OCCUPY EVERYTHING.” Party favors are distributed at the door—and to consider them a precise political manifesto: “You see, here’s the deal. We’ve recently started to realize that we exist…” Inside, a dance party is in progress; the derelict post-industrial decór has been beautified with streamers and another banner, this one reading “PARTY LIKE IT’S 1886.” A couple gender

dissidents have taken off all their clothes. Others are explor-
ing the margins of the reclamed building in ones and twos. Unlike the Reclaim the Streets actions that swept the state a decade earlier, this is a private party, but it has the same atmosphere of wonder.

Aafter longer than expected, the news spreads from ear to ear: the police are inside! The sound system cuts out and someone pulls it out the back door just as an officer comes into sight, probing the crowd with his flashlight. Everyone tricks out the front door in a single-file line; this feels somewhat demoralizing, and the older anarchist grumbles that if they really want to have a march they should be exiting in one determined block. Instead, a hesitant crowd congeals on the sidewalk, dawdling as the outnumbered police struggle to figure out what’s going on.

The sound system reappears and people rally around it. Just as the crowd begins to move down the street, a policeman rushes over and seize it. Everyone else continues; turning the corner, they miraculously find themselves occupying the street in a world seemingly empty of authorities. There is no precise cause or rallying cry for the evening, so the participants—unable to disable themselves with activist traditions, despite some rhetoric to the contrary—find themselves chanting the first catchphrases that come to mind: “Swine f*ck!” “We Tang Clan ain’t nothin’ ta fuck with!” “Two young men out on the town join in, clearly not interpreting this as an anarchist street party.

A block later hoods go up, masks come down, and the sound of grating metal rings out as newspaper boxes are dragged into the street. Everyone else around the country is abandoning corporate print media, but anarchists are still passionately invested in their coercion that the boors prevent pursuit by police vehicles. The café district is around the next turn, and chairs are sent flying against plate glass windows, only to bounce off and fall to earth. There is an element of playacting in the demeanor of even the wildest participants: they are striking poses, acting out their favorite scenes without the grim determination to do damage that characterized the famous black blocks of the anti-globalization era. The legal risks, of course, are still very real—but the police are mercifully far behind, and the crowd disperses before they can catch up. Some participants are pleased with themselves; others are nonplussed. A young hippy tries to initiate a conversa-
tion with a stern-faced fellow tucking a sweatshirt under his arm: “Did you see those people throwing chairs at windows? That’s fucked, huh?” The one with the sweatshirt picks up his pace and does not answer.

Afterwards, all the discussions from five years earlier begin again. Was it irresponsible for some people to escalate to prop-
erty destruction when others didn’t know it was coming? On the other hand, how are people supposed to initiate participatory vandalism? You can’t exactly put up fliers announcing it. Did anyone aside from the participants understand the point—and does that even matter? “We were here,” the one with the sweatshirt replies. “It couldn’t break the café windows? Or is it fortunate, that maybe there has provoked a more serious follow-up inquiry without achieving any meaningful objective? Few recognize these old questions—five years earlier, we were living elsewhere or involved in totally different things. The grumpy older anarchist reminisces about the days when surprise marches like this used to take place in his own com-

munity. The first one involved hundreds of people, the majority of whom had never imagined themselves parading without a permit; to his mortification, they chanted “What do we want? PEACE!” when he would have preferred them to say “Sl*ws to the ground. Over the following years, each march became a little more aggressive than the last; a small nucleus of commit-
ted clandestine organizers emerged, while conflicts deepened within the broader social base that made the format possible. The final action ended up on the national news, with tens of thousands of dollars of damage done to a high-profile target and several people standing trial for offenses. After that, everything dissipated in a mix of exhaustion, exhausting legal support, and prohibitive security culture.

His friend asks if it was worth it. “Maybe,” he allows. “Like, everyone blames the Spanish anarchists for losing the Spanish Civil War, as if a few kids in their twenties today could know the context better than they did—but perhaps they knew they were doomed from the start, and were holding it together as best they could in hopes of going out with a bang, so they could inspire people like us. If the movement we were part of wasn’t going to last forever, maybe it’s for the best it ended the way it did, too. But should you cut right to smashing shit when you’re trying to get something started? I don’t know.”
DYNAMITING THE FAULT LINES

Let’s return once more to the context surround-
ing large-scale insurrections such as the one that took place in Greece in December 2008. Militant resistance is sustainable in such situations not only because of the initiative of the immediate participants, but also because of the efforts of non-anarchists who oppose military intervention, organize against legal repression, and otherwise limit the options of the state. Many of these people may also oppose the insurrection, even while playing essential roles in making it possible. If social war were simply a matter of force meeting force, the Greek government could have bombed all the squats and occupied universities from which the revolts were organized; it could not do so because its hands were tied by liberals, and for fear of turning liberals into radicals.

Revolutionaries ignore this at their peril. The outcome of revolutionary struggle is not decided by revolutionaries or autocrats so much as by those who sit on the fence between them. The balance of power is determined according to which side of the fence they come down on when they are forced to choose. Revolutionaries ignore this at their peril.

INFRASTRUCTURE VERSUS EQUALS CONFRONTATION

Liberals and others who oppose revolutionary struggle often pose a false dichotomy between connecting with the community and engaging in militant confrontation. Some insurrectionists have accepted this dichotomy at face value, arguing for the latter in place of — perhaps in despair of — the former. Ten years ago, militant anarchists argued against the conceptual framework of violence “versus” non-violence; now the pendulum has swung to the opposite extreme, and it is insurrectionists who insist that attack is distinct from community organizing.

On the contrary, “community organizing” and taking the offensive are at their most effective when they are identical. Permanent conflict, decentralized organization, and all the other insurrectionist precepts can serve quite well in local, community-based struggles. Combining infrastructural and confrontational approaches does not mean volunteering at an infoshop during the day and smashing bank windows at night, but rather synthesizing the two into a single project. This is not complicated—as the whole world has been taken from us, we need only seize back any one of the things that should be ours and we enter into conflict with the state. If anarchists do not undertake this more often, perhaps it is because it is always most frightening to attempt what one wants most, what one knows one should have been doing all along.

Is there an empty lot that should be a community garden? Turn it into one, and mobilize enough social force that the owner finds it most convenient to leave you be. In a country being harassed or laid off? Bring the full power of your community to bear against her employer. Are there resources at the grocery store or the university that would be better off in your neighborhood? Seize them and how and where to distribute them, and take them. To win these engagements, you’ll have to spend a lot more time building up relationships and credibility than running around with masks on — but there are no shortcuts in social change.

This is nothing less than the project of beginning our lives, eternally deferred with all manner of half-hearted excuses and tortured theoretical justifications. In our real lives, we are warriors who fight for ourselves and each other, who seize back the territory of our day-to-day existence or else die trying. Nothing less is worthy of us.

It is neither persuasion to abstract ideas nor class position alone that makes people invest themselves in the struggle against hierarchy. It is the experience of anarchist solutions to the problems of life, the development and fulfillment of anarchistic desires. The need to revolt, to destroy, to get revenge is only one of many such desires.
The need to revolt, to destroy, to get revenge is one such need; if insurrectionist approaches can fulfill it, so much the better. But we deserve a resistance that fulfills all our needs, and all our dreams besides.

**Returning from the riots in Gothenburg during the 2001 summit of the European Union, activists in Stockholm begin casting around for ways to initiate struggles closer to home.** At first, the prospect is overwhelming: when you're trying to confront the system in its entirety, where do you start? Meanwhile, the rates in the Stockholm subway increase from 450 kroner to 500. One day, perhaps en route to a meeting, a young activist narrowly escapes being ticketed for fare evasion. Like most of her friends, she simply can't afford the new rates, and has to risk her back leaping the turnstile every time she goes out. Most of the time she gets away with it—but if they catch her next time, it will cost 1200 kronor.

She reflects on how many others must share her plight, each waging an individual guerilla war against the transportation authorities. There's a union for everything in Sweden, it seems—but when it comes to the day-to-day tactics by which people actually survive, they still have to go it alone. There's an idea... A fare-dodgers union.

Hundreds of people join up. The dues are 100 kronor a month, a savings of 80% on the government rate for transportation, and if you get busted the union pays your fine. More importantly, fare dodging is no longer an isolated activity, but a collective revolt. Fare-dodgers see themselves as a social force, taking pride in their actions and inviting others to join in; the union also warns commuters of the movements of ticket enforcers, giving them added incentives to skip the fares even if they don't become dues-paying members. Rather than trying to persuade others to join in their activism, the founders of the union have found a way to bring people together on the basis of the resistance they were already engaged in: now every fare-dodger is seen herself as one. A few months have passed and a few members have been busted for evasion, it turns out that the union is operating at a profit. With the extra funds, the organizers produce glossy propaganda urging the public to join them in an all-out war on public transportation fees, and begin brainstorming about their next step. What other fault lines run through Swedish society? How can other individual revolts be transformed into collective power—not in order to bargain with the authorities, but to defy them?

For more on the fare-dodgers' union, see www.planka.nu.

---

**ANARCHISM WITHOUT ADJECTIVES**

“If there are no such things as superior forms of struggle. Revolt needs everything: papers and books, arms and explosives... The only interesting question is how to combine them.”

- At Daggers Drawn

If we have never called ourselves insurrectionists, it is not because we do not wish for insurrection, but because our own temperament predisposes us to an anarchism without adjectives. The important thing is to fight for freedom and against hierarchy; we imagine that this will demand different approaches in different situations, and that these approaches may need one another to succeed. We are anarcho-syndicalists on the shop floor, green anarchists in the woods, social anarchists in our communities, individualists when you catch us alone, anarcho-communists when there's something to share, insurrectionists when we strike a blow. Anarchism without adjectives not only refuses to prioritize one approach over the others, but emphasizes the importance of each aspect of anarchism to its supposed opposites. The riot needs the bake sale to be repeatable; the arson needs the public campaign to be intelligible; the supermarket heist needs the neighborhood grocery distribution to pass on the goods.

All dichotomies are false dichotomies to some extent, masking not only the common threads between the terms but also the other dichotomies one might experiment with instead. On close inspection, successful insurrectionism seems to depend so much on “community building” and even “lifestyle anarchism” as to be virtually indistinguishable in practice. If we retired this particular distinction, what other distinctions might arise in its place? What other questions might we ask?

All this is not to say that individual anarchists can’t focus on their particular skills and preferred strategies—simply that it is an error to frame anyone’s personal preferences as universals. In the end, as always, it comes down to a question of which problems you want to wrestle with, which shortcomings you feel most equipped to overcome. Do you prefer to struggle against invisible hierarchies in informal networks, or brave the stultifying inertia of formal organizations? Would you rather risk acting rashly, or not acting at all? Which is more important to you, security or visibility—and which do you think will keep you safer in the long run? We can’t tell anyone which problems to choose. We can only do our best to outline them. Best of luck in your insurrections—may they intersect with ours.
FIGHT YOU
WHERE STAND
Gobsmacked!

- Enric Duran Segundo

While we all know that spit is the ideal sexual lubricant, always free and readily at hand, when it comes to expressing rage, we are more reluctant to let the spittle fly. Yet don’t love and hate both stop midoral fluids and call for discharge? Sadly, in the case of the latter, polite society disparagingly considers the well-placed smack of goop to be the crudest and most self-loathing act of practice. Much of the theory is sound, anything, it is to get beyond the fixation on the balance of power at the workplace had at least is about the immediate satisfaction afforded by that most personal of revolts, and the unexpected social consequences.

Once upon a time in the 1980s, after routinely cashing a check at a local bank where I had an account, I remained parked in their lot in order to spend an hour volunteering at a nearby free school at which I was facilitating a seminar about music and resistance. Afterwards, following a particularly passionate discussion, I returned to my car only to find that my car had been towed away. I walked into the bank and confronted the manager about this petty harassment, but he just laughed in my face. I later learned that by parking lot rules because he knew I had been involved in the recent publication of an exposé documenting the racist “redlining” policies and lending practices of local banks. As a result of documenting the racist “redlining” policies and involved in the recent publication of an exposé, it could back before there were armed federal agents on every flight. Airports are quite possibly the most miserable places on earth.

Gobsmacked!
Accountability is about making a commitment to the people in our lives to work through destructive behaviors, toward healthier, more egalitarian relationships. Accountability is about the willingness to receive input from and be responsive to the people around us, prioritizing their needs, safety, and emotional health in our actions.

In most of our communities, we have no established structures for this, no resources or guidelines for conflict resolution; as individuals, we don’t have the skills to communicate openly, directly, supportively with one another. We don’t know where to start, and community intersect. As anarchists, we seem confused about when it is okay to get involved in others’ lives, but our lives cannot be made distinct, separate. We are more interrelated than many would like to act, and it is only this interdependence that makes us strong.

Getting It Together

Lately, I’ve been hearing complaints about the lack of skill and guidance in dealing with accountability processes for perpetrators of sexual assault, intimate violence, and abuse. I’ve seen a desire to craft “the anarchist model” for dealing with situations “like these.” It’s great that people are talking about this, but it’s not useful to fall into a rote “this is what consent always looks like” or “this is the community response to sexual assault” model. Some people have done a great job of taking the ideas of consent and shaping them in ways that work for them—maybe it’s easier to feel how consent is a daily practice, how it’s widely applicable, or maybe it’s just more fun to talk about it and compare notes. But we also need to develop nuanced approaches to perpetrator accountability processes that really work in our individual lives.

We seem to be developing a new standard response for what to do when someone is identified as a perpetrator of intimate violence or sexual assault. The survivor seeks support and—ideally with the help of friends—sees a list of demands for the perpetrator and requests regarding how they want others to interact with that person. Although I am not asking for sur-

Meeting Basic Needs

An effective accountability process cannot be established until the situation has leveled out enough for all involved to listen and communicate honestly. When a survivor first identifies that

Accountability

a perpetrator is accountable to the survivor(s)
a perpetrator is accountable to their communities
a perpetrator is accountable to themselves
they have been in or are in an abusive relationship, the initial priority is to assess the situation and take steps to assure the safety of everyone involved. Listen to what the survivor wants. Ask questions that can lead to concrete solutions. Offer to help in any way you can—but only in ways the survivor wants.

If the survivor and the perpetrator live together, find emerg- ecy housing options for one or both of them. If the survivor and the perpetrator work on projects together, find people to take on their perpetrator’s responsibilities immediately out of either of them. If the survivor and the perpetrator live in a small town or neighborhood, or if they see each other regularly, help make a plan for accomplishing daily life tasks without running into one another and/or the situation. Whatever the challenge, figure out how to create the space necessary for both the physical and emotional safety of the survivor.

When a Perpetrator is Unwilling

It is never easy to be presented with the fact that you have hurt someone, but it can be especially hard to get this through to many perpetrators. When a perpetrator is first confronted about their abusive behavior, they may respond with surprise and repudiation before the initial shock passes. Some may try to continue utilizing the manipulative logic and defense mechanisms honed through their pattern of abusive behaviors, as if pushing back the obvious reality. They may deny, dismiss, or minimize the situation, the survivors’ concerns, or the survivors themselves. They may try to put the blame onto the survivor; they may frame themselves as the victim. They may use their social status or charisma to put on a good public face. They may pay convincing lip service to the process, using the language of consent and accountability, while continuing to refuse to acknowledge their actual role in the abuse with the survivor. People often get tricked by the subtle machinations of a perpetrator who is unwilling to approach this process honestly—because the smooth-talking calm of the perpetrator on the defensive can make emotional intensity of many survivors or because people simply don’t have a clear understanding of what abuse is at.

People don’t want to get wrapped in messy drama; they only want to interact with a situation where everything is clear and simple. However, abuse is never simple.

If a perpetrator in the midst of rationalization says a survivor was abusive to them too, don’t get confused. When someone is being abused, they often must respond with some kind of defense. When they are being abused, they may think they were abusive to them too, don’t get confused. When a perpetrator claims a survivor instigated abuse, they may frame themselves as the victim. They may use their social status or charisma to put on a good public face. They may pay convincing lip service to the process, using the language of consent and accountability, while continuing to refuse to acknowledge their actual role in the abuse with the survivor.

When someone is being abused, they often must respond with some kind of defense. When they are being abused, they may think they were abusive to them too, don’t get confused. When a perpetrator claims a survivor instigated abuse, they may frame themselves as the victim. They may use their social status or charisma to put on a good public face. They may pay convincing lip service to the process, using the language of consent and accountability, while continuing to refuse to acknowledge their actual role in the abuse with the survivor.

Approaching the Accountability Process

The most fundamental structure for beginning an accountable process is creating the personal trauma space for the perpetrator and their support group, and an agreed upon method for communication between the groups. It is essential to define concrete networks of support for both the survivor and the perpetrator. We are only able to change the destructive behaviors we have inherited from this culture when we have healthy opportunities to process our feelings and supportive spaces in which to learn from our mistakes. Please don’t under- estimate how much this can help.

A support network for a perpetrator can be made up of people with varying levels of commitment or roles within the group. As a whole, the group should function to create safe spaces to explore the feelings resulting from the abuse—including defensiveness and guilt that can obscure deeper feelings—and to help the perpetrator identify their behavioral problems and make concrete plans for change. In support communities, often the people who are most committed to doing work around abuse and accountability are people who are themselves survivors of abuse, and it can be particularly emotionally taxing and complicated for past survivors to support perpetrators. It is only going to be good for the perpetrator if their own emotional capacity is to be fully present for them. Accordingly, there must be space for people to decline doing this kind of work. This may mean others who have privilege in terms of gender, sexuality, or abuse history stepping up to take on these roles.

In crafting the general framework for the accountability process, it is essential to focus on the necessity for rehabilitation, not punishment. We all desire to recreate the flaws of the judicial system, we should not unlearningly adopt its focus on forcing people to atone for past infractions. As anarchists, we should be cautious not to recreate cycles where punishment for abuse creates more abuse, creating a miniature prison-industrial complex within our own movement. We already know that doesn’t work. That said, it is completely valid for the survivor to have any range of emotions in response to the trauma they have experienced. They can

Remember that in supporting perpetrators of abuse, it is the person you are supporting, not their behaviors.

(Mis)Understanding Abuse

I have heard people say they didn’t really know what to do, so they never asked them for help.

I have heard people say that they don’t understand how a survivor could have let it happen, or how such a strong feminist could have allowed such abuse.

I have heard people say that the abuse must not have been that bad because the survivor went back to the relationship with the perpetrator.

I have heard people say that they didn’t really know what to do, so they never asked them for help.

I have heard people say that they don’t understand how a survivor could have let it happen, or how such a strong feminist could have allowed such abuse.

I have heard people say that the abuse must not have been that bad because the survivor went back to the relationship with the perpetrator.

I have heard people say that they didn’t really know what to do, so they never asked them for help.

I have heard people say that they don’t understand how a survivor could have let it happen, or how such a strong feminist could have allowed such abuse.

I have heard people say that the abuse must not have been that bad because the survivor went back to the relationship with the perpetrator.
dictate everything that happens for them, for the spaces around them, for their own healing process. The survivor should be fully supported in whatever they need for themselves, but it is still possible for them to ask for unacceptable things from the perpetrator. They shouldn’t be the only ones to dictate what the perpetrator should do or how it will be best for them to achieve the collectively desired goals. There has to be room for negotiating what is reasonable and non-coercive to ask for and what can be challenging in a productive way for the perpetrator. Accountability processes are not the place for exacting revenge. Again, it is completely valid if that is what the survivor wants—particularly if the perpetrator is unwilling to participate in an accountability process—but that type of retaliation must happen outside of this process.

Setting Boundaries for (Not) Interacting

Along with establishing how the survivor and perpetrator will or will not communicate with one another, it may be important to create other ground rules for negotiating the physical spaces and working relationships in which the survivor and perpetrator could potentially interact. The survivor and their support group should communicate as clearly as possible about how much separation from the perpetrator will create a positive healing environment for the survivor. Because these boundaries can be revisited and changed at any point in the process, survivors should feel entitled to try out various approaches to achieving a positive healing environment for the survivor. Clear communication can help facilitate dealing with these challenges in the small, interconnected social circles the survivor and perpetrator often share. In addition to making specific requests for access to social space without the perpetrator, the survivor or their support group may ask the perpetrator to decrease their general visibility—minimizing the ways they are around, even when they are not around. That might mean asking the perpetrator to take significant steps back from public organizing, to make an effort to avoid receiving public recognition, or to spend less time in high-profile social settings.

Setting Goals for “Progress”

Once the structure for the accountability process is in place—networks of support for the survivor and perpetrator, modes of communication, and some basic boundaries around their interactions—it is possible to begin to develop a curriculum. Everyone who can offer perspective should, as various people’s combined experiences with the perpetrator’s abusive behaviors will provide the most comprehensive picture of the perpetrator’s support group must function with due respect for the survivor and be equipped to take the lead wherever the survivor doesn’t want to.

Much of the actual emotional and theoretical processing will probably be up to the perpetrator’s support group, although the survivor may want to give input about what to prioritize or how to approach certain topics. It is important for the perpetrator’s support network to help the perpetrator work out what their abusive

- For groups that both the survivor and the perpetrator are a part of, is this work that contributes to or distracts from the accountability and healing processes?

It can be incredibly complicated to create safe spaces for the survivor and their friends while maintaining the perpetrator’s connection to and participation in radical communities. Clear communication can help facilitate dealing with these challenges in the small, interconnected social circles the survivor and perpetrator often share. In addition to making specific requests for access to social space without the perpetrator, the survivor or their support group may ask the perpetrator to decrease their general visibility—minimizing the ways they are around, even when they are not around. That might mean asking the perpetrator to take significant steps back from public organizing, to make an effort to avoid receiving public recognition, or to spend less time in high-profile social settings.

- How interconnected are the communities of the survivor and the perpetrator? Where do they overlap and diverge?
- What is their capacity for support?
- How can the perpetrator continue to have positive social interactions without infringing on the space of the survivor?
- How can the perpetrator use the distinct communities they come from as a way to get outside support without sidestepping their accountability?
- How often are the survivor and the perpetrator share:
  - How interconnected are the communities of the survivor and the perpetrator? Where do they overlap and diverge?
  - What is their capacity for support?
  - How can the perpetrator continue to have positive social interactions without infringing on the space of the survivor?
  - How can the perpetrator use the distinct communities they come from as a way to get outside support without sidestepping their accountability?
  - How often are the survivor and the perpetrator share:
Despite the suggestion to take advantage of mediation trainings to further understand how it is interlinked with their abusive behavior. It is also important for the perpetrator to develop a theoretical framework for ending abuse through a critical analysis of binary gender, patriarchy, and violence in our culture.

All of this is a tall order. Even the best of us can spend our whole lives trying to learn our defense mechanisms, poor communication, and abusive ways we relate to other people. It is a serious commitment, regardless of one’s history with abuse. For the purposes of the accountability process, it’s necessary to break down this complicated and massaged issue. Several small steps can make a difference. Some approaches to these tasks can include:

- Getting together regularly with a group of friends or one peer mentor to read books, talk through discussion questions, practice consent role plays, and develop concrete skills for improved communication. Topics to consider include: gender, sexuality, power, consent, rape culture, consent, and deconstructing masculinity. This can also function as a mentor—or other gender-based support group to talk more generally about past and present experiences bound up in gender.

- Getting together regularly with a counselor to get to the emotional centers of gravity of the abuse and develop an honest understanding of how to make concrete changes. This could be a professional, licensed counselor\(^1\), a friend who has well-developed counseling and communication skills, or a trained co-counselor. Meeting with any type of counselor should provide you the opportunity to focus on the emotional challenges facing the perpetrator.

- Using something like an accountability circle model, in which both the survivor and the perpetrator are present with at least one or two supporters and a facilitator. This can be a good way to clarify what happened and get a good foundational base to move from. This can be particularly useful if the perpetrator resists sharing much of their experiences. At the forefront of this concern is sensitivity to survivors who appear to be making swift progress in the way they talk about the issues, while internally refusing to explore the origins of the abuse in a way that leads them accepting responsibility and making changes. It’s important to go beyond such a superficial reading of progress in an emotional development in which it is possible to communicate openly even about difficult emotional things, it is also necessary to develop a culture of awareness about how that disclosure will affect the people addressed—especially if they are acquaintances or simply friends.

At the forefront of this concern is sensitivity to survivors who may not want to be forced to think about abuse simply because a perpetrator needs to add facts or fill in the missing pieces of their abuse history. It may be that disclosure of the perpetrator’s abuse history is not an easy or short process, even when they asked if it was OK, the subtext was always, “I’m asking you because I need your help. I need you to hear this. And eventually I need your approval.” I know that I am not the only female-bodied person, not the only survivor, who is beginning to move beyond feeling overwhelmed into feeling overburdened by the non-stop crisis created by this kind of disclosure. And I know I am not the only one who wonders if it is import to talk about the asking that is not really asking, particularly when so many men are consistently seeking support solely from the women in their lives. I’m not here just to fix it for you; I’m not ready at your disposal, friends. For every perpetrator who crosses the threshold from uncertainty into ease about their accountability process, it is increasingly important to talk and survivors to listen. It became a perpetuation of the abusive dynamic in which it is possible to communicate openly even about difficult emotional things, it is also necessary to develop a culture of awareness about how that disclosure will affect the people addressed—especially if they are acquaintances or simply friends.

Mediators may certainly be useful for helping to facilitate some of the concrete negotiations within an accountability process. Although it is an emotional development in which it is possible to communicate openly even about difficult emotional things, it is also necessary to develop a culture of awareness about how that disclosure will affect the people addressed—especially if they are acquaintances or simply friends.

One option is for the support networks to make a timeline of various subjects to tackle or approaches to graduate through. For example:

- Rape culture deconstructing masculinity gender binary consent or accountability circle men’s discussion group batterer’s recovery program co-counseling rape crisis line volunteering

The support networks could make a list of new, concrete skills to be developed, or they could create a system for regular progress reports. Ideally, the support networks will find a process that feels both thorough and sustainable.

Disclosure

Once terms have been agreed upon to talk about the abuse and there is some semblance of a plan in place, figure out how to talk to others about the abuse and the accountability process. Remember that a person’s patterns of abusive behavior affect them more than just those within the relationships where the abuse is the most focused. It is important for the perpetrator to communicate about their accountability process with their future partners, friends, housemates, comrades, and anyone else with whom they organize.

It may be that disclosure of the perpetrator’s abuse history is one part of the accountability process. The survivor may request that the perpetrator talk about the abuse to other people in their life, or the survivor may request that the perpetrator publicly disclose information about their accountability process through an open letter, zine, or other means. Public disclosure from the perpetrator may be important for communication across multiple communities or for a perpetrator who is widely known. At its best, disclosure can be an important way to open up dialogue in a wide array of spaces.

If the perpetrator is unwilling to participate in an accountability process or is otherwise resistant to the survivor’s requests, public disclosure about the abuse from the survivor or their support networks may be necessary to give people the pertinent information to understand a perpetrator’s accountability track record. Abuse may also be used as a pressure tactic; the humiliation and widespread attention of publicly disclosing the perpetrator’s history is also an accountability mechanism that the perpetrator can take to make the perpetrator to take it more seriously. Also, when other people from the perpetrator’s family begin to ask them about the situation or participate even peripherally in the accountability process, this can emphasize the importance of ending with them.

Disclosure is a complicated thing. It is increasingly acceptable in anarchist circles for perpetrators to disclose information about their histories of abuse and their accountability processes. As long as it is an emotional development in which it is possible to communicate openly even about difficult emotional things, it is also necessary to develop a culture of awareness about how that disclosure will affect the people addressed—especially if they are acquaintances or simply friends. But people also aren’t used to talking about the tough stuff they’ve been through, nor chronicling the trajectories of their emotional development. It is important to talk about the asking that is not really asking, particularly when so many men are consistently seeking support solely from the women in their lives. I’m not here just to fix it for you; I’m not ready at your disposal, friends. For every perpetrator who crosses the threshold from uncertainty into ease about their accountability process, it is increasingly important to talk and survivors to listen. It became a perpetuation of the abusive dynamic in which it is possible to communicate openly even about difficult emotional things, it is also necessary to develop a culture of awareness about how that disclosure will affect the people addressed—especially if they are acquaintances or simply friends.

Another part of follow-up is getting our stories of recovery out there. People often say that there’s not a lot of success with grassroots perpetrator accountability processes— that fundamentally, perpetrators don’t change their abusive behaviors. But people also aren’t used to talking about the tough stuff they’ve been through, nor chronicling the trajectories of their emotional development. It is important to talk about the asking that is not really asking, particularly when so many men are consistently seeking support solely from the women in their lives. I’m not here just to fix it for you; I’m not ready at your disposal, friends. For every perpetrator who crosses the threshold from uncertainty into ease about their accountability process, it is increasingly important to talk and survivors to listen. It became a perpetuation of the abusive dynamic in which it is possible to communicate openly even about difficult emotional things, it is also necessary to develop a culture of awareness about how that disclosure will affect the people addressed—especially if they are acquaintances or simply friends.
From Popular Power to Social War

Claudia López Benegas, David Moreno Piets, Horacio Carriqueo Valdés, and others have lost their lives—perhaps by police.

What are the roots of current social conflict in Chile, and of anarchist involvement? Has the transition from dictatorship to democracy shifted the terrain? Can US anarchists learn from the movement in Chile, or is the context utterly different?

The First Phase of US Intervention

“The key is psych war within Chile.”

-CIA secret cable, September 27, 1970

The democratic system in Chile was historically divided into three key blocs: the electoral left, the center, and the right. Throughout the twentieth century, the center bloc was critical in deciding ruling coalitions and the presidency. This mechanism allowed a presidential candidate to secure a majority of votes even though the electoral tradition was not a bipartisan system as in the United States. There were exceptions to this tradition, such as the election of the right wing president Jorge Alessandri Rodríguez. The 1958 election of Alessandri foreclosed complications in the three electoral blocs; this would only be used as a day by day as used for a justification for the military coup of 1973. As a candidate for the National Party (PN), Alessandri barely won a plurality in the election by 32.2%. His closest competitor, Salvador Allende Gossens from the Front for Popular Action (FRAP), received 28.5% of the vote, while the centrist candidate from the Christian Democratic Party (PDC) gained 20.5% of the vote. Without a clear majority, the decision to select the president fell upon congress, which supported the plurality in favor of Alessandri.

This election was not the last attempt by Allende to bring a coalition of left parties to power. Though influenced by anarchists during his youth, Allende co-founded the Socialist Party in 1933, and ran unsuccessfully for president so many times that he joked that his epitaph would read “here lies the next president of Chile.” The 1938 election was Allende’s second attempt, and he failed again in 1964, losing this time to the Christian Democratic candidate. It was the height of the Cold War; fearing that a Marxist electoral victory would destabilize their control of Latin America, the US had crafted a program called the Alliance for Progress to empower centrist parties across Latin America. Chile was a key target of this new program. Though many documents from this period remain classified, it is known that the US covertly financed $4 million to the Christian Democrats’ campaign during the 1964 election. This would only be exceeded in the next election.

In 1970, Allende ran for the presidency on the ticket of a new coalition of left parties, the Popular Unity (UP), a tense and alliance including Allende’s Socialist Party, the Communist Party, the Radical Party, the Movement of Unitary Popular Action (MAPU), and the Social Democracy Party (PSD). Allende was once again in tight competition with right-wing candidate Alessandri, and the US government was following the contest closely. This time, in a situation similar to the Alessandri election of 1958, Allende gained a plurality with 36.6% of the vote, while Alessandri followed with nearly 35.7%.

In a secret CIA document from September 16, 1970, officials discussed “Project FUBELT” to prevent Allende from successfully assuming power. The memorandum clearly states, “The Director told the group that President Nixon had decided that an Allende regime in Chile was not acceptable to the United States. The president asked the Agency to prevent Allende from coming to power or to prevent him. The president authorized ten million dollars for this purpose, if needed. Further, The Agency [sic] is to carry out this mission without coordination from the Departments of State or Defense.”

This document has only been public since the early 2000s, and it substantiates what many have suspected ever since the 1973 coup.

The US government developed two plans to prevent Allende from realizing his agenda. The first plan, Track I, was to dissolve the Chilean congress from accepting Allende’s victory. The second, Track II, was to create the conditions for direct military intervention. Track I focused on creating fears of a communist totalitarian state in order to persuade the current president to dissolve his cabinet, create a new cabinet with military officers, refuse to accept the presidency of Allende, and finally bring in a dictatorship. The president felt uneasy with this plan, being a staunch constitutionalist and centrist. Track I failed when congress approved Allende in a last-minute decision after he signed a document affirming his support for the Chilean constitution.

Subsequent CIA documents—all with pages of blacked out text—illustrate detailed intelligence techniques for psychological warfare intended to destabilize the confirmation of Allende. On September 17, the CIA released a report stating that they were preparing a group that would “conduct special recruitment and other direct approaches—they all have ‘false flag’ experience.” Later CIA reports included plans to create a situation that could induce a military coup, including economic warfare to be instigated by Chileans with anti-Allende sympathies.

We must prepare ourselves for psychological warfare today. We overshadow their voices and we are the US government. We feel the weight of their eyes reading our email. They take our photographs before they are being carried out by entities other than those actually behind them.

May 22, 2009, the twenty-first-century Mapuche revolutionaries in southern Chile. The mutiny began in a direct line from resistance and repression under the Pinochet regime. This affords anarchists a broader base of support and a wider understanding of their efforts, but also intensifies clashes with the authorities. Mauricio was not the first anarchist to die in conflict with the state in recent years. The transition from dictatorship to democracy is not the empire; it is only its most famous spokesperson.

The touch of empire has been felt in so many places. The United States is not the empire; it is only its most famous spokesperson. The US had crafted a program called the Alliance for Progress to empower centrist parties across Latin America. Chile was a key target of this new program. Though many documents from this period remain classified, it is known that the US covertly financed $4 million to the Christian Democrats’ campaign during the 1964 election. This would only be exceeded in the next election.

In 1970, Allende ran for the presidency on the ticket of a new coalition of left parties, the Popular Unity (UP), a tense and alliance including Allende’s Socialist Party, the Communist Party, the Radical Party, the Movement of Unitary Popular Action (MAPU), and the Social Democracy Party (PSD). Allende was once again in tight competition with right-wing candidate Alessandri, and the US government was following the contest closely. This time, in a situation similar to the Alessandri election of 1958, Allende gained a plurality with 36.6% of the vote, while Alessandri followed with nearly 35.7%.

In a secret CIA document from September 16, 1970, officials discussed “Project FUBELT” to prevent Allende from successfully assuming power. The memorandum clearly states, “The Director told the group that President Nixon had decided that an Allende regime in Chile was not acceptable to the United States. The president asked the Agency to prevent Allende from coming to power or to prevent him. The president authorized ten million dollars for this purpose, if needed. Further, The Agency [sic] is to carry out this mission without coordination from the Departments of State or Defense.”

This document has only been public since the early 2000s, and it substantiates what many have suspected ever since the 1973 coup.

The US government developed two plans to prevent Allende from realizing his agenda. The first plan, Track I, was to dissolve the Chilean congress from accepting Allende’s victory. The second, Track II, was to create the conditions for direct military intervention. Track I focused on creating fears of a communist totalitarian state in order to persuade the current president to dissolve his cabinet, create a new cabinet with military officers, refuse to accept the presidency of Allende, and finally bring in a dictatorship. The president felt uneasy with this plan, being a staunch constitutionalist and centrist. Track I failed when congress approved Allende in a last-minute decision after he signed a document affirming his support for the Chilean constitution.

Subsequent CIA documents—all with pages of blacked out text—illustrate detailed intelligence techniques for psychological warfare intended to destabilize the confirmation of Allende. On September 17, the CIA released a report stating that they were preparing a group that would “conduct special recruitment and other direct approaches—they all have ‘false flag’ experience.” Later CIA reports included plans to create a situation that could induce a military coup, including economic warfare to be instigated by Chileans with anti-Allende sympathies.

We must prepare ourselves for psychological warfare today. We overshadow their voices and we are the US government. We feel the weight of their eyes reading our email. They take our photographs before they are being carried out by entities other than those actually behind them.

* A month later, Cristian Cancino was arrested for allegedly providing black powder for explosive devices from his workplace in the mining industry. Cancino’s case was the first instance under the democratic regime in which the dictatorship-era anti-terrorism law was being used in Santiago; the law is usually reserved to repress indigenous Mapuche revolutionaries in southern Chile.

† Some anti-authoritarian comedies in Chile do not call themselves anarchists, instead referring to themselves as libertarians. The term has a decidedly different meaning than it does in the United States.
Allende’s electoral victory heralded a period of social tensions in Chile. The new government undertook a series of reforms, eventually nationalizing the vast copper mines in the northern part of the country. Meanwhile, segments of the Chilean bourgeoisie began a campaign to undermine the Popular Unity coalition. Many of their tactics were in line with the CIA’s Plan II: for example, shop owners falsely claimed food shortages to spread fear of economic collapse and hyperinflation. The Chilean right also employed more direct approaches: a right-wing organization, Patria y Libertad, formed to combat revolutionaries during street demonstrations.

Although the new president was a constitutionalist and reformist, more militant groups used this moment to mobilize their forces. One key group, the Revolutionary Left Movement (MIR), was an armed organization formed in 1965 by radical students with revolutionary tendencies, including some anarchists; the MIR later declared itself Marxist-Leninist, in 1967. While the Stuart Allendista movement promoted the idea of the via pacifica, the peaceful way, it was the revolutionary elements that pushed direct conflict with the bourgeoisie. The MIR declared, “The MIR rejects the theory of the ‘peaceful way,’ because it politically disarms the proletariat and is useless, because the bourgeoisie will choose totalitarian dictatorship and civil war before peacefully giving up power.”

The dictatorship of capital does not know peace. It is an empire built upon massacres and lies. The dictatorship only promotes peaceful dissent to keep us incapable of destroying it.

After a failed coup attempt by a faction of the military on June 29, 1973, an even tenser atmosphere reigned in Santiago. Augusto Pinochet Ugarte, head of the Chilean army, did not support the effort. He was generally considered a constitutionalist opposed to military intervention—at least until he helped lead the successful coup d’état on September 11. There is evidence of US support for the coup in secret documents that were recently made public, but it is noteworthy that there was domestic support for the coup among the Chilean bourgeoisie, political right, and centrist parties. Members of the centrist electoral bloc believed that the military would take power only temporarily before returning it to the political structures from before Popular Unity rule.

Allende also believed this to be true, and preferred temporary military rule to armed conflict. This demonstrates the reformist intentions of his entire project.

In Allende’s final radio address, he requested that leftists, students, and workers not raise an armed resistance to the military, a plea that was ignored by the MIR and others. These organizations assisted in the armed defense of the poblaciones, the poor neighborhoods on the outskirts of Santiago, such as la Legua, that were raided by the military during the coup d’état.

The military regime did not immediately hand power over to the center and right-wing electoral blocs, but held it for seventeen years.

Militant Activity during the Dictatorship

“In Chile, a leaf does not move without me knowing about it.”
—Augusto Pinochet

The armed forces quickly organized a ruling junta including all branches of the military and the police. Pinochet was selected head of the regime; initially this was to be a temporary position rotated between various members of the junta. The military government justified the coup as a preemptive measure against Plan Z, an alleged Popular Unity coalition plot for armed communist revolution, which has never been substantiated. As time passed, Pinochet secured control of the military regime, which he retained until its end.

The new regime created a list of suspected communists and subversives in the country. Many of these were detained and executed or tortured. Some, such as Miguel Enriquez Espinosa of the MIR, went underground to combat the new regime; others went into exile. Enriquez was eventually shot to death in a standoff in 1974 with officials from the National Intelligence Directorate (DINA), the new secret police force. After the repression of the early 1970s, many Chileans were afraid to participate in illegal street demonstrations. The 1980s, however, brought a resurgence of political activity against the military regime, and the MIR reemerged as a political force.

As revolutionary anarchists, we critique the organizations of the past that failed to reject state power, but we do not forget their practice in combat. We are at war.

Political actions during this period included clandestine activity. In addition to the historic MIR, two more armed organizations formed in the 1980s: a wing of the Community Party designated the Manuel Rodriguez Patriotic Front (FPMR) and a militant faction of the MAPU from the Popular Unity era, called MAPU-Lautaro. In one of the most famous cases, on September 7, 1986, a cell of the FPMR unsuccessfully attempted to assassinate Pinochet. All three organizations engaged in armed actions during the dictatorship, including expropriations.

The Rise of the Popular Unity Coalition

“Workers of my country, I have faith in Chile and its destiny. Other men will overcome this dark and bitter moment when treason seeks to prevail. Keep in mind that, much sooner than later, the great avenues of social tensions in Chile and its destiny. Other men will overcome this dark and bitter moment when treason seeks to prevail. Keep in mind that, much sooner than later, the great avenues

* The period of the Popular Unity was a complicated time of conflicting revolutionary tendencies and right-wing conspiracies. Workers took over factories and students occupied schools against the will of the Allende government; there were massive demonstrations in the streets. Readers interested in the history of this period should check out the three part documentary, La Aventura de Chile. Stills just before and during the military coup, Part three, “El Poder Popular,” contains an especially interesting look into these competing tendencies.

* The period of the Popular Unity was a complicated time of conflicting revolutionary tendencies and right-wing conspiracies. Workers took over factories and students occupied schools against the will of the Allende government; there were massive demonstrations in the streets. Readers interested in the history of this period should check out the three part documentary, La Aventura de Chile. Stills just before and during the military coup, Part three, “El Poder Popular,” contains an especially interesting look into these competing tendencies.
The transition to a democratic state took place between 1980 and 1990. As a result, many of the political prisoners were released and the memory of repression was gradually replaced by the memory of reform. The transition was not smooth, as the military regime continued to exert control over society.

The social movement reached a peak in Chile during the 1990s, as the anti-globalization movement became influential around the world. The anti-globalization movement movement reached a height in Chile during the APEC conference in late 2004. While there have been anarchists present throughout the history of political struggle in Chile, Marxism and reformist organizations dominated during the 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s. At the end of the 1990s, the Concertación de Partidos por la Democracia (Concertación), which includes numerous center-left parties for the traditional electoral blocs, thus preventing electoral left parties from gaining power.

The transition was a result of the political system’s failure to address the needs of the population. The military regime had utilized the political system to maintain their power. The transition was not smooth, as the military regime continued to exert control over society.

The transition was a result of the political system’s failure to address the needs of the population. The military regime had utilized the political system to maintain their power. The transition was not smooth, as the military regime continued to exert control over society.

The transition was a result of the political system’s failure to address the needs of the population. The military regime had utilized the political system to maintain their power. The transition was not smooth, as the military regime continued to exert control over society.

The transition was a result of the political system’s failure to address the needs of the population. The military regime had utilized the political system to maintain their power. The transition was not smooth, as the military regime continued to exert control over society.

The transition was a result of the political system’s failure to address the needs of the population. The military regime had utilized the political system to maintain their power. The transition was not smooth, as the military regime continued to exert control over society.

The transition was a result of the political system’s failure to address the needs of the population. The military regime had utilized the political system to maintain their power. The transition was not smooth, as the military regime continued to exert control over society.

The transition was a result of the political system’s failure to address the needs of the population. The military regime had utilized the political system to maintain their power. The transition was not smooth, as the military regime continued to exert control over society.

The transition was a result of the political system’s failure to address the needs of the population. The military regime had utilized the political system to maintain their power. The transition was not smooth, as the military regime continued to exert control over society.

The transition was a result of the political system’s failure to address the needs of the population. The military regime had utilized the political system to maintain their power. The transition was not smooth, as the military regime continued to exert control over society.

The transition was a result of the political system’s failure to address the needs of the population. The military regime had utilized the political system to maintain their power. The transition was not smooth, as the military regime continued to exert control over society.

The transition was a result of the political system’s failure to address the needs of the population. The military regime had utilized the political system to maintain their power. The transition was not smooth, as the military regime continued to exert control over society.

The transition was a result of the political system’s failure to address the needs of the population. The military regime had utilized the political system to maintain their power. The transition was not smooth, as the military regime continued to exert control over society.

The transition was a result of the political system’s failure to address the needs of the population. The military regime had utilized the political system to maintain their power. The transition was not smooth, as the military regime continued to exert control over society.

The transition was a result of the political system’s failure to address the needs of the population. The military regime had utilized the political system to maintain their power. The transition was not smooth, as the military regime continued to exert control over society.

The transition was a result of the political system’s failure to address the needs of the population. The military regime had utilized the political system to maintain their power. The transition was not smooth, as the military regime continued to exert control over society.

The transition was a result of the political system’s failure to address the needs of the population. The military regime had utilized the political system to maintain their power. The transition was not smooth, as the military regime continued to exert control over society.

The transition was a result of the political system’s failure to address the needs of the population. The military regime had utilized the political system to maintain their power. The transition was not smooth, as the military regime continued to exert control over society.

The transition was a result of the political system’s failure to address the needs of the population. The military regime had utilized the political system to maintain their power. The transition was not smooth, as the military regime continued to exert control over society.

The transition was a result of the political system’s failure to address the needs of the population. The military regime had utilized the political system to maintain their power. The transition was not smooth, as the military regime continued to exert control over society.

The transition was a result of the political system’s failure to address the needs of the population. The military regime had utilized the political system to maintain their power. The transition was not smooth, as the military regime continued to exert control over society.

The transition was a result of the political system’s failure to address the needs of the population. The military regime had utilized the political system to maintain their power. The transition was not smooth, as the military regime continued to exert control over society.

The transition was a result of the political system’s failure to address the needs of the population. The military regime had utilized the political system to maintain their power. The transition was not smooth, as the military regime continued to exert control over society.

The transition was a result of the political system’s failure to address the needs of the population. The military regime had utilized the political system to maintain their power. The transition was not smooth, as the military regime continued to exert control over society.

The transition was a result of the political system’s failure to address the needs of the population. The military regime had utilized the political system to maintain their power. The transition was not smooth, as the military regime continued to exert control over society.

The transition was a result of the political system’s failure to address the needs of the population. The military regime had utilized the political system to maintain their power. The transition was not smooth, as the military regime continued to exert control over society.

The transition was a result of the political system’s failure to address the needs of the population. The military regime had utilized the political system to maintain their power. The transition was not smooth, as the military regime continued to exert control over society.

The transition was a result of the political system’s failure to address the needs of the population. The military regime had utilized the political system to maintain their power. The transition was not smooth, as the military regime continued to exert control over society.

The transition was a result of the political system’s failure to address the needs of the population. The military regime had utilized the political system to maintain their power. The transition was not smooth, as the military regime continued to exert control over society.

The transition was a result of the political system’s failure to address the needs of the population. The military regime had utilized the political system to maintain their power. The transition was not smooth, as the military regime continued to exert control over society.

The transition was a result of the political system’s failure to address the needs of the population. The military regime had utilized the political system to maintain their power. The transition was not smooth, as the military regime continued to exert control over society.

The transition was a result of the political system’s failure to address the needs of the population. The military regime had utilized the political system to maintain their power. The transition was not smooth, as the military regime continued to exert control over society.

The transition was a result of the political system’s failure to address the needs of the population. The military regime had utilized the political system to maintain their power. The transition was not smooth, as the military regime continued to exert control over society.

The transition was a result of the political system’s failure to address the needs of the population. The military regime had utilized the political system to maintain their power. The transition was not smooth, as the military regime continued to exert control over society.

The transition was a result of the political system’s failure to address the needs of the population. The military regime had utilized the political system to maintain their power. The transition was not smooth, as the military regime continued to exert control over society.

The transition was a result of the political system’s failure to address the needs of the population. The military regime had utilized the political system to maintain their power. The transition was not smooth, as the military regime continued to exert control over society.

The transition was a result of the political system’s failure to address the needs of the population. The military regime had utilized the political system to maintain their power. The transition was not smooth, as the military regime continued to exert control over society.

The transition was a result of the political system’s failure to address the needs of the population. The military regime had utilized the political system to maintain their power. The transition was not smooth, as the military regime continued to exert control over society.

The transition was a result of the political system’s failure to address the needs of the population. The military regime had utilized the political system to maintain their power. The transition was not smooth, as the military regime continued to exert control over society.

The transition was a result of the political system’s failure to address the needs of the population. The military regime had utilized the political system to maintain their power. The transition was not smooth, as the military regime continued to exert control over society.

The transition was a result of the political system’s failure to address the needs of the population. The military regime had utilized the political system to maintain their power. The transition was not smooth, as the military regime continued to exert control over society.

The transition was a result of the political system’s failure to address the needs of the population. The military regime had utilized the political system to maintain their power. The transition was not smooth, as the military regime continued to exert control over society.

The transition was a result of the political system’s failure to address the needs of the population. The military regime had utilized the political system to maintain their power. The transition was not smooth, as the military regime continued to exert control over society.

The transition was a result of the political system’s failure to address the needs of the population. The military regime had utilized the political system to maintain their power. The transition was not smooth, as the military regime continued to exert control over society.

The transition was a result of the political system’s failure to address the needs of the population. The military regime had utilized the political system to maintain their power. The transition was not smooth, as the military regime continued to exert control over society.

The transition was a result of the political system’s failure to address the needs of the population. The military regime had utilized the political system to maintain their power. The transition was not smooth, as the military regime continued to exert control over society.

The transition was a result of the political system’s failure to address the needs of the population. The military regime had utilized the political system to maintain their power. The transition was not smooth, as the military regime continued to exert control over society.

The transition was a result of the political system’s failure to address the needs of the population. The military regime had utilized the political system to maintain their power. The transition was not smooth, as the military regime continued to exert control over society.

The transition was a result of the political system’s failure to address the needs of the population. The military regime had utilized the political system to maintain their power. The transition was not smooth, as the military regime continued to exert control over society.

The transition was a result of the political system’s failure to address the needs of the population. The military regime had utilized the political system to maintain their power. The transition was not smooth, as the military regime continued to exert control over society.
“Social war.” A city bus bears the evidence of protests in downtown Santiago.

Remembering September 11: 2006
Since the time of Pinochet, people have engaged in protests and riots on various anniversaries. September 11, the date of the military coup, continues to be one of these days of combat. In a tradition originating from the era of the dictatorship, thousands march every year from downtown Santiago to the General Cemetery, where there is a memorial for the victims of the military regime. Police still utilize militarized machinery to repress protestors the same way they did before democracy. The Fuerzas Especiales, which are basically highly-equipped riot police, can be seen downtown on a daily basis.

As soon as we turned the corner, we were met by water cannons.* Police attempted to corner the marchers, chasing us down with their horrible machines. After a tactical retreat, we regrouped to plan how we would meet our friends. I noticed that the bank, which had been protected by riot police just moments ago, had been dramatically assaulted. Its windows were destroyed and its walls had been painted: “The struggle continues.”

The police employ militarized formations that have not changed since the dictatorship. Riot police generally keep a distance from protestors, instead relying on their armored vehicles to direct the crowd. Police on foot will only approach crowds in large teams; individual police are at risk of being attacked by protestors. Anarchists regularly participate in protests in downtown Santiago, often engaging in combat with police. Some years, the September 11 protest involves intense riots in which militants attack banks and businesses with Molotov cocktails. In 2006, a masked protestors threw a Molotov cocktail at la Moneda, the presidential palace. Although the attempt did not cause any structural damage, it created a wave of sensationalist reports in the capitalist press.

I landed near a news van and happened to catch some amazing news. A Molotov had hit la Moneda! The press would later repeat the usual slurs about anarchists along with images of the attack. The march turned another corner. We only had to enter straight ahead through a small alley. Seconds later I found myself in the thick of a crowd thousands strong, with countless encapuchados, people who mask their faces in protest, moving through downtown. I could hear the constant sound of shattering glass. We were not under attack; we were attacking them! I was surrounded by an array of black flags and combatants armed with makeshift weapons. Not a single capitalist target was left untouched.

In a wave of repression following the incident, the Carabineros raided a squatted social center and a politically active university before a protest concerning the educational system. Police claimed that the squat, la Mansión, was a factory for manufacturing Molotov cocktails. Carabineros even presented machetes and chemicals from the school, the Universidad de Santiago de Chile, to the press as probable weapons for combating riot police. The director of the university was forced to appear on the news to negate these accusations, as the machetes were from an African dance class and the chemicals from the chemistry lab.

Carabineros, politicians, and the press were not the only groups to criminalize anarchists during the September 11 march. The youth faction of the Communist Party spoke out against the attack on la Moneda. The Communist Party was among the official organizers of the protest, and they claimed that they would forcibly prevent anarchists from disrupting future marches. However, the protests have continued every September 11 since, and the Communist Youth will never play the role of protest police in Chile.

The march continued toward the General Cemetery. I heard a series of whistles from comrades, signaling trouble. Guanacos were approaching from all sides! We ran for cover. I quickly found myself separated from my partners as the streets were filled with the chemistry lab, an African dance class and the chemicals from la Mansión. We had to enter straight ahead through a small alley. A group of encapuchados fought police on the other side of the gates that surround a campus of the University of Chile.
getting close to the General Cemetery. My partner and I recognized una amiga (a friend). We were on our way to the mercado when we stumbled upon a group of young people protesting against the army. While walking down the street, we witnessed a demonstration against the army's violent tactics, which included tear gas and rubber bullets. We were shocked by the level of radically and the density of the crowd. As we approached the protest, we saw a young man wearing a backpack and holding a sign that read, “NO MORE WAR!” He was shouting slogans and waving a flag that read “PEACE NOW!”

The protest was a call for peace and an end to the conflict. The demonstrators were singing songs and chanting slogans, expressing their determination to bring an end to the violence and war. They were joined by a large group of people, including women, children, and elderly people. The atmosphere was charged with emotion and determination. We felt a strong sense of solidarity with the protesters and were moved by their courage and commitment.

We decided to join the protest, and as we walked among the crowd, we spoke with some of the protesters. They told us about the ongoing conflict and their experiences of violence and displacement. They shared their stories of loss, pain, and hope. We listened intently, moved by their resilience and the depth of their convictions.

As we walked, we encountered other groups of protesters affiliated with different political parties and social movements. They were expressing their demands and aspirations, from land reform to education reform. The diversity of the protest was striking, reflecting the complex and multifaceted nature of the conflict. We were impressed by the unity and solidarity among the protesters, despite their differences in ideology and goals.

We spent several hours protesting, and as the day came to a close, we felt a sense of exhaustion but also a profound sense of purpose. We knew that our participation was just a small step towards a larger struggle, but we were inspired by the determination and courage of the protesters. We left the protest with a renewed sense of solidarity and a commitment to supporting the fight for justice and peace.
the terrain and hesitant to navigate it in the dark. These tactics originated during protests against the Pinochet regime.

Security culture is critical. We must live by it: I will share only one memory with you from that night. An older woman on the street corner told me, “Take care of yourselves, comrades.”

Police utilize more violent tactics in the poblaciones than they do against protests downtown or outside the universities; they even fire live ammunition. In some neighborhoods demonstrators respond with guns, as well.

There have been numerous protest fatalities under democracy, including the young anarchist dancer and student at la Academia, Claudia López. During the protests in 1998, she was fatally shot while spray painting messages on a wall. Carabineros are also known to beat demonstrators that they arrest during the night.

Confrontations in poblaciones are not limited to September 11; they occur during most periods of protest, including the Day of the Youth Combatant. Although these protests started in the Villa Francisca, when the police arrived, they killed, they now occur throughout the poblaciones, and in recent years, these protests have spread to other Chilean cities.

The September 11 protests in 2007 produced a larger scale of conflict than had been seen in the preceding years. There were confrontations in neighborhoods that had not been active in recent memory. In another traditionally active neighborhood, Pudahuel, a Carabinero was shot dead. This story figured in the press system soon collapsed. We did not need to ask anyone where to go. We traveled downtown to Plaza Italia, a traditional site for protests. Other comunardas marched in the poblaciones. There were so many of us on November 5 to commemorate the death of Pablo Vergara, the elder brother of Eduardo and Rafael.

The Day of the Youth Combatant is not only about the Vergara brothers. We remember the deaths of all the combatants under the dictator. We read communiqués that explain our actions. We create the atmosphere for insurrection.

The Legacy of a Dictator

On December 10, 2006, I had just returned home from a short trip. I was sitting in my bedroom reading an engaging novel. My mind wandered as I pictured the story before me. Suddenly, a voice screamed, “He is dead! He is really dead!” Alarmed, I ran into the other room to find my friend in an elated state. Augusto Pinochet was dead. He had killed all our friends, where the wars, and the phones were scrambled and their faces obscured while testifying. As a result of this campaign of government repression, there are numerous Mapuche political prisoners.

The Chilean state considers this conflict its greatest national threat. The cities are full of people of Mapuche decent. If the communities in conflict become strong enough, they may find sympathy in the Mapuche people in urban areas who were taught by the racist system to forget their culture. This is already starting to happen.

Two Mapuche youth and weichafes from a militant organization, the Coordinadora Arauco-Malleco (CAM), have been shot and killed by police in recent years, Alex Lemnín was killed by a gunshot wound to the head in 2002, and Matías Catrileo was murdered with an uzzi in 2008. Several documentaries explore this topic, including El Despojo and Wallmapu. Anarchists continually engage in solidarity actions concerning the conflict, including regular marches for Mapuche political prisoners. Comrades also participated in confrontation demonstrations after the deaths of Alex Lemnín and Matías Catrileo.

The Mapuche Conflict and Anarchist Solidarity

A detailed analysis of the Mapuche conflict is beyond the scope of this article. The situation is far too important and complicated to be presented in such a small space, but it is also impossible to discuss the situation in southern Chile without at least mentioning it.

The Mapuche people successfully resisted Spanish occupation during the colonization of South America. Early maps of Chile show Wallmapu as an autonomous territory. Wallmapu remained relatively independent of the Chilean state until the army engaged in a campaign called the “purification” in the late nineteenth century. The military intervention resulted in the deaths of hundreds of Mapuche people, and large tracts of land were handed over to people of European decent.

The contemporary conflict in Wallmapu is not a reemergence of indigenous resistance, but a continuation of a war that never ended. Today, Mapuche communities clash with national and multinational corporations that hold land that is traditionally part of Wallmapu. Some communities have successfully regained large amounts of land after decades of struggle. Weichafes (Mapuche warriors) defend their communities against violent police raids. Carabineros routinely fly over rebellious communities in helicopters, and watch all movement in and out of the area closely.

Anarchists continually engage in solidarity actions concerning the conflict, including regular marches for Mapuche political prisoners. Comrades also participated in confrontation demonstrations after the deaths of Alex Lemnín and Matías Catrileo.

The Bancó Security Case and Repression of Ex-Lautaristas

“During these days of confinement, we have received the love, care, and dedication of many people without regard to borders. Our history of struggle speaks for itself: repression

In Santiago, the police arrested a large number of demonstrators. Carabineros physically attacked the protesters. Carabineros are also known to beat demonstrators that they arrest during the night.

Confrontations in poblaciones are not limited to September 11; they occur during most periods of protest, including the Day of the Youth Combatant. Although these protests started in the Villa Francisca, when the police arrived, they killed, they now occur throughout the poblaciones, and in recent years, these protests have spread to other Chilean cities.

The September 11 protests in 2007 produced a larger scale of conflict than had been seen in the preceding years. There were confrontations in neighborhoods that had not been active in recent memory. In another traditionally active neighborhood, Pudahuel, a Carabinero was shot dead. This story figured in the press system soon collapsed. We did not need to ask anyone where to go. We traveled downtown to Plaza Italia, a traditional site for protests. Other comunardas marched in the poblaciones. There were so many of us on November 5 to commemorate the death of Pablo Vergara, the elder brother of Eduardo and Rafael.

The Day of the Youth Combatant is not only about the Vergara brothers. We remember the deaths of all the combatants under the dictator. We read communiqués that explain our actions. We create the atmosphere for insurrection.

The Legacy of a Dictator

On December 10, 2006, I had just returned home from a short trip. I was sitting in my bedroom reading an engaging novel. My mind wandered as I pictured the story before me. Suddenly, a voice screamed, “He is dead! He is really dead!” Alarmed, I ran into the other room to find my friend in an elated state. Augusto Pinochet was dead. He had killed all our friends, where the wars, and the phones were scrambled and their faces obscured while testifying. As a result of this campaign of government repression, there are numerous Mapuche political prisoners.

The Chilean state considers this conflict its greatest national threat. The cities are full of people of Mapuche decent. If the communities in conflict become strong enough, they may find sympathy in the Mapuche people in urban areas who were taught by the racist system to forget their culture. This is already starting to happen.

Two Mapuche youth and weichafes from a militant organization, the Coordinadora Arauco-Malleco (CAM), have been shot and killed by police in recent years, Alex Lemnín was killed by a gunshot wound to the head in 2002, and Matías Catrileo was murdered with an uzzi in 2008. Several documentaries explore this topic, including El Despojo and Wallmapu. Anarchists continually engage in solidarity actions concerning the conflict, including regular marches for Mapuche political prisoners. Comrades also participated in confrontation demonstrations after the deaths of Alex Lemnín and Matías Catrileo.

The Mapuche Conflict and Anarchist Solidarity

A detailed analysis of the Mapuche conflict is beyond the scope of this article. The situation is far too important and complicated to be presented in such a small space, but it is also impossible to discuss the situation in southern Chile without at least mentioning it.

The Mapuche people successfully resisted Spanish occupation during the colonization of South America. Early maps of Chile show Wallmapu as an autonomous territory. Wallmapu remained relatively independent of the Chilean state until the army engaged in a campaign called the “purification” in the late nineteenth century. The military intervention resulted in the deaths of hundreds of Mapuche people, and large tracts of land were handed over to people of European decent.

The contemporary conflict in Wallmapu is not a reemergence of indigenous resistance, but a continuation of a war that never ended. Today, Mapuche communities clash with national and multinational corporations that hold land that is traditionally part of Wallmapu. Some communities have successfully regained large amounts of land after decades of struggle. Weichafes (Mapuche warriors) defend their communities against violent police raids. Carabineros routinely fly over rebellious communities in helicopters, and watch all movement in and out of the area closely.

Anarchists continually engage in solidarity actions concerning the conflict, including regular marches for Mapuche political prisoners. Comrades also participated in confrontation demonstrations after the deaths of Alex Lemnín and Matías Catrileo.

The Bancó Security Case and Repression of Ex-Lautaristas

“During these days of confinement, we have received the love, care, and dedication of many people without regard to borders. Our history of struggle speaks for itself: repression
On October 8, 2007, an armed robbery occurred at a branch of Banco Security in Santiago. Five people disguised in everyday dress participated in the heist, then attempted to leave the area on two motorcycles. The robbers were confronted by a Carabinero on a motorcycle and an exchange of gunfire ensued. In the aftermath, the Carabineros, Luis Moyano Farías, lay dead, and the individuals made their getaway. The capitalist news speculated about the identities of the robbers for weeks. The press and the state expressed suspicion of the robbers’ capabili ties with firearms, even declaring that the robbers must have been former Carabineros. In early November, the state changed its position, announcing that they suspected ex-members of MAPU-Lautaro. The new suspects included four former members of the organization: Marcelo Villarroel Sepúlveda, Freddy Fuentevilla Saa, Juan Aliste Vega, and Carlos Gutiérrez Quidules. Villarroel, singer for the punk band Dlinkr, was an active libertarian and former participant in the political prisoner collective Kamina Libre. As a young subversive, he had spent fifteen years in jail under the new democratic government of the 1990s—nearly half his life. The ex-Lautaristas went into hiding, and the go vernment soon arrested another former member of the same organization, Áxel Osorio Rivera. Osorio, another militant libertarian, was accused of providing a network of assistance for the underground ex-Lautaristas.

Remember, our comrades lived through a time where false confrontations—allings made to look like standoffs with po lice—were common. Osorio was arrested outside of the metro; after his detention, he shouted words of support for Mapache political prisoners to the press: “Freedom to the political prisoners, matrichewal!* This is a setup.” Reports in the press revealed that he had been subjected to weeks of close surveillance by intelligence officers. Osorio was ultimately sentenced to three years and one day in jail for transporting a firearm. It was later revealed that Osorio, along with Cristián Godoy Ávila, another person charged with assisting the suspects, was framed by an individual turned state’s witness, Carlos Sepúlveda Bregier. Two of the suspects in hiding, Freddy Fuentevilla and Marcelo Villarroel, were captured in Argentina on March 15, 2008. As of this writing, Villarroel and Fuentevilla are still facing charges for transporting arms in Argentina as well as an extradition request from Chile.

Over the following weeks, the capitalist press criminalized comrades with a history in MAPU-Lautaro. On the Day of the Youth Combatant in 2008, Carabineros arrested Marcelo Dote López, an ex-member of the Lautaro Youth Movement. They accused Dote of attempting to attack police with a Molotov cocktail during a nighttime demonstration for the anniversary in Padalhue. The police raided Dote’s home; in the process, they arrested a former Lautarista, Esteban Huinguírey Reyes. The police invented scandalous stories for the press about a possible reappearance of MAPU-Lautaro, and even released a document intended to show that ex-members of the organization planned to infiltrate various movements, including the escolares and the Mapuche conflict.

A young Chilean woman, Andrea Urzúa Cid, was arrested on September 20, 2008 in Argentina upon visiting Marcelo Villarroel and Freddy Fuentevilla. She was accused by the Ar gentine authorities of delivering explosive materials on her person to help break the two out of prison. Urzúa responded by denouncing the charge as a further attempt to incriminate Villarroel and Fuentevilla. The Chilean press responded with exaggerated headlines, even calling Urzúa the “woman bomb.”

The state seeks to criminalize ex-militants from the subversive organizations of the past in order to delegitimize the political dis sent of today.

The Current Climate of Repression and the Death of Mauricio Morales

Mauricio Morales, a young anarchist and history student at the Universidad Metropolitana de Ciencia de la Educación, died in a bomb explosion during the early morning of May 22, 2009. Carabineros and capitalist media allege that Morales and another unidentified individual intended to target the School of Prison Guards. According to reports, this second person was injured during the explosion, but has not been apprehended to date.

The Day of the Youth Combatant is a day to remember all the people who have fallen under the dictatorship and democracy. Mauricio Morales is the most recent addition to a long list of fallen combatants.

“He died a warrior, fighting without fear and without hesitation against all forms of power.”
—Open letter from the occupied social center and library, Sacco y Vanzetti

Morales was politically active in Santiago, participating in various occupied social centers in Santiago. After the deaths of Morales, Carabineros raided two social centers, Cueto con Aídes and La Idea. Police also attempted to enter a third space, a squatted social center named after the Italian anarchists Sacco and Vanzetti. The operation proved unsuccessful after occupants and supporters of the center defended it.

A Mapuche saying: “Ten times over we will be victorious”
Masked demonstrators throw Molotov cocktails at riot police outside the Universidad Metropolitana de Ciencia de la Educación; Mapuches and supporters march during the “Day of the Race,” the official name of Columbus Day in Chile.

“We stand in solidarity with the family and friends of Mauricio Morales. The ideas of freedom are with us just as so many others are with us everywhere—people who act in diverse ways. […] We call for more acts of assistance, resistance, and solidarity against this repressive situation. We are here defending our home and space.”

—International call for solidarity after police raided the squat La Idea in downtown Santiago

Mauricio loved his community, and he expressed it in all of his actions. Mauricio’s moments of combat are not only apparent in how he died, but also in how lived. Mauricio supported activities in squatted social centers and libraries. Mauricio was a combatant in every sense of the word.

“When one embraces the social war, one must also accept the tragedy that accompanies it. Death is inevitable, and war creates death in its urgency. For us, the death of the enemy is a part of this urgency: the death of the state, capital, and all of its relations, money, and property. Without a doubt, we must be capable of understanding the inexplicable deaths, the indescribable, unnecessary, and terrible ones…”

—Open letter from Áxel Osorio, revolutionary anarchist and ex-militant from MAPU-Lautaro, currently confined to maximum-security prison

“Compañero Mauricio Morales. ¡Presente! Compañero Mauricio Morales. ¡Presente! Ahora. ¡Y siempre!”

On June 24, the mother of a young anarchist, Diego Ríos González, alerted police to a bag that she found suspicious in her home. Betrayed by his mother, Ríos went into hiding, and police raided a social center nearby in the población Pudahuel, the Centro Social Autónomo and Biblioteca Libertaria Jhonny Cariqueo. On the right-wing news channel, Meganoticias, a neighbor stated, “I do not know why they have so much against these young people who bring culture to the población, since there are so many drug dealers just a few blocks away.”

The repression is nothing new. It is only the extension of decades of tyranny.

As of writing this piece, the raids, persecution, and constant police surveillance have not succeeded in breaking up the movements in Chile. Revolutionaries in the country are part of a culture that has sustained generations of repression since the establishment of the military dictatorship. The anti-authoritarian structure of...
anarchist affinity groups and collectives is more difficult to infiltrate than the organizations of a generation ago.

In 2004, anarchists were blamed for violent demonstrations during the APEC conference. Two years later anarchists were attacked in the media for violent May Day demonstrations. Encapuchados were also accused of infiltrating student demonstrations. In 2006, anarchists were criminalized by the media for the Molotov attack on the presidential palace, La Moneda.

State repression occurs in many forms: sensationalist media campaigns, infiltration, “false flag” operations, and militarized police tactics. All of these methods are directly inherited from the military regime. Despite repression, the anarchist movement continues.

Reflections on Chile and the International Context

“It is once again the time for dedication. It is the moment to act on our convictions.”

–Communiqué upon the death of Mauricio Morales, signed by the Fuerzas Autónomas y Destructivas León Czolgosz, Columnas Armadas y Desalmadas Jean Marc Rouillan, and Banda Antipatriota Severino Di Giovanni

The dictatorship never ended; democracy is only its latest image. The dictatorship is the violence of the economy, the rule of the bourgeoisie, and the brutal repression of a militarized police force.

The Concertación and the Alianza have created a more stable electoral system, reforming the traditional three blocs. This new structure has aided in the promotion of social control and the neoliberal project. The new Socialist Party has a stronger sense of clarity than it ever had under the Allende government. The party no longer maintains the pretensions of the “peaceful way.” It utilizes the doctrines developed under the dictatorship, the LOCE, and the anti-terrorism law being only two obvious examples.

It is a dictatorship that does not recognize national boundaries. It is empire.

On a larger scale, the Concertación and Alianza continue the neoliberal project of the Pinochet dictatorship. This is an international program, carried out across the globe.

The enemy has no borders and neither should our response. Our combat is alive in the streets of Greece and France. It is alive in Wallmapu. It is even alive in the heart of empire, the United States.

Political repression against anarchists around the globe continues to intensify. Carlo Giuliani was killed in Genoa, Italy during the G8 demonstrations in 2001. Nicolas Neira was beaten to death by police at a May Day demonstration in Bogotá, Colombia in 2005. Brad Will, an indymedia journalist from the United States, was killed in Oaxaca while documenting the conflict in 2006. Alexandros Grigoropoulos, a fifteen-year-old anarchist, was killed in Greece on December 6, 2008, inspiring a wave of riots across the country and other parts of Europe.

“We affirm a diversity of tactics.”

We work in the communities that we touch, and we are touched by them. These are our territories. We listen to the stories of those who have fought before us, and we create our own.
This article was written and peer-reviewed by one small group in the Bay Area; the viewpoints expressed are the authors’ alone. We are fortunate to have a multitude of analysts in the Bay Area anarchist community; it is not our intention to place ours as more valid than others. We apologize in advance for all errors of fact, analysis, and omission which are undoubtedly present, and ask the reader—especially readers from our community—to understand that our main goal in writing this is to further strategic dialogue between communities and within our own, not to incite divisiveness.
In the Bay Area, it remains one of the most frequent, and in a few short years the anti-war movement had crumbled. DASW died a slow painful death as part of this trajectory.

Anarchist organizing in the Bay Area picked up in 2005 with the formation of Anarchist Action. As the name implies, this was an explicitly anarchist group; it evolved into a forum for local anarchists to propose actions and find others willing to help carry them out. Early on, a demonstration was organized under the aegis of Anarchist Action in the wealthy peninsula town of Palo Alto. The event got rowdy and was characterized by some local papers as a riot. Anarchist Action quickly became notorious for sponsoring similarly militant actions. They continued their work by organizing around immigrant rights, confronting the newly-formed racist anti-immigration Minutemen group.

Their efforts culminated in a July 2005 solidarity demonstration supporting the mobilization against the G8 summit in Scotland. Anarchist Action had sponsored several outreach events and a speakers council in advance of...
Over the years, Bay Area anarchists have organized and participated in a number of street parties, such as this Reclaim the Streets action.

The demonstration in San Francisco’s Mission district. On the evening of July 9, over 200 anti-authoritarians left the BART station at 16th and Mission. The crowd began targeting symbols of corporate capitalism, smashing windows at Wells Fargo and Kentucky Fried Chicken. They also dragged newspaper boxes and other objects into the street as makeshift blockades. At one point, a police cruiser drove into the crowd and got stuck on a foam sign.9 The police exited their car and charged protesters; at least one officer began beating them. At this point another demonstrator allegedly fractured his skull.

At this point another demonstrator allegedly came to the aid of his comrade and hit officer Peter Shields in the head with some object, fracturing his skull.

The assault on Shields provoked a powerful backlash in the local media and courts. Anarchist organizers received visits from police when investigating the action. A federal grand jury was convened, ostensibly to look into allegations that anarchists attempted to set fire to the police car by firing bottle rockets at it. In-dymedia journalist Josh Wolf was subpoenaed and ordered to turn over video footage of the protest. Wolf refused to comply and was jailed by the federal district court for 24 days, more time than any journalist in American history had previously served to protect source material.10 In the midst of this repression, Anarchist Action dissolved.

After this, the Bay Area experienced a full in explicitly anarchist organizing. Local anarchists remained busy with long-term infrastructural, single-issue, or identity-specific projects. There were anarchist book fairs, Reclaim the Streets actions, May Day demonstrations, Really Really Free Markets, Food Not Bombs’ services, and so on, but when it came to general anarchist organizing space, there was a void.

Some anarchist organizers were seeking to fill this void when, in 2008, they helped reform Direct Action to Stop the War. The immediate impetus for the revival was the five-year anniversary of the Iraq invasion. The newly resurrected DASW held several sprees that at which many groups helped develop a strategy for the anniversary. Affinity groups formed and a strategy of blocking war profiteers was adopted. On the day of action, affinity groups successfully deployed lockdowns and other forms of civil disobedience against Bechtel, Chevron, the Catfyle Group, and UPS Corp, as well as Nancy Pelosi’s office. However, these actions did not shut down San Francisco the way the protests five years earlier had, the masses that had spontaneously come into the streets to aid the blockades in 2003 were nowhere to be seen. In this iteration of DASW, a broad group of activists holding a diversity of political perspectives were temporarily able to organize together, but ultimately dissolved on account of the absence of a shared vision.

Unconventional Action in the Bay: Genesis

Many of the anarchists leaving the second iteration of DASW began working with Unconventional Action (UA) in the Bay. UA in the Bay had been formed in summer 2007 by a group of friends interested in organizing toward the 2008 political conventions. The impetus for this came largely out of discussions with other Unconventional Action clusters throughout the country. Many of our comrades were putting a concerted effort into the conventions, it seemed possible that we could play in and make something special happen. We also hoped in doing so to revive local anarchist organizing efforts.

One thing we saw in the national UA milieu that resonated with us was a desire to combine direct action organizing with infrastructure. The UA experiment was as much about creating a national direct action network as it was about organizing toward the conventions in particular. Many of us had participated in mass mobilizations before and were frustrated by having to construct a new network all over again for each mass action. There hadn’t been much national coordination between anarchist conventions in a long time. We felt that all our communities would benefit from a greater degree of interconnection, and it seemed organizing for the political conventions was a good way to build these connections.

Much of the discussions going on nationwide applied to our situation in the Bay. Confrontational street actions were in a full lull. Worse, in an area with dozens of active radical projects, hardly anyone was working together. It was as if the whole Bay Area had been divided up into tiny islands of radical activity, with many activists in isolation. Many of us wished for a more expansive organizing space in which we could coordinate long-term strategies and develop relationships between people working on diverse projects.

In March, the RNC Welcoming Committee presented several discussions in the Bay Area. These were widely attended and offered a great opportunity to meet new friends. As the conventions started, people began to attract attention, more people started working with us. Things really took off in July when we hosted a regional consulta.

The excitement was palpable as people got to know one another. As the conventions were drawing near, our organizing seemed to have a direction and purpose. It seemed possible that UA in the Bay could really coordinate a major action.

Reliability, accountability, and personal relationships wavered and our coordination fell apart. In the final days, as groups arrived from the DNC, conflict and exhaustion produced a willingness to abandon the sector strategy, while others moved forward without the numbers they would need to succeed in their plans. Consequently, the blockading strategy for our sector failed to produce the desired results. Sparsely organized in our sector were among the first arrested that day, and blockades were quickly routed or prevented by police. Some UA in the Bay participated spent the entire RNC in jail, though others roamed the streets throughout the convention. After the early failure of our strategy, though, UA in the Bay did not coordinate further actions in the Twin Cities.

On one hand, the RNC experience was disheartening. We’d been raided, jailed, tear-gassed, and beaten up, and our friends were facing conspiracy charges. On the other hand, we had taken the initiative and organized on our own terms. Anarchists around the country had come out of the closet, as it were, and mobilized militant collective action. This had effects locally as well. At the beginning of the summer, many of us in the Bay felt disconnected, after the RNC, we at least had a space on which to work toward broader campaigns and long-term strategies. The recognition of our combined potential helped us through the legal aftermath following the RNC. Although some left our group, the ones who stayed determined to cash in the potential we had glimpsed in St Paul.

Organizing for the Long Haul

Upon returning, we undertook the daunting task of figuring out what we were going to do locally. One of the challenges we had faced in St Paul was a lack of strong interpersonal relationships and good communication. We hypothesized that these
Hitting the Ground Running

ICE Demonstration

Shortly after these grueling organizational meetings, we were approached by comrades organizing for immigrants’ rights. US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) had recently carried out several raids in San Francisco, despite its status as a “Sanctuary City.” In response, several groups were planning a demonstration at the ICE detention center in the Bay Area. This is an important issue locally, and presented us with an opportunity to begin building bridges with other activist groups in our area. We agreed to provide trained medics, and also to construct banners that would serve as a physical barrier between the police and the protesters. Many youth groups in the Bay Area had helped plan this demonstration; some young people were participating on behalf of family members who were unable to attend on account of their immigration status, or because they had already been deported.

Many of these young activists were located in the East Bay. This posed a logistical challenge, since the detention center is in San Francisco and public transit between the two is notoriously expensive. Consequently, they organized school walkouts for the morning of the action, with the intention of marching to the nearest Bay Area Rapid Transit station, hopping the turnstiles, and riding to San Francisco. Unfortunately, BART heard that students were marching toward the stations, and in some cases ordered the trains to continue through the targeted stations without stopping to pick up passengers. Some students were thus prevented from getting to the action in the first place.

Eventually, however, many students did make it to the rally point; the action began an hour or two behind schedule. In the spirit of Dia De Los Muertos, and to conceal our identities, we painted our faces to resemble skeletons and began marching to the ICE building. Some groups had brought drums, which helped create a loud and boisterous presence in the street. We arrived at the detention facility with a thousand protesters and held a rally in front of it before circling the building several times. On the third pass, a group of young Latinas changed sides of the crowd. Using cleverly disguised barrels, they locked themselves down at the entrance of the building in which ICE stores its vehicles. A second group was simultaneously doing the same thing at the other end of the alley.

The lockdown continued throughout the afternoon. The SFPD seemed reluctant to use excessive force against the two groups of young women; the fact that ICE is wildly unpopular in the Bay Area probably contributed to this. To our knowledge, ICE was not able to use any of their vehicles to raid or detain immigrants that day. Since that was impossible, they brought the bus around to the front of the building and began to transfer detainees through the front door. Wind spread, and disorganized groups hastily made their way to the bus. Protesters began to block the bus, and for a moment it seemed they might have to abandon their transfer that day. In the end, the police got the upper hand and “reprogrammed the system” to make sure that deportees as detainees were loaded on the bus. This was disheartening, but we did take some solace in knowing that those being loaded onto the bus got to see us and know that we were demonstrating in solidarity with them. Indeed, their morale seemed to improve, and several even cheered us on.

Dia de los Muertos

While organizing for the ICE demonstration, we learned of the murder of fellow San Francisco activist Kirsten Brydum in New Orleans. This followed immediately on the heels of the murder of Indymedia journalist Marcella “Sali” Grace in Oaxaca. We felt strongly that we should do something in their memory and speak out against what we saw as an ongoing war on women. We learned that some of our comrades in San Francisco were building a memorial for Sali and Kirsten at the Dia de los Muertos celebration in the Mission district, a major event in a mostly Latino neighborhood. It was an especially appropriate venue in that many San Francisco anarchists reside there and it was the site of the Really Really Free Markets Kirsten helped organize. We organized a contingent in the procession; the march was solemn and non-confrontational, but there was a sizable turnout and many appreciated that there was an explicitly anarchist presence to celebrate our fallen comrades. We passed through the Mission and ended at Castillio Square.

While participating in protests against ICE and for immigrants’ rights in general, we have begun to build strong alliances in those communities.

By participating in protests against ICE and for immigrants’ rights in general, we have begun to build strong alliances in those communities.
Early on in the uprising, the assembly of the occupied Athena Polytechnic University publicized a request for anarchists abroad to carry out solidarity actions. In response, an ad-hoc coalition of anarchists and activists from across the spectrum set about planning a successful solidarity action. UA in the Bay did not—and still doesn’t—have a process for reaching consensus outside our bisweshi meeting structure, so we were unable to participate in the organizing process as a group. Nevertheless, anarchists throughout the Bay reached out through their social networks and prepared for the action.

A recurring topic during these planning discussions was the desire to reclaim and hold space. The Greeks were striking from a neighborhood in which they had held space for years, and had used the opportunity to turn the area into liberated space. In Britain, protesters had seized the Greek consulate and continued to hold it. Meanwhile New College, a local radical-leaning liberal arts college in the Mission District, had recently been foreclosed upon and was sitting vacant, slated for gentrification. New College seemed particularly apropos as the economy was imploding and eviction rates were skyrocketing. In the middle of this discussion someone received a text message declaring that New York’s New School had been occupied in solidarity with the Greek anarchists and general assemblies were being held to determine a further course of action. We took this as a challenge and immediately set about determining the best method for occupying New College.

The crowd continued down 16th street, where we came upon Weil’s Fargo branch office. Surely there must be a link between Weil’s Fargo and the murder of Grigoropoulos, at the very least, Weil’s Fargo is a corporation that requires the protection of police and the murder of anarchists. At the time, any connection was nebulous, but, as mentioned, the economy was imploding and the bank’s culpability in that, at least, was glaringly obvious. In one suspenseful moment, several people lunged for the front door, through which we could have entered and occupied the building—but just as they grasped the handle, security guards bolted it shut, and subsequently put the building on lock down.

At this point everyone was getting frustrated. There was still a lot of energy, but we needed a target, and we had squandered the few opportunities that had presented themselves. There were brief arguments about where to go next. Our message of resistance was never in question, but we needed to articulate it.

The atmosphere made this almost impossible, though, and there was some last-minute discussion. An attempt to turn the area into liberated space. In an effort to outmaneuver police, we coordinated sprints, counting down from three and then sprinting for seven sprints, counting down from three and then sprinting for several blocks. After leaving the bank, our numbers had dropped significantly, as we turned from Valencia onto Market, we picked up more people. The energized crowd opted to continue marching.

The murders of Kostas Blydimou and Soli Grace came as a shock to the Bay Area anarchist community and our social circles. The atmosphere made this almost impossible, though, and there was some last-minute discussion. An attempt to turn the area into liberated space. In an effort to outmaneuver police, we coordinated sprints, counting down from three and then sprinting for several blocks. After leaving the bank, our numbers had dropped significantly, as we turned from Valencia onto Market, we picked up more people. The energized crowd opted to continue marching.
Rolling Thunder

72 ¬ Scene Reports ¬ Issue Eight, Fall 2009 ¬

had had enough

there were only about sixty militant protesters left. The police

streets lined with stores offering luxury goods. At this point,

A few street-savvy moves later, we were marching north through

they could drive it away.

vehicle that held our friends. Unfortunately, it was locked, and

gathering crowd re-energized us, and we began to surround the

the Police” began to echo off the buildings.

Unexpectedly, the message resonated with a number of the

back on the sound system and began to denounce the police.

so many curious shoppers had gathered that it was impossible

into a paddy wagon on the street. Some demonstrators got

shoppers, many of whom were people of color who may have

aged to arrest six people, and several more were beaten up, but

of property was destroyed, including a mall kiosk. Police man

attacking us, and some began throwing objects back at police

with children, fled in horror, and hundreds of heads peered over

pursuit. Shoppers on the first floor, including some families

from. The march en

It was the last weekend before Christmas, and without even

planning it, we had run right into the middle of San Fran-

cisco’s elite shopping district. There were people everywhere,

thousands of them, shopping bags in hand—and to our right, the

Westfield mall. This is no ordinary mall—it’s a monster, a high-

status monument to excess and capitalism. It is a cathedral

at which the consumer prays to the god of demand, sacrificing

children to the god of supply. Without hesitation or reflection,

the crowd charged in.

What happened next was not entirely clear. The march en-
tered, and police and security guards rushed after it in hot

pursuit. Shoppers on the first floor, including some families

with children, fled in horror, and hundreds of heads peered over

the banisters of the floors above. The cops and guards began

attacking us, and some began throwing objects back at police

in self-defense. In the course of the tussle a moderate amount

of property was destroyed, including a mall kiosk. Police man-

aged to arrest six people, and several more were beaten up, but

everyone else managed to escape through various exits or into the

crowd of people.

We regrouped outside the entrance to the mall. At this point

so many curious shoppers had gathered that it was impossible

for the police to enter the crowd and arrest anyone else. Several

of our comrades were dragged past us by squads of police and

into a paddy wagon on the street. Some demonstrators got

back on the sound system and began to denounce the police.

Unexpectedly, the message resonated with a number of the

shoppers, many of whom were people of color who may have had

their own beef with the law. Boisterous chants of “Fuck the Police”
began to echoed off the buildings. The support of the gathering crowd re-energized us, and we began to surround the vehicle that held our friends. Unfortunately, it was locked, and the police quickly sent in additional officers to secure it until they could drive it away.

Having reassembled, the crowd rushed back into the streets.

A few street-savvy moves later, we were marching north through
to streets lined with stores offering luxury goods. At this point,

there were only about sixty militant protesters left. The police

had had enough and were beginning to conduct maneuvers to

disperse or arrest us. The remaining participants began drag-
ging objects into the street in order to slow the police pursuit.
The march became less cohesive, and police were able to make

several arrests. At this point we knew it was time to find a place

to safely disperse. A few blocks later, we came upon Union Square, where hundreds of families had gathered to sip lattes, ice-skate, or take a break from shopping in nearby department stores. They were shocked, to say the least, when a ragtag band of hooligan street fighters came storming up the street.

We stopped in front of the park’s enormous Christmas tree. Images of the monumental Christmas tree set afire by the anarchists of Athens flashed through our heads. Having been in the streets for over three hours, however, we were tired. And we were already pressing our luck: the police would surely show us no quarter if we continued on, and there would be no dispersal spot as advantageous as this one. Additionally, it would have been ethi-
cally questionable to risk bringing severe police violence upon an area full of families and children. So we called it a night.

Although we weren’t able to take a major organizing role in the Greek Solidarity action, UA in the Bay had some good discussions about it. The decision to enter the mall was wildly controversial. Some felt that it needlessly endangered and alienated shoppers in the mall, some of whom reportedly fled the building with their children in tow. Others felt that entering the mall was entirely appropriate, that those inside were culpable for patronizing such a despicable institution. Yet others felt that, while the mall may not have been a perfect or even strategically significant target, it would have done more harm to Bay Area organizing efforts to have let that energy peter out; they reasoned that doing so would have been demoralizing and might have discouraged anarchists from engaging in similar organizing efforts in the future.

One lesson that some of us learned, or relearned, from this experience was how lucky we are to live in the Bay Area. Many of us were nervous after the Greek Solidarity action: a good number of our comrades had been arrested, and some faced relatively serious charges. It appeared that we were going to have to put a lot of energy into fundraising and legal support for our comrades. But the local National Lawyers’ Guild chapter swept in almost immediately and began representing the ar-
estees. Within a few days, everyone was out of jail, and as of this writing arrestees have faced relatively minor consequences. The SF NLG chapter is incredibly active, and along with other legal collectives such as the Midnight Special collective they have provided invaluable support to anarchists. Getting our friends out of jail and confronting the state in court is at least as important as confronting the state in the street. These legal collectives, along with other groups focusing on radical space, healthcare, and resource acquisition, provide crucial infrastruc-
ture. Admittedly, our infrastructure is nowhere near where it needs to be for us to be able to foment the kind of change we want to see, but we are fortunate to be the inheritors of the infrastructure amassed over decades of struggle in the Bay Area. Our movement, after all, can move only as far as there is infrastructure to support it.

* At this point, some protesters from the Revolutionary Communist Party materialized seemingly out of nowhere. In an uncharacteristic move, they began giving their newspapers away for free to those gathered outside of the mall. As this passer we had been marching for over two hours and had no literature left, so the RCP’s message was the only one that was delivered.

† Editors’ note to whatever SFPD intelligence officer is tasked with reading this: obviously, you should have just let them occupy the New College. The moral of the story is that overzealous policing can lead to riots, shopping stoppages, and violent situations.

‡ A few other such groups include Brand Together Book, the Long Haul Infoshop, Station 40, and AK Press.
Gaza Solidarity

Shortly after the Greek solidarity action, Israel invaded Gaza in what was called in the Arab press the “Gaza Massacre.” Political groups of all stripes began calling for individual actions, including one called for by DASW that ended in a militant breakaway march led by Middle Eastern, Arab, and Muslim youth. In the last week of December actions escalated to a dramatic demonstration that brought thousands to the Israeli consulate and again saw militant youth lead breakaway marches that obstructed traffic and confronted police.

At the behest of the Arab Resource Organizing Center and members of SF ANSWER, a call circulated to organize a coalition to coordinate demonstrations. To this end, the Gaza Action Coalition was formed and agreed on a strategy of targeted civil disobedience. In the first week of January, attempts were made to shut down the federal building and the Israeli consulate, as well as maintain nightly street demonstrations.

On Saturday, January 10, ANSWER organized a rally and march. Our group put together a call for anarchist participation in this action, which we used as an opportunity to practice blocking up and coordinating movements in a mass demonstration environment: linking arms, counting down to sprint, and other such maneuvers.

Meanwhile, behind the scenes in the Gaza Action Coalition, sectarian divisions and jealousies, as well as duplicitous and undemocratic practices, undermined the organizing capability of the group. Actions began to peter out after dozens of arrests and grueling nightly demonstrations had exhausted organizers.

Oakland Uprising

It was only a matter of days before Bay Area anarchists found themselves fighting in the streets again. As is now widely known, on New Year’s Eve 2008, BART officer Johannes Mehserle cold-bloodedly murdered Oscar Grant, a young local man of color, as he was on his way home from a party in San Francisco. Sadly, police executions of this kind have not been uncommon over the years. What was unique about this one was that scores of people riding the train that night video-recorded the incident on their cell phones. In the days following the murder, videos of the incident spread virally across the internet, so by the time the authorities began the process of fabricating excuses and cover-ups, the word was already out. On January 7, the day of Grant’s funeral, an ad hoc group, the Coalition Against Police Execution, organized a rally at the Fruitvale BART station where the murder occurred.

The rally was huge, with perhaps a thousand people attending. Right away protesters blocked the toll gates, which prevented trains from stopping. The organizers set up a sound system and began presenting speakers and offering open mic time. The organizers insisted on a “non-violent” response to the murder, arguing in favor of keeping a merely rhetorical fire under the bureaucrats’ feet to ensure “justice.” Most of the individuals who spoke extemporaneously disagreed, however. The crowd was furious, and many voiced a need for retribution, suggesting that justice was a prize to be won in the streets. Those who spoke agreed, however, that our numbers and support from bystanders and our numbers seemed to grow. The crowd was teeming with energy, but mostly satisfied itself with chanting "BART" and beginning to block the train track. As the organizers had no intention of waiting for permission, began beating improvised drums, and left, accompanied by the vast majority of the crowd, including the rally organizers.

The march proceeded through the predominantly Hispanic Fruitvale district and toward downtown Oakland. As we marched down International Blvd., we received cheers of support from bystanders and our numbers seemed to grow. The crowd was teeming with energy, but mostly satisfied itself with chanting anything but a non-violent response. The crowd was furious, and many voiced a need for retribution, suggesting that justice was a prize to be won in the streets.

Eventually, late at night, after the two trains at the Fruitvale station had been stopped, the marchers began exiting the train. The organizers refused to allow the marchers to exit and instead pushed them back toward downtown Oakland. The organizers never explained their actions, and the crowd continued to swell as this continued.

A group of anarchists began to gather toward the back of the rally. After a while it became apparent that the organizers had no intention of allowing the crowd to exit and instead pushed them back toward downtown Oakland. The organizers never explained their actions, and the crowd continued to swell as this continued.

A pattern emerged. A member of the crowd would get on the mic and demand action, in-vigorating the protesters and calling for the crowd to march. Immediately after, the organizers would take back the mic, call for calm, and restate their belief that we should channel our energy into “legitimate” channels. They would promise to march “in 10 minutes” or “after this amazing next speaker.” This went on for a number of hours, and the crowd grew restless. The crowd continued to swell as this continued.

Among other things, protesters were accused of destroying the potted plant pictured here.
and marching through Fruitvale. As we came out of Fruitvale, though, the anger became even more palpable. Some youths began jumping on a parked car. A little later, some protesters rushed into a liquor store as others demanded that they not loot it. As we turned off International toward the BART precinct office, piles of flaming newspapers appeared in our path. Things were escalating, but up to this point it seemed the police were standing back. They must have believed—correctly—that a large visible presence would incite the crowd.

Everything escalated after we turned toward the police station. Several blocks on, the march met a solitary police car with two officers inside. The crowd quickly approached the surprised officer, being based on, they abandoned their car and fled on foot. People started jumping on the hood and roof while others smashed out the windows. A flaming dumpster appeared out of nowhere and careened toward the car. Just as it smashed into the car we looked to our left and saw a phalanx of cops in full riot gear approaching us. They began unloding pepper bombs and other less-lethal ammunition. The crowd fled into the surrounding streets, and the riot was on. Dumpster and newspaper boxes filled the streets. Police pushed protesters into downtown Oakland, splitting them up by means of troop movements and vehicle sweeps. One group ended in a standoff with police on Broadway. Other groups began to reconvene around this standoff. In spite of everything, the police were still being relatively restrained. It appeared that some higher-up didn’t want the story of the night to be police violently repressing a leadership role. Anarchists worked side by side with a diverse crowd that night, but the rage that fueled the fire came from those who face brutal police repression every day of their lives.

Unfortunately, some groups in the African-American community did not see it this way. At first many of these groups bought into the narrative presented by corporate media. It seemed that, having been betrayed by political activists and other predominantly white evangelists in the past, these groups suspected that anarchists had dropped in to have their fun and wouldn’t be sticking around the clean up the mess. This animosity was displayed a week later at another rally organized by CAPE, when organizers formed a human wall to prevent anarchists from participating in the event.† Despite expectations, anarchists continued to work on the issue. Some helped form the Oakland 100 Support Committee to do jail support alongside Critical Resistance and other community groups. The NLG and the Midnight Special Law Collective provided legal support to arrestees. Anarchists attended forums in the African-American community about the issue, and outed themselves when talk turned against anarchists; this included some of the lawyers working on the cases. Eventually, the anti-anarchist outcry quieted down. As time passed, fewer people attended these community meetings, but anarchists continued to work on the issue, and gained some credibility. Even CAPE toned down their rhetoric. In the end, most arrestees had no charges filed, while others had their charges drastically reduced.‡ See “Oakland on Trial: Anarchists, Solitary, and New Possibilities in the Oakland Rebellion,” available online, for a more in-depth discussion of anarchist participation in the Oakland uprising.

† All the same, this rally featured a demonstration to which participants continued the property destruction of the previous week, although to a lesser extent, and there were several more arrests.

‡ It’s unclear where these came from; it has been suggested that someone in an apartment building found a people who were smashing his car.
assault attested to the good fortune target for repression. We realized that ing protests in the Bay we represented an op

momentum. As we reflected further, it occurred actions which we were unable to organize for

radical momentum. The Greek demonstration

actions; this had given people a chance to work

formed the group. We'd organized a number of local political situation had blown up since we'd

ulated a lot of reflection in UA in the Bay. The

No Justice, No BART campaign.

causes, but burnout has certainly been one of them. Anarchists put a lot of time and effort into our activities, but our projects often end in al

be a form of propaganda by the deed: a way to show that our forms

in the long run we believe it can build broader energy they will have to put back into the group.

Anarchists put a lot of time and e≠ort into an action-based agenda while neglecting the rest of our goals. If we continued on that path, we might push things to the tipping point and bear the wrath of the state—which we might

not be able to withstand, having not yet created an infrastructure that could help us do so. We thought back to the trajectory of Anarchist Ac

tension. Additionally, we were exhausted, working on action after action for several months had
taken a toll, and burnout loomed on the horizon. So we shifted our focus a bit, and began to look at ways to build the infrastructure we needed.

Infrastructure

A major concern of ours from the outset was how to extend the “life span” of anarchists. Many of us had watched over the years as old comrades left our communities, finding

out of activism altogether. Undoubtedly, this phenomenon is complex and has many causes, but burnout has certainly been one of them. Anarchists put a lot of time and effort into our activities, but our projects often end in al

be a form of propaganda by the deed: a way to show that our forms

in the long run we believe it can build broader energy they will have to put back into the group.

Anarchists put a lot of time and e≠ort into an action-based agenda while neglecting the rest of our goals. If we continued on that path, we might push things to the tipping point and bear the wrath of the state—which we might

not be able to withstand, having not yet created an infrastructure that could help us do so. We thought back to the trajectory of Anarchist Ac

tension. Additionally, we were exhausted, working on action after action for several months had
taken a toll, and burnout loomed on the horizon. So we shifted our focus a bit, and began to look at ways to build the infrastructure we needed.

Infrastructure

A major concern of ours from the outset was how to extend the “life span” of anarchists. Many of us had watched over the years as old comrades left our communities, finding

out of activism altogether. Undoubtedly, this phenomenon is complex and has many causes, but burnout has certainly been one of them. Anarchists put a lot of time and effort into our activities, but our projects often end in al

be a form of propaganda by the deed: a way to show that our forms

in the long run we believe it can build broader energy they will have to put back into the group.

Anarchists put a lot of time and e≠ort into an action-based agenda while neglecting the rest of our goals. If we continued on that path, we might push things to the tipping point and bear the wrath of the state—which we might

not be able to withstand, having not yet created an infrastructure that could help us do so. We thought back to the trajectory of Anarchist Ac

tension. Additionally, we were exhausted, working on action after action for several months had
taken a toll, and burnout loomed on the horizon. So we shifted our focus a bit, and began to look at ways to build the infrastructure we needed.

Infrastructure

A major concern of ours from the outset was how to extend the “life span” of anarchists. Many of us had watched over the years as old comrades left our communities, finding

out of activism altogether. Undoubtedly, this phenomenon is complex and has many causes, but burnout has certainly been one of them. Anarchists put a lot of time and effort into our activities, but our projects often end in al

be a form of propaganda by the deed: a way to show that our forms

in the long run we believe it can build broader energy they will have to put back into the group.

Anarchists put a lot of time and e≠ort into an action-based agenda while neglecting the rest of our goals. If we continued on that path, we might push things to the tipping point and bear the wrath of the state—which we might

not be able to withstand, having not yet created an infrastructure that could help us do so. We thought back to the trajectory of Anarchist Ac

tension. Additionally, we were exhausted, working on action after action for several months had
taken a toll, and burnout loomed on the horizon. So we shifted our focus a bit, and began to look at ways to build the infrastructure we needed.

Infrastructure

A major concern of ours from the outset was how to extend the “life span” of anarchists. Many of us had watched over the years as old comrades left our communities, finding

out of activism altogether. Undoubtedly, this phenomenon is complex and has many causes, but burnout has certainly been one of them. Anarchists put a lot of time and effort into our activities, but our projects often end in al

be a form of propaganda by the deed: a way to show that our forms

in the long run we believe it can build broader energy they will have to put back into the group.

Anarchists put a lot of time and e≠ort into an action-based agenda while neglecting the rest of our goals. If we continued on that path, we might push things to the tipping point and bear the wrath of the state—which we might

not be able to withstand, having not yet created an infrastructure that could help us do so. We thought back to the trajectory of Anarchist Ac

tension. Additionally, we were exhausted, working on action after action for several months had
taken a toll, and burnout loomed on the horizon. So we shifted our focus a bit, and began to look at ways to build the infrastructure we needed.

Infrastructure

A major concern of ours from the outset was how to extend the “life span” of anarchists. Many of us had watched over the years as old comrades left our communities, finding

out of activism altogether. Undoubtedly, this phenomenon is complex and has many causes, but burnout has certainly been one of them. Anarchists put a lot of time and effort into our activities, but our projects often end in al

be a form of propaganda by the deed: a way to show that our forms

in the long run we believe it can build broader energy they will have to put back into the group.

Anarchists put a lot of time and e≠ort into an action-based agenda while neglecting the rest of our goals. If we continued on that path, we might push things to the tipping point and bear the wrath of the state—which we might

not be able to withstand, having not yet created an infrastructure that could help us do so. We thought back to the trajectory of Anarchist Ac

tension. Additionally, we were exhausted, working on action after action for several months had
taken a toll, and burnout loomed on the horizon. So we shifted our focus a bit, and began to look at ways to build the infrastructure we needed.

Infrastructure

A major concern of ours from the outset was how to extend the “life span” of anarchists. Many of us had watched over the years as old comrades left our communities, finding

out of activism altogether. Undoubtedly, this phenomenon is complex and has many causes, but burnout has certainly been one of them. Anarchists put a lot of time and effort into our activities, but our projects often end in al

be a form of propaganda by the deed: a way to show that our forms

in the long run we believe it can build broader energy they will have to put back into the group.

Anarchists put a lot of time and e≠ort into an action-based agenda while neglecting the rest of our goals. If we continued on that path, we might push things to the tipping point and bear the wrath of the state—which we might

not be able to withstand, having not yet created an infrastructure that could help us do so. We thought back to the trajectory of Anarchist Ac

tension. Additionally, we were exhausted, working on action after action for several months had
taken a toll, and burnout loomed on the horizon. So we shifted our focus a bit, and began to look at ways to build the infrastructure we needed.

Infrastructure

A major concern of ours from the outset was how to extend the “life span” of anarchists. Many of us had watched over the years as old comrades left our communities, finding

out of activism altogether. Undoubtedly, this phenomenon is complex and has many causes, but burnout has certainly been one of them. Anarchists put a lot of time and effort into our activities, but our projects often end in al

be a form of propaganda by the deed: a way to show that our forms

in the long run we believe it can build broader energy they will have to put back into the group.

Anarchists put a lot of time and e≠ort into an action-based agenda while neglecting the rest of our goals. If we continued on that path, we might push things to the tipping point and bear the wrath of the state—which we might

not be able to withstand, having not yet created an infrastructure that could help us do so. We thought back to the trajectory of Anarchist Ac

tension. Additionally, we were exhausted, working on action after action for several months had
taken a toll, and burnout loomed on the horizon. So we shifted our focus a bit, and began to look at ways to build the infrastructure we needed.
If we spend six hours every week at meetings about projects that will fail or be repressed, no one will want to participate in our group for long. On the other hand, if those who work on these projects thereby gain access to child care or health care, people will have an immediate incentive to stay involved.

Conclusions/Beginnings

The struggle for liberation is not a skirmish; it is a campaign. In order to win it, we must position ourselves for prolonged struggle. Having seen movements in the Bay wax and wane over the years, we believe that we must develop strategies to improve our staying power. If we cannot accomplish this, all of our efforts will likely be lost in the boom/bust cycle we’ve seen so many times. It is in breaking this cycle that we stand to do our best work. This is also our most daunting task.

It would be dishonest to say that we’ve made great gains in this regard. In reality, we’ve made little progress toward meeting our infrastructural goals. Social centers, food production networks, free schools, day cares, and the like could build momentum over many years, if not generations. But such projects are huge in scope and require an effort that would dwarf all we’ve attempted to date.

In spite of our shortcomings, the last year has been pretty extraordinary for us. It is a long way from those first meetings with the RNC. Since we learned in S. Paul that we needed to develop closer relationships and gain experience working together, we’ve orchestrated an impressive list of actions; at the same time, some of the most noteworthy ones took place outside our organizing structure. On May Day 2009, an autonomous group of masked demonstrators held a “flash mob” protest at San Francisco’s luxury shopping district, in which dozens of high-end retailers were attacked. The mob vanished before police could respond. The regularity with which such events have occurred indicates that momentum has been building in the Bay over the past year. No single group of people is responsible for this—certainly not us—but we’d like to think that our work has contributed to it.

It’s unclear what the future holds for us. Perhaps by the time you read this we will be just another defunct organization, a footnote to the pages written by the next wave of anarchist activities in the Bay Area. But with a little luck and a lot of work and determination, we could build something truly powerful. Anarchists have struggled in the Bay Area for decades now. Movements have come and gone, but all have left something behind for us. Sometimes it’s an infoshop, a legal precedent, or something else that makes a bits easier the next time around. Often, it is just a cautionary tale, a warning of what to watch out for next time. Even if we fail utterly, even if our efforts only add up to another example of what not to do, we have shared this struggle together, and it’s been a hell of a time.

* This story, originally told by René Rodarte, the national and the national network that came out of the RNC organizing held a nationwide conference in May 2008 to distribute hundreds of people.

Appendix: UA in the Bay and the Unconventional Action Network

After the 2008 Republican National Convention, various proposals for an action network aligned with the Unconventional Action network’s mission were floated. Most believed that these ideas should be taken seriously, and regional networks that had held gatherings in advance of the DNC and RNC prepared subsequent consultations aimed at maintaining coordination and the final nationally coordinated action network with the network appears to have implicated itself in the organizing. At the moment, when people around the US woke up to find corporate newspapers wrapped in a false front page proclaiming “Capitalism Wins at the Polls; Anarchists Brewing in the Streets,” but by early 2009, UA had evaporated as a national phenomenon. When it was announced that the UA summit would conduct a “vacation” with a list of only UA groups, which is generally thought to be the main event in our movement, the only UA group besides the UA in the Bay endorsed the call for an anarchist mobilization.

As individual organizing groups, networks can only persist when they offer clear and consistent political opportunities to the participants. Were there an anarchist federation that could provide its members with free health care, this country would not lack for anarchists. The networks that developed in the build-up to the convention protests flourished because they promised the opportunity to participate in something larger than their histories of being torn to endure because no equally compelling purpose emerged after the RNC. The point of networks is to save organizers the trouble of having to replicate or surpass the hard work of those who came before us.

Anarchists in North America are notoriously incapable of sustaining national networks; perhaps the US is simply too vast, both spatially and culturally. In any case, a durable national network is impossible without long-lived local groups. Perhaps the Bay Area’s rich anarchist heritage made it fertile ground for an Unconventional Action group, rather than rendering the latter redundant; when people have a long way to go, they tend not to endure because no equally compelling purpose emerged after the RNC. The point of networks is to save organizers the trouble of duplicating groundwork, and to increase the scope of what can be achieved with the same resources. Anarchists in North America are notoriously incapable of sustaining national networks; perhaps the US is simply too vast, both spatially and culturally. In any case, a durable national network is impossible without long-lived local groups. Perhaps the Bay Area’s rich anarchist heritage made it fertile ground for an Unconventional Action group, rather than rendering the latter redundant; when people have a long way to go, they tend not to endure because no equally compelling purpose emerged after the RNC. The point of networks is to save organizers the trouble of

Let them burn us, hang us, shoot us, for the last that we have that makes to make songs with.

*--Before the Brave,” Joe Hill Listens to the Praying

Kenneth Patchen, Anarchist, Poet, War Resister, Bay Area resident

---

60 – Scarcenews – Issue Eight, Fall 2009 – Rolling Thunder

Rolling Thunder – Issue Eight, Fall 2009 – Scarcenews – 81
La Commune (de Paris, 1871)

Peter Watkins

1999; 5 hours 45 minutes

The feature article in the second issue of Rolling Thunder asked whether anarchists should frame liberation as the consummation of current values and desires, or a total rejection of them. One might pose a parallel question about radical cinema: is it to be appropriated popular culture and turn them against the powers that be, or to violate them in the course of rejecting the system that produced them?

In 1971, at the end of a disastrous war with Germany, Paris experienced a popular uprising. The rebels drove government forces from the city, convened a council of immediately-recallable delegates, and attempted a variety of ambitious social experiments in women’s liberation, workers’ self-management, and public education. After two months, a reactionary counteroffensive supported by the Germans recaptured the city, though the communards fought street by street and block by block; the invaders murdered tens of thousands outright and later executed or deported tens of thousands more. Anarchists and communists hailed the Commune as the first proletarian revolution, on the other hand, as Edmond de Goncourt wrote, “A bleeding like that, by killing the rebellion itself to revit more spectators to their seats?

In 2009, dissident television and film director Peter Watkins set out to depict the uprising through reports from opposing television channels, the reactionary Versailles TV and the radical Commune TV, emphasizing that any portrayal of the Commune necessarily takes place through the lens of our own time. By explicitly requesting that viewers suspend their disbelief—“We ask you to imagine that it is now March 17”—filmmakers achieve the opposite effect, denying the audience the illusion that the reenactment takes place in a world other than their own. La Commune thus avoids the catharsis Aristoteles described as the purpose of tragic drama, in which people experience an emotional discharge in a controlled environment only to return to their ordinary lives: “Wasn’t that a sad story?”

Rather than focusing on the Brad Pitts and Audrey Tautous of history, Commune TV wanders the crowd in long cuts, giving equal screen time to scores of people the way a highway Indymedia video might. The apparent improvisation of the cast and film crew succeeds in evoking the tremendous chaotic energy of an insurrection, the urgency and disorder, the alternation of exultation and terror, the multiplicity of voices, desires, and activities.

As the reactionary forces of the government begin bombarding Paris from outside, power struggles develop within the Commune, opening the fault lines that divided anarchists from communists and other socialists shortly after its fall. The cast weigh the purported necessity of centralizing power to coordinate the defense of the city against the ideal of the Commune as a pure, if doomed, gesture towards liberation; as the arguments intensify, some actors depart from character to debate the Bolshevik revolution and the slaughter of anarchists at Kronstadt.

The journalists of Commune TV undergo a parallel schism. One—perhaps intended to represent Peter Watkins, and in any case acted out by his son—is outraged at the other’s pretense of objectivity in the face of the consolidation of power by the dictatorial Committee of Public Safety. “We’ll give our opinion from now on and that’s it, or I’m going home!” Like the real-life Watkins, who made La Commune for French television only to see it suppressed, his scruples result in his departure from the television crew. Today, as television is supposed to be the other side of the barricades, it’s hard to picture the different uses to which it could have been put—one can hardly separate the shortcomings of the technology from the ways it has taken shape in this society. In robbing us of our imaginations and historical sense, capitalism renders it impossible to imagine or remember how any of the inventions of our civilization could be applied outside a logic. Primitivist generalizations aside, could it be possible to produce anything along the lines of “motion pictures” without dooming millions to spectatorship, and melting the polar ice caps in the bargain? We may never find out. But it’s poignant that only a decade ago a renegade director, doomed to obscurity by corporate stonewalling, was still struggling to build skyscrapers to the roads not taken.

The risk, of course, is that in earnestly attack- ing corporate media and its aesthetics, the film legitimizes itself as a medium—buying more time for a format perhaps better buried entirely. Even Guy Debord’s blank screen was still a spec- tacle to contemplate, as its afterlife in European museums attests. Yet one can also look at La Commune as an effort to discover a way of recounting history that brings its unsettled debts back into play. Whether or not it accomplishes this for viewers, it seems to have served this purpose for members of the cast, some of whom went on to form a collective that continued organizing around the issues brought up by the film long after its release. One can imagine that, in attempting to incorporate revolutions without ceasing to be themselves, the actors were forced to engage with the injustices and possibilities of their own times as well as those of 1871.

Is this personal engagement the film’s greatest strength, from a viewing standpoint as well. Though some of the earlier stretches can drag, the film builds to a stirring and unusual climax. Because reputable critics and historians have long been revealed by the final sequences, they can only derive their power from the extent to which the passions displayed in them are genuine. This underlines the essential message of the film: not only does history repeat itself, but its unresolved conflicts continue to seethe just beneath the surface of the present day. As one commentator proclaims near the conclusion, with a sincerity that provokes gooseflesh: “If there are any barricades in Paris in the year 2000, I’ll be there fighting!”

It’s taken for granted that the experiences of the few hundred people who make a movie are less important than those of the thousands or millions who watch it; experiments like La Commune are rejected out of hand as disrespectful to the audience and ineffective as vehicles for propaganda. But in a product-oriented society, in which so few reflect on anything they see, perhaps a few hundred people participating in an empowering process could be more significant than any blockbuster viewed by millions. Moreover, if this comes across on the screen as something that really happened, perhaps it could challenge the passivity of the audience as well.
De Stad Was van Ons
A Film about the Amsterdam Squatters’ Movement 1975-1988
Joost Seelen
1986: 1 hour 45 minutes

Thirty years ago, squatters in Amsterdam could fight the authorities for control of the physical terrain of the city and win. This documentary, comprised of interviews interspersed with archival footage, chronicles the trajectory of the movement, up to that zenith and beyond, into its subsequent nadir. The film makes a useful companion to the excellent book Cracking the Movement, which explores the same events through a cleverly analytical lens, though it seems some of the names are given differently in the book.

The director’s goal was clearly to dispel the image of the squatting movement as a leaderless, spontaneous phenomenon. Were this a dramatization, it would be hard to gauge its importation—but the stories are told by the protagonists themselves, juxtaposing accounts from participants on opposite sides of each issue. Through this format, the film offers an instructive example of how power struggles can play out inside decentralized groups confronting the state.

At the opening of the narrative, in 1975, squatting is framed as a lifestyle choice made of necessity: there is a housing crisis, so people begin occupying buildings. A culture of collective living and radical politics develops around this alternate approach to housing, and when the government attempts to evict squatters, however, they turn out to resist. At first, the squatters try pacifist tactics; when the police respond with brutal force, they reconsider and shift to a more active defense.

The next squats are reinforced like medieval castles, and real battles ensue when the police come. When the police attempt to evict a building on Vondelstraat, the squatters fight them off and set up a tremendous barricade, establishing an autonomous zone that lasts until the Danish government is finally forced to send in helicopter, tanks, and soldiers with live ammunition. At this point, by all accounts, the squatters were supported by a great part of Dutch society, who viewed the housing crisis as a real problem and saw the government as the aggressor.

As they recount the subsequent developments, the narrators’ interpretations begin to differ. The first fractures appear around the riots during the coronation of Queen Beatrix in 1980, which were organized under the banner “no housing, no coronation.” Some squatters see this as a gratuitous gesture that can only discredit them in the eyes of the public: so long as the confrontations were about physical spaces, they were defensible, but now confrontation is becoming disconnected, an end unto itself. Others, more focused on political struggle than struggle itself, consider the riots an act of success: “There was the incident where a cop was pulled off his horse. I did my best to get that horse. That would have been great—I can ride a horse!”

At this point in the storyline, many anarchists will find themselves identifying with the latter tendency. It’s hard not to be inspired by their grim determination: “If you choose confrontation, you have to go to the extreme and not bluff. If you put a refrigerator on the roof, you may have to throw it, too.” This makes the following developments especially chilling.

The Groote Keyser, the flagship fortress of the movement, is legalized by the city in a back-room deal involving some of the militant organizers, following a decision at a squatters’ assembly which turns out to have been fixed in advance. Afterwards, some of the lifestyle-oriented squatters who had squatted the building in the first place drunkenly trash the infoshop inside it. The militants react by building a horse in the street, which the authorities end by turning it on each other.

Is this inevitable, or can we identify what went wrong? One cannot help noticing gendered hierarchies in the movement: every one of the militants is a man, and every woman interviewed becomes alienated by their conduct in the early years. One also cannot help viewing the narrators in light of their subsequent lives, as the interviews take place many years after the events. Like the characters in the German comedy What Do We Do in Case of Fire, some have gone on to middle class success, reimagining disingenuously from comfortable living rooms, while others remain invested in living against the grain, one is still homeless, and mourns the passing of the squatting movement pitifully. Had all the participants depended on the squatting movement for their very lives, they might have had more impetus to work out conflicts. Of course, that equation can be inverted: who will stake their life on a movement that cannot work out conflicts?

Movements that involve massive numbers of people can enable the participants to accomplish things they could not do on their own, but those often arise practically by accident. As the participants sort out what they want from them, the movements splinter, until the miracles of collective action that catalyzed them become impossible. Those who wish to wield that collective power rarely care how much they need each other until it is too late. In the Dutch squatting movement of the early 1980s, for example, it was ultimately immaterial whether or not riots like the one at the coronation actually alienated the public: the fear that they would, and the arrogance of those who brushed this off, were enough to divide the movement, rendering confrontations and housing-oriented squatting alike more difficult.

In the wake of this collapse, no incentive remained for the survivors to get along. In the final passages of the documentary, after provoking a series of violent clashes, the militants are forced out of the movement entirely; squatting goes on without them, albeit on a smaller scale than during its peak. In fact, despite the power struggle that built up to it, this outcome attests to the non-hierarchical nature of the squatters’ movement: had this conflict played out in a different context, the administrators might have been able to consolidate control for themselves. Although the stories of violent internal conflict are harrowing for anyone who would like to believe that people can coexist without authorities, they don’t necessarily prove that this is impossible. It might have been easier to have conflicts, and sometimes these escalate to violence; the idea that this could be avoided by the imposition of external force is part of the statist mythology that justifies the consolidation of power. Where the institutions of the state are absent, however, power tends to even out, the same way water seeks its own level—even if it takes some slogging about to get there.

Os Cangaceiros
A Crime Called Freedom
Eberhard Press, 2006

This is the first book published in the US about the French group Os Cangaceiros, a semi-clandestine circle of anticapitalists active around Europe from the early 1980s to the beginning of the ’90s. Though they published a journal, carried on targeted direct action, and sought to support the most radical currents in labor struggles, they famously identified as criminals rather than political activists, extolling all manner of antisocial activity and attempting to live out the old challenge to have conflicts, and sometimes these escalate to violence; the idea that this could be avoided by the imposition of external force is part of the statist mythology that justifies the consolidation of power. Where the institutions of the state are absent, however, power tends to even out, the same way water seeks its own level—even if it takes some slogging about to get there.

It may seem strange to you, dear reader, for us to review two obscure foreign films that came out several years ago. But this is the cybernetic age, and you probably have all the movies, books, and albums at all time at your fingertips. If, however, you are as befuddled by all this newfangled technology as we are, and haven’t any idea of how to track down either of these films, we’ll be happy to help contact us via rollingthunder@ crimeinhic.com. We can also supply copies of the original Os Cangaceiros publications in French, in hopes of dispelling some of the fog around them.
weird strikes and riots erupting everywhere they set foot, rather than squatting deserted buildings, they forced yuppies out of posh condominiums—“squatting as expropriation”—and regarded the inevitable arrival of the police as part of the party; they distributed their magazines in the manner of the French Resistance, leaving stacks of them in the subway; like the fairies of old who appeared in the witching hour to curdle milk, they mixed sugar into the concrete at the construction sites of future prisons so the walls would crumble easily. Some of this is exaggerated, though doubtless the truth is at least as fabulous; one role of mythology is to convey the wonder of reality where simple facts cannot.

Unfortunately, like children impatient to be disabused of the fancies of youth, we can’t help rushing past the mythology to try to get at the facts. The one person we’ve managed to track down who knew the Cangaceiros personally—an old British fellow who refers to them as the Kangaroos—reports that though they were influenced by the most radical currents from the 1968 uprising, most were too young to remember it. The majority were from middle class backgrounds, though they kept company with genuine workers and, true to their rhetoric, funded many of their projects via criminal escapades.

Os Cangaceiros appeared from the ashes of the Gravediggers of the Old World, who published four issues of an eponymous magazine between 1977 and 1985. The first of these issues of the magazine Os Cangaceiros debuted in 1985. Members of the group had gone to Britain to participate in the wave of rioting that had peaked in 1981; some spent years living there, in hopes that a revolutionary situation would develop. They befriended a number of British workers and radicals, including participants in the Yorkshire miner’s strike, which inspired texts like “Brick Keeps Britain Beautiful” in Os Cangaceiros #2.

This collection is not entirely free from the aforementioned tendency towards spotty scholarship: translate Wolfi Landstreicher, who rendered the contents of an Italian collection into English rather than working from the original French, repeats the line that “the group came together in Nice in 1968,” and there is virtually nothing on the Cangaceiros’ activities in England. The texts are all from the Cangaceiros’ later phase, when they returned from their British idyll to pursue a vendetta against the French prison system.

This campaign gained public attention in 1985 when they sabotaged train lines in solidarity with a wave of prison uprisings. After repeating this tactic in 1986, they went back to the drawing board, returning a couple years later to take the offensive against a government program intended to build enough new facilities to accommodate an additional 13,000 prisoners. In a series of actions reminiscent of the SHAC campaign described in Rolling Thunder #6, they broke into offices to steal and destroy documents, set fire to the vehicles of subcontractors, and even attacked a prison architect in the street. This culminated in a mass mailing in which they circulated classified floor plans and other documents detailing the new prisons, a major embarrassment for the government and a potential boon to flighty captives.†

In the end, most of the Cangaceiros fell out with each other, as radicals are wont to do even in times of social peace, and scattered across the world when they deny being “political,” and scattered across the world from Ulan Bator to Tanzania. Intense pressure from the police, who conducted raids throughout subservient circles in search of them, could not have helped. They left behind a couple publishers started up on stolen money, and a ghost—a specter, if you will—that continues to haunt Europe.

North Americans will find that this little collection of their writing makes an exciting introduction to their deeds and ideas. It only remains for others to fill it out with additional material, so a more complete picture of the Cangaceiros can emerge: not of an invincible clandestine cell but of the efforts of other prison abolitionists to shame, but rather of ordinary people who experimented with a number of approaches to waging war in times of social peace, with mixed success.

The human being is made from the same material as his dreams. We are revolutionary. Os Cangaceiros means “Everything is possible,” “We are at war,” “Nothing is true, everything is permitted.”

* One, who was a child at the time, recalled helping initiate workers and radicals, including participants in the 1968 uprising, most were too young to remember it. The majority were from middle class backgrounds, though they kept company with genuine workers and, true to their rhetoric, funded many of their projects via criminal escapades.

† As Leopold Roc discusses in the following text, the strike of genius in this action was that, rather than confining the Cangaceiros group to make the most effective use of the information via clandestine attacks, it equipped the public at large to broaden the terms of conflict past the scope of any police investigation. In limiting their focus to what they can do alone, militants often unconsciously lose faith in the mass of the population, which not only causes them to miss strategic opportunities but also to lose hope of a genuinely anarchic struggle.

88 – Reviews – Issue Eight, Fall 2009 – Rolling Thunder

© 1980 Derrida et al.
In order to provide more insight into the activities of Os Cangaceiros, and to present these in the light in which at least one participant saw them with the benefit of hindsight, we are reprinting here a reflection composed by one member a few years after the group’s final actions. In the course of his years with the Cangaceiros, the author served prison time for sabotaging French high-speed trains; he remains on the run today, wanted by the French government in connection with later activity. His comments on how to outmaneuver media blackouts and the risks of clandestine organizing are no less timely a decade and a half later.

The Blurred Trail of the Cangaceiros in the Social Pampas

Leopold Roc, May 1995; copyedited for this publication

Between 1985 and 1990, the group Os Canga-
ceiros attained some notoriety through a cou-
ple resounding actions in France; now that the Cangaceiros belong to the past, it is probably those actions which are worth remembering; rather the lessons and criticisms that can be drawn from them. However, the following comments are not an effort to arouse admira-
tion, nor scorn. I just think that they could be of use to others willing to engage in similar practical dissent.*

The various acts of sabotage we carried out were an assertion that when it comes to express ing discontent or solidarity a few determined people can indulge in something more efficient than meandering through the streets or trying to find an audience.*

The series of actions we carried out in 1989-
90 were based in a different perspective. This time it was not a direct response to a revolt that had just occurred; but a decision to oppose the planned construction of new prisons. This meant we could decide for ourselves the timing and means we thought most appropriate. We were motivated by the obvious reasons for which anyone might feel pissed off at the prospect of 13,000 new cages being built, but we also had personal grounds for resentment: in the preceding year, we’d been subjected to continuous harassment by the police, who had tried to vanquish the Cangaceiros with a little publicity as possible, forcing us to be constantly on the run. It was no exaggeration to assert that those prisons were also being built for us; seeing as “the best defense is to attack,” we thought that if we were caught, it would be better if it was for something worth it. However, this feeling of anguished emergency also played a harmful role in the whole thing, as the playful element, necessary to any kind of subversive activity, tended to give way to a neurotic obsession with wanting a successful outcome.

The final report we published about this campaign can give a deceiving impression of ease and facility. In fact, for more than a year, we kept banging our heads against the many walls of well-guarded government offices, private businesses, building sites, and secret data locations, with the impression that our sabotage was a mere pinprick against such a monstrous machine. And confronted by this, our first reaction was to overstate our goals, which can lead to a dangerous (i.e., uncontrolled) escalation. Moreover, long-term planning relating to hit-and-run activity tends to introduce its own “military” logic, which prevents you from getting any distance on events for self-critical reflection while means slowly turn into ends. However non-hierarchical the group might be, everyone still feels that they have somehow lost the initiative; so it took some time to realize that we had to much simpler and more efficient card to play by circulating the secret plans and documents we’d gotten hold of. This was not just a change of tactics; I would like to stress more general considerations regarding this matter.

The first concerns our relation to the media. The sort of acts of sabotage we carried out in 1985-86 were highly dependent on media cov erage. No matter how much you despise the media, you also need their publicity—for what’s the point of a solidarity action worth, if it doesn’t come to the attention of the ones it’s aimed at? And thus you surrender to their power: the power

---

* This text reflects my personal view on the subject, though part of it comes from a collective reflection, some former protagonists probably wouldn’t agree with my outlook.

† Editors’ note: As of this writing, the so-called Danon Nine face terror conspiracy charges for allegedly sabotag ing public utilities. And during the 2008 general election, the Cangaceiros were resulting from the 1985 action offers a precedent for this on a variety of levels.

§ For instance, according to one of the participants, the most militant Yorkshire miners also had this experience during the 1984-85 strike; they were so absorbed in the daily organizing of flying pickets and hit squads that they didn’t have any time left to discuss the general perspec tive at stake. In an army, only the generals are allowed to draw strategy. However, the miners’ wives meeting in the food kitchen did have the time and disposition for more profound reflections.
Rolling Thunder #3; 90 ¬ Old News ¬ Issue Eight, Fall 2009 ¬

Prisoners at Fleury-Mérogis, “Prisoner’s Talkin’ Blues,” in August 20, 1983, from Os Cangaceiros

the local papers to the agencies of the national rush around to get a copy of the dossier: thus, were then transmitted to higher authorities, busy that day, “a journalist wrote), the copies received, they copied it (“Xerox machines were been sabotaged. She handed them the mail she’d could force their way out through walls that had sands of people had already become aware of what was happening—for instance, we’d sent the dossier to all the cafés in the towns where what was happening—for instance, we’d sent the dossier to all the cafés in the towns where new prisons had been built, and our spies there told us that it fed and nourished discussions in the bars all day long. According to a local paper, line on the security firm we’d virtually burnt to ashes or the prison architect we’d punched to one” match against the state—a challenge growing among us that we were fighting a “one program, the more the uneasy feeling was ing to cause consistent damage to the prison order to black out our activities: even the lo cal papers, which never failed to report on the occasional run-over dog, didn’t write a single line on the security firm we’d virtually burnt to ashes or the prison architect we’d punched up on a Paris street.

With the distribution of the “13,000 Belles” dossier, we turned the problem upside down. Before the media knew anything, tens of thousand sand of people had already become aware of what was happening—for instance, we’d sent the dossier to all the cafés in the towns where new prisons had been built, and our spies there told us that it fed and nourished discussions in the bars all day long. According to a local paper, a horrified pensioner rushed to her local town hall, asking them if it was true that prisoners could force their way out through walls that had been sabotaged. She handed them the mail she’d received, they copied it (“Xerox machines were busy that day,” a journalist wrote), the copies were then transmitted to higher authorities, and so on. The journalists were then forced to rush around to get a copy of the dossier: thus, during the day, the news made its way to the local papers to the agencies of the national press, until a government official had to call a press conference to “reassure the public” about the potential dangers of these revealing documents. And just because this time we hadn’t needed the press as a necessary go-between to reach the general public, their reports were more consistent and accurate than usual—even funny sometimes. Le Figaro drew up a full-page article called “jailbreaks—directions for use” in which they reproduced our entire letter, and another paper commented: “These Cangaceiros are as romantic as their predecessors (i.e., the Brazilian social bandits), though better orga nized.” A TV news announcer concluded: “One could think of it as a bad joke, for weren’t these people already known to the police?” There is a moral to this story: the best way to use the media, instead of them using you, is to try to bypass them*. Make them unnecessary so that they will react as a mere amplifier of events, spectators but to potential accomplices who could themselves relay our initiative and carry it further.

And it worked quite well. Though some pris oners definitely had knowledge of the dossier and were enthusiastic about it, we don’t know whether it actually helped inmates to find a way out—but every time there’s been some disturbance in one of those prisons since then, the press has never failed to remind us of those missing documents on the loose somewhere. Regardless, it’s certain that the playful side in volved in pillaging forbidden documents and sneakily passing them on to someone else did contribute to a wide distribution. Even people who usually do not like us appreciated for once this snook we’d cooked at the state. However, this eventual success also was a denial of our former perspective, however glad we were to have carried it out, because in the end the whole thing left us utterly exhausted.

To return to the alienating side of long-term clandestine activity, the police strategy towards us fit that description remarkably. As I said, at one time they had counted on a big clamp down, probably amounting to a spectacular show trial complete with fabricated evidence; it also seems that they tried to inordinate us in order to have us plant bombs†. But their main concern throughout the years has been to isolate us by means of a constant harassment of our potential allies. Yet again, in February 1991, the “13,000 Belles” scandal was followed by media-profiled raids in several cities, with 25 people being questioned, their flats searched, and Mordicus magazine that reproduced parts of our dossier threatened with legal action.

* A good example of this is the hackers who send out the secret data they’ve dug up via the internet to millions of potential users, making a blackout impossible.

† This is according to allegations published in Le Figaro in November 1990, which we have some grounds to believe are true. As early as 1983, a certain X. Raufer wrote a book “on social violence” where he highlighted us as a group of embittered semi-intellectuals eager to fan the flames wherever a fire was burning! At the time when the police operations started against us, Raufer was a personal adviser on security matters to Mordicus, the editor of the interior who once promised he’d “force a subscription against the subverter.”

Prisoner revolt in Scotland, from Os Cangaceiros #3; the laisser faire. “We are all hostages.” After four days on the roof, they set fire to the prison, destroying an entire wing.
th money we grabbed enabled a greater degree of solidarity and are totally different now that virtually all struggling communities, whose thefts were commonly considered part and parcel of the situation in the world as delinquents. In this respect, we could have made more of that abstract radical speech, since you never knew what was going to happen, because we never really came to terms with our subjective feelings will be kept hidden behind a veil of “objectivity”—and Os Cangaceiros was not exempt from this at all. But this is no reason to sit back and wait until “the revolution” magically solves those problems: they exist anyway, and are part of the political project, rather, is how to reach and maintain a sufficient level of fluidity between the group and its social environment, failing this, the group tends to follow a separate logic, and to become a sort of autism, which in turn exacerbates interpersonal conflicts. Throughout all those years, we had been obsessed with the idea of creating a big scandal, something in the Dada-Surrealist-Situationist tradition: a spectacular deed expressing the latent negativity undermining society. In some ways, the “13,000 Belle’s” outcome was one. However, we also experienced the limits of this notion. The primary failure of most of the radical post-1968 agitation has been its inability to create lasting breaches in the coherence of society, the patient construction of social bonds through various mediations and initiatives. The “radical” attitude confined itself too often to a mere denunciation of society in all its particular and finite activities, rather than trying to act in an innovative way within a definite terrain. Instead, there have been the habitual comments made from the outside on things that had it just led us into a radical cul-de-sac: solitary navigators on a sea of troubles. No bitterness here, though. This has been an adventure, in an epoch when adventures are rather scarce. Fortunately, unlike most illegal groups, it didn’t end in a tragic rout—and what doesn’t kill you makes you stronger. But because it was just an adventure, it had no particular reason to last beyond the will of its protagonists. Eventually, the only thing the Cangaceiros could agree on was that such an association was no longer desirable, and each one went his own way, trying to put into practice whatever he’d taken from this shared history. So I will leave the question open whether this experience was just a belated occurrence of post-’68 radicalism, or if it carried seeds for something new to come.

Since they’d gotten rid of Action Directe in 1987, the French state was looking for a new official enemy within, and we were definitely at the top of the list for such a role. It is elementary police psychology that the more individuals or groups are cut off from the rest of society, the more likely they are to react with an increased level of violence, which in turn will isolate them further. The media blackout of our actions against the new prisons undoubtedly worked toward that end. And admittedly, we laid ourselves open to this. We thought we’d done away with the critique of terrorism, because we never missed an opportunity to express our contempt for Action Directe, the Red Army Faction, the Red Brigades, and the like, and because we refused to resort to guns and bombs—our means or action are the ones used by any proletarian: sabotage and vandalism.” Yet this missed the essential point: in a context of social regression, a group of people standing out and asserting their violent revolt can easily be highlighted, then isolated and dragged onto the enemy terrain—to the police within your head; unconsciously, you end up molding your own behavior and thought patterns after that victory. This contradiction was also present in the less public part of our activity—I mean organized theft, or “la reprise” (retaking), as the illegalist anarchists of the late 19th century called it. “Never work!” we never took this as just a poetic slogan, but as an immediate program. Of course, theft also is, in many respects, some kind of Labour, but a kind of labor for which the individual is irrelevant. True enough, as soon as people join forces for some common reason to last beyond the will of its protagonists.

For sure, everyday life in 1980s France (and Europe) left little place for optimism. But we took this situation with an utter fatalism, which in turn encouraged an exacerbated voluntarism as far as our own fight was concerned. Thus, it is significant that, instead of ourselves as anti-projectors, all our actions were nevertheless focused on prisons, as if any perspective by that point was as obdurate as a prison wall. And I don’t think we were the only ones who merely complained about the evil of the revolutionary tide of the 1960s and 70s without questioning whether the “radical” conceptions and practices we were still carrying on were not also to blame for this situation. Especially because I’m writing now to English-speaking readers, I know that these comments will easily be taken by some people as a confirmation of their old individualist stance, which so many priests dismiss as a kind of collective attemt at a “heeding the ground of hierarchical power,” the “alienation of the individual by the group,” and so forth. I still think that this kind of criticism is irrelevant. True enough, as soon as people join forces for some common reason to last beyond the will of its protagonists. Eventually, the only thing the Cangaceiros could agree on was that such an association was no longer desirable, and each one went his own way, trying to put into practice whatever he’d taken from this shared history. So I will leave the question open whether this experience was just a belated occurrence of post-’68 radicalism, or if it carried seeds for something new to come.

The Red Army Faction or Italy’s Red Brigades, an armed struggle group that carried out robberies, bombings, and assassinations. Needless to say, things could not have any lasting dynamic impulse. Not that the idea was new—Os Cangaceiros was not exempt from this at all. But this is no reason to sit back and wait until “the revolution” magically solves those problems: they exist anyway, and are part of the political project, rather, is how to reach and maintain a sufficient level of fluidity between the group and its social environment, failing this, the group tends to follow a separate logic, and to become a sort of autism, which in turn exacerbates interpersonal conflicts. Throughout all those years, we had been obsessed with the idea of creating a big scandal, something in the Dada-Surrealist-Situationist tradition: a spectacular deed expressing the latent negativity undermining society. In some ways, the “13,000 Belle’s” outcome was one. However, we also experienced the limits of this notion. The primary failure of most of the radical post-1968 agitation has been its inability to create lasting breaches in the coherence of society, the patient construction of social bonds through various mediations and initiatives. The “radical” attitude confined itself too often to a mere denunciation of society in all its particular and finite activities, rather than trying to act in an innovative way within a definite terrain. Instead, there have been the habitual comments made from the outside on things that had it just led us into a radical cul-de-sac: solitary navigators on a sea of troubles. No bitterness here, though. This has been an adventure, in an epoch when adventures are rather scarce. Fortunately, unlike most illegal groups, it didn’t end in a tragic rout—and what doesn’t kill you makes you stronger. But because it was just an adventure, it had no particular reason to last beyond the will of its protagonists. Eventually, the only thing the Cangaceiros could agree on was that such an association was no longer desirable, and each one went his own way, trying to put into practice whatever he’d taken from this shared history. So I will leave the question open whether this experience was just a belated occurrence of post-’68 radicalism, or if it carried seeds for something new to come.

Since they’d gotten rid of Action Directe in 1987, the French state was looking for a new official enemy within, and we were definitely at the top of the list for such a role. It is elementary police psychology that the more individuals or groups are cut off from the rest of society, the more likely they are to react with an increased level of violence, which in turn will isolate them further. The media blackout of our actions against the new prisons undoubtedly worked toward that end. And admittedly, we laid ourselves open to this. We thought we’d done away with the critique of terrorism, because we never missed an opportunity to express our contempt for Action Directe, the Red Army Faction, the Red Brigades, and the like, and because we refused to resort to guns and bombs—our means or action are the ones used by any proletarian: sabotage and vandalism.” Yet this missed the essential point: in a context of social regression, a group of people standing out and asserting their violent revolt can easily be highlighted, then isolated and dragged onto the enemy terrain—to the police within your head; unconsciously, you end up molding your own behavior and thought patterns after that victory. This contradiction was also present in the less public part of our activity—I mean organized theft, or “la reprise” (retaking), as the illegalist anarchists of the late 19th century called it. “Never work!” we never took this as just a poetic slogan, but as an immediate program. Of course, theft also is, in many respects, some kind of Labour, but a kind of labor for which the individual is irrelevant. True enough, as soon as people join forces for some common reason to last beyond the will of its protagonists. Eventually, the only thing the Cangaceiros could agree on was that such an association was no longer desirable, and each one went his own way, trying to put into practice whatever he’d taken from this shared history. So I will leave the question open whether this experience was just a belated occurrence of post-’68 radicalism, or if it carried seeds for something new to come.

The Red Army Faction or Italy’s Red Brigades, an armed struggle group that carried out robberies, bombings, and assassinations. Needless to say, things could not have any lasting dynamic impulse. Not that the idea was new—Os Cangaceiros was not exempt from this at all. But this is no reason to sit back and wait until “the revolution” magically solves those problems: they exist anyway, and are part of the political project, rather, is how to reach and maintain a sufficient level of fluidity between the group and its social environment, failing this, the group tends to follow a separate logic, and to become a sort of autism, which in turn exacerbates interpersonal conflicts. Throughout all those years, we had been obsessed with the idea of creating a big scandal, something in the Dada-Surrealist-Situationist tradition: a spectacular deed expressing the latent negativity undermining society. In some ways, the “13,000 Belle’s” outcome was one. However, we also experienced the limits of this notion. The primary failure of most of the radical post-1968 agitation has been its inability to create lasting breaches in the coherence of society, the patient construction of social bonds through various mediations and initiatives. The “radical” attitude confined itself too often to a mere denunciation of society in all its particular and finite activities, rather than trying to act in an innovative way within a definite terrain. Instead, there have been the habitual comments made from the outside on things that had it just led us into a radical cul-de-sac: solitary navigators on a sea of troubles. No bitterness here, though. This has been an adventure, in an epoch when adventures are rather scarce. Fortunately, unlike most illegal groups, it didn’t end in a tragic rout—and what doesn’t kill you makes you stronger. But because it was just an adventure, it had no particular reason to last beyond the will of its protagonists. Eventually, the only thing the Cangaceiros could agree on was that such an association was no longer desirable, and each one went his own way, trying to put into practice whatever he’d taken from this shared history. So I will leave the question open whether this experience was just a belated occurrence of post-’68 radicalism, or if it carried seeds for something new to come.
Madge & Pansy

by Carrot Quinn

Madge put on her huge white hat made of lace and beads and said, “We are going on a journey!”

“Where are we going?” asked Pansy. Pansy was sitting next to the woodstove, knitting a scarf of yarn that she had spun from scrap thoughts, gathered from library bookstores and the dumpsters behind great and expensive universities.

“In our country, there are already enough scarfars!” said Madge, ignoring the question. “Come! We are going on a journey!”

“Where?” asked Pansy again.

“We are going,” said Madge dramatically, “to a fantastical city, built entirely of stone mined from the hills of unreasonable expectations.”

She then carefully taped shut one side of a tall cardboard box filled with dress-up clothes.

“We’ll need these dress-up clothes,” she said, “for something or other, and this accordion, which we can take turns playing.”

The accordion played one single chord altogether, whether you were pushing in or pulling out, in addition to whatever baritone you might press. Neither of them knew how to play the accordion.

Suddenly Pansy had an idea.

“We can bring my invisible snare drum!” she said. “On a stand! We’ll hide it in your tall pile of things on the highway shoulder, and they thanked him for his generosity.

“With ice cream,” said the man. And then, “Well, here is the very best place to get pie. In your country, what is the very best place to get pie?”

He stepped down from its high leather seats and he lifted all of their things from the bed of the truck, one by one, until there was a tall pile of things on the highway shoulder, and they thanked him for his generosity.

But where?” asked Pansy again.

“We are going,” said Madge dramatically, “to a fantastical city, built entirely of stone mined from the hills of unreasonable expectations. You’ll be able to move great distances?” asked Madge.

“I select them,” said Pansy, and she began to fill the two black bike panniers with items to take along.

Checking to make sure the big white lace hat for traveling was on her head, Madge picked up the old accordion, and they walked to the highway shoulder. Pansy was pushing the bicycle loaded with panniers filled with Things, and with a tall cardboard box filled with dress-up clothes strapped to the rack, in which there was hidden an invisible snare drum. After nine steps Madge stopped and shouted, “Wait!”

“What is it?” asked Pansy.

“What if there is a cat?”

“What?”

“What if there is a cat, at the hills of unreasonable expectations?”

“Yes?” said Pansy, who was anxious to go.

“If there is a cat,” said Madge, “It will need a house!” And she turned and ran back, appearing moments later with a cat house made of foam, which she carried to the highway shoulder.

“Now we have everything!” she said.

“Who are we waiting for?” asked Pansy. They were standing on the highway, no traffic anywhere, and the long arms of blackberry branches shook handfuls of herbicide-coated road berries at them.

“We are waiting,” said Madge, “For Dude in a Pickup Truck.”

“Who’s that?” asked Pansy, gathering a handful of big hot berries, muttering under her breath the magical incantation to make the berries pure and non-toxic. (There’s no such thing as herbicide there’s no such thing as herbicide.)

“Dude in a Pickup Truck is the person who’s coming to pick us up. His truck is big, except for when it’s small. He always has room, except for when he doesn’t. He got off work and gave his girlfriend a ride home, now he’s on his way to his mother’s with a load of siding for her house. He works too much and never takes time to enjoy himself. He remembers when he used to hitchhike, back before he got hit in that motorcycle accident, seven surgeries and the scars to prove it, now he feels lucky to be alive and does five hundred sit-ups a day. But he’s bored.”

“Why is he bored?”

“Because life can be boring.” said Madge.

“Why are you two headed?” he asked.

“We are going,” said Madge, “To a fantastical city, built entirely of stone mined from the hills of unreasonable expectations.”

And where is that?” he asked

“We don’t know,” said Pansy. “We were hoping you could tell us.”

“Hmm,” said Dude in a Pickup Truck. “I’ve heard about this place. I even used to try to find it. I can’t tell you where it is, though.”

“You used to look for this place?” asked Madge.

“Yes,” said Dude in a pickup truck. “I used to spend all my time looking. That’s all I did, look. When you’re a kid, the path is very clear. As you get older, it splits a lot. But you still look. Then, at about twenty-four, it’s like bushwhacking in a thick fog. That’s when I gave up.”

“What do you do now, instead of look?” asked Pansy.

“I Keep Busy,” said Dude in a Pickup Truck. “I Keep Busy, and the Busy makes life pass by like a strong bowel movement. I Keep Busy during the day, and afterwards the day is gone.”


“With ice cream?” asked Madge.

“With ice cream,” said the man. And then, “Well, here is my turn. If you want to go to Brinnon, stay on this road. And he pulled onto the shoulder in his big yellow truck, and they stepped down from it’s high leather seats and he lifted all of their things from the bed of the truck, one by one, until there was a tall pile of things on the highway shoulder, and they thanked him for his generosity.

“With ice cream,” asked Madge.

“The very best place to get pie. In your country, what is the very best place to get pie.”

“That would be Brinnon,” said the man. “At the Halfway House restaurant. I would say that that is the very best place to get pie.”
"Good luck, you two," he said, and got back in his truck, still struggling with his head as though he didn’t speak much at all.

"Why did you ask him about the pie?" asked Pansy, after he had driven away.

"Well, Madge, it’s good to know which place has the best pie. If every single person says that this place in Brinnion has the best pie, with ice cream, then we can assume that the people at the restaurant know a thing or two about unreasonable expectations. We can go to talk to them, and maybe they can help us."

"That’s a very smart idea," said Pansy. She was beginning to see the logic in all of this.

As they waited for their next ride, a strange figure moved up the hill for them below. It was a person on a bicycle. As the person got closer, she could see that the person was wearing bright yellow spandex clothing, a bright blue helmet, and rode a bright red bicycle. The person wore a shirt on the top and stopped, panting a little, where Madge and Pansy were standing under the shade of a tree.

"Where are you two trying to get to?" asked the person, taking off her dark plastic sunglasses to see them better.

"We’re looking," said Pansy, "for a fantastical city, built entirely of stone mined from the hills of unreasonable expectations. Do you happen to know how we might get there?"

"No," said the person on the bicycle. "I don’t know how to find the city. I just, I looked until I was exhausted. I looked until my shoes were worn through, until my clothes were waterproof with grease. Until the cuffs of my pants held dust and sand from all the corners of the world. I looked so hard, I didn’t sleep. I looked so hard, that all that I saw was old bags, dipped in water and re-heated on flat rocks in the sun. I looked until I fell down one day and could look no longer."

"What did you do then?" asked Pansy, from the backseat.

"I decided to get rich," said the woman. "When you are rich, you may not have found a fantastical city, but other people look at you and think that perhaps you have."

The person looked ahead at the road, from inside of her fine car.

Pansy asked, from the back seat, "Where is your favorite place to eat pie?"

"There is," said the woman. "Well, I have traveled all over the world, and eaten pie in many places, and now I am very rich, and I can eat whatever kind of pie I want, and I would say that the very best place to get pie would be at the Halfway House restaurant, in Brinnion.

"You don’t say!" said Madge. "Do they have different kinds?"

"They have many different kinds!" said the woman. "In fact, I can’t even take care of all of them, if you’d like to go. It’s only a few minutes out of your way.

The woman took them right to the gravel parking lot of the Halfway House restaurant, and to show her gratitude Pansy opened one of her panniers and took out a book. It was a card with a picture of a cave on it, and coming out of the cave were bats. The woman took them right to the gravel parking lot of the Halfway House restaurant, and to show her gratitude Pansy opened one of her panniers and took out a book. It was a card with a picture of a cave on it, and coming out of the cave were bats. The woman handed the card to the woman, who looked at it curiously. She handed the card to the woman, who looked at it curiously. The woman looked back up at them, her eyes wet and red. "Your story is so sad," said Madge. She pulled a wadded-up handkerchief out of her pocket.

"They’re all good," said the woman, who was loosely holding a glass of coffee. "I have my head on my hands, and the cream and the chocolate and the candy and, and…"

"There is no pie that is everything," said the woman. "Many pies are very different, and you can only eat one piece at a time. Would you like me to choose one for you?"

"Yes!" said Madge. And then she turned to Pansy. "I think that each one will be everything! You’ll see! Plus, you and I can eat different pieces, and share!" She turned back to the woman. "I can have mine warm, with ice cream?"

The woman said, "That’s a very smart idea," and Pansy said, "Very well."

The woman said, "That’s a very smart idea," and Pansy added, "Very well."

The woman said, "That’s a very smart idea," and Pansy added, "Very well."

"It is a very friendly place," said Madge. But we had to leave it. It was such a side street that the fabulous city could not even be seen if you had no glass display case showing pies of every sort, with a mirror in back that cre-at-ed the illusion of even more pies. There were bERRY pies, and apple pies, and cream pies that had candy in them, and chocolate pies, and mysterious pies that were covered in whipped cream. There was such a variety, it made the idea of pie seem even more incredible, as if they could eat every kind of pie. The pies were so tall, and the crusts so golden, and the slices so well shaped, it seemed as if they would be more like pie than any pie had ever been before. Madge felt, at that moment, that this pie would not only satisfy her desire for pie, but that it would stop time completely, making only one moment, the moment of this pie, into the only moment that could ever exist, and it would become infinite, this moment of pie eating and wanting pie and tasting pie.

"I don’t know which kind I want!" cried Madge, in a moment of wild abandon. "Bring me your very favorite!"

"They’re all good," said the woman, who was loosely holding a glass of coffee. "I have my head on my hands, and the cream and the chocolate and the candy and, and…"

"But what?" asked Pansy, and Mudge only leaned on their wooden pallets of butter, white and blue and brown eggs from dawn until dusk. Now Madge and Pansy waited for their next ride, a strange figure moved up the hill far below them. It was a person on a bicycle. They waited for their next ride, a strange figure moved up the hill far below them. It was a person on a bicycle.
“It’s a tooth!” she said. “A tooth!” cried Pansy, “To remind you that too much sugar will make your teeth fall out.”

The woman was overcome with gratitude. Tears grew again in the corners of her eyes. She wiped them away. “Thank you!” she said. “In return, I will tell you the one thing that I know about this fantastical City.” She paused. “In this City, there are Magical Talking Unicorns.”

“Magical Talking Unicorns!” cried Pansy. Madge and Pansy looked at each other excitedly. “It’s more than we could have hoped for!”

The woman smiled a sad, tight smile. “Now go,” she said, and good luck.” She turned away to serve the man at the counter, but then she looked back and said, “Oh—if you get tired of hitchhiking, there’s a bus that will take you where you need to go. Finally, they were at the very bottom of the hill, at the bus stop, so they had piled everything on top of it. Pansy worked the pedals, since it was her bike and it fit her, and the cardboard box of dress-up clothes was balanced on the rack with the panniers, and on top of the cardboard box was Madge, sitting the accordion and the foam cut-out. (It was a very sturdy cardboard box.) Pansy took a long drink of water away the last taste of pie, and they set off down the road, up to the top of the hill, and then left, down to the very bottom.”

“Thanks!” cried Madge and Pansy, and they left the small restaurant, shaking the melancholy from their limbs and jumping up and down the clear lungs of the heavy air.

They had decided to ride the bicycle to this faraway bus stop, so they had pilled everything on top of it. Pansy worked the pedals, since it was her bike and it fit her, and the cardboard box of dress-up clothes was balanced on the rack with the panniers, and on top of the cardboard box was Madge, sitting the accordion and the foam cut-out. (It was a very sturdy cardboard box.) Pansy took a long drink of questionable spring water to wash away the last taste of pie, and they set off down the road, up to the top of a long sloping hill and then to the left, down to the very bottom. While Pansy was pedaling Madge was playing the accordion, which was broken and played one single chord always, whether they were pushing in or pulling out, in addition to whatever buttons you might press. During the bike ride Madge played the accordion and she discovered, to her surprise, that she could also play several other chords, and even a bit of a melody that she had adapted from a country song they had heard on the radio, when they were riding with Duke in a Pickup Truck. “I think I’m learning to play the accordion!” she shouted to Pansy above the noise of the wind and the noise of the one chord that the accordion was always playing.

“Of course you are!” cried Pansy, panting a little bit. “You can’t play and play the accordion, pushing in and pulling out, without eventually figuring out how to play the accordion!”

Finally they were at the very bottom of the hill, at the bus stop, and at the bus stop were three teenagers. Madge climbed down from the top of the cardboard box, and they leaned the bike against a metal pole, and then they asked the teenagers about the bus.

“What are you doing?” asked a teenager wearing a torn pink jacket, and a headband with rabbit ears on it, and there were velvet caps and shimmering capes and hooded and collarless capes, there were dresses of satin and tulle, and soft dresses from the 1930s, and a long black wig with bangs, and one tiara. Pansy pulled all of these things out of the box, and then she looked up, and all of the teenagers were staring at her.

“Well,” she said, “What are you waiting for? Go ahead!”

And suddenly the pile was buried in a writhing mass of teenagers, and when they were finished they stepped back and all that was left was one gold button, lying on the dusty floor.

And inside the giant cardboard box, at the very bottom, was the invisible snare drum. An invisible snare drum, how clever.

The teenagers gathered around and stared at what was left of the band, and then they asked the teenagers about Pansy’s invisible snare drum. Pansy walked up to a teenager in a hoodie that was much too big and asked, “Where is the band that’s playing a show?”

“We’re setting up our snare drum,” said Pansy. “We all could come!” they shouted. “We could help! We want to come!” Madge and Pansy looked at each other excitedly. “How happy these teenagers would be, free! What an interesting adventure…"
And I can't come,' added another, from the side of the room, "because I wouldn't have my home, and because I don't have any money".

They all chimed in, one after the other:

"And I'm afraid of the dark."

"Because my little brother would think I died."

"And I don't know how to read a map."

"My mom needs me to sweep the floors."

"I don't have any good shoes for traveling."

"What about you?"

"My sister's birthday is coming up."

"I have to feed the dog."

And so on. Madge and Pansy listened and nodded and sighed, and then Pansy took the lid off the door, the door too quickly for the teenagers to notice, they were so busy talking and being disappointed. In a minute she was back inside, with a thing cupped in her two hands. She walked up to the shy teenager and held out the thing. All of the other teenagers fell silent, watching.

"It's a feather!" said one of them.

"A chicken feather," said Pansy.

"It's the most beautiful thing I've ever seen," said the shy teenager. And it was beautiful. Near the base were the most delicate soft hairs. In the middle the feather was buffed and spotted, a brown that shimmered with all the colors of the rainbow. And at the tip the feather was sleek and lightly curled.

"This is to remind you that the ordinary is the extraordinary," said Pansy. "For when you cannot go on quests. This reminds us to notice all the beauty that is around us, because with it, and your imagination, you can make the extraordinary things happen.

"But I wish I could go with you!" cried the shy teenager, devastated.

"Wait!" said Pansy, and from her pocket she pulled another thing. It was a round metal bell, with a ball inside that jingled.

"I didn't know you had a bell in your pocket!" said Pansy. "How did I miss its jingling?"

"It's the most beautiful thing I've ever seen," said the shy teenager. She jingled it, and nothing happened. She pointed. In a minute she was back inside, with a Thing cupped on her hands as if she were trying to hold the back of the little bus, and sank into two soft seats, piling their things next to them.

Outside it was nighttime, and getting very cold. They looked out the window. Hot, stale air blew at them from vents. Pansy felt hungry and then, drifted off, thinking about peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and venison stew with big lumps of butter. It's the most beautiful thing I've ever seen, she thought, staring at the window, too awake to sleep, wondering if they would make it to the city, if they would just look and look and finally give up and go home, defeated. Finally drowsiness overcame her and she fell asleep, slumping over onto Pansy, who was slumped against the ramp door. Up at the front of the bus, the driver listened to the radio and whistled, monitored his head-lights sweep along the dark trees until they were left and then turning right onto this country road and then another country road, no other cars anywhere.

Pansy and Madge woke up. The driver was talking to them. "Well," he said, "here we are! End of the road! No more road after this! Gotta turn around! You gotta get off!

They blinked their eyes and rubbed them and stood up, bones creaking. Madge gathered the accordion and cat house and Pansy carried the panniers and cardboard box. They thanked the driver, and he smiled at them.

"Sun'll be up soon. You'll be alright."

They pulled the things back to the bus and put them in the rack and pushed it out of the way. The bus rumbled and left, was still cold and dark, with a little grey in the very farthest east.

"What do we do now?" asked Pansy.

"Let's sleep some more," said Madge wearily. "In that grass—"

"and she pointed to a dim mound on the other side of some blackberries. "I bet when the sun comes up it'll be nice there. And then we can decide what to do, when the sun comes up!"

They found a little patch here, took their blackberries, and picked their way across, trying not to catch their things too much. Once in the tall grass they found an old log and curled up next to it, leaning the bicycle against it and wrapping their arms around each other for warmth.

"Do you think we'll ever find the city?" asked Pansy. She had been thinking the very same thing as Madge.

"I don't understand corny," said Madge. "If we're tired of looking, if we get tired of being hungry and lost, we can just go home. Home will still be there for us, whenever we want it."

"If we go home," said Pansy, "I can finish the scarf I was making."
Slow And Steady Wins The Race.

The unicorn trotted to a stop and Madge & Pansy dismounted, open-mouthed in awe. They carried their things in their arms and walked slowly through the break in the wall, and just past it green pasture stretched out before them, thick with wildflowers, all in bloom, and there was a smooth stone road, and on either side of the road were two tall flagpoles, and on each flagpole was a long flag, one milk-colored and the other the color of the sky. Pansy stood for a moment and then she could see that they both had words on them, and that one of them said "No Thing Can Be Every Thing" and on the other one was written all in the most flowery golden script.

"Wow!" cried Madge, weakly. It was more wonderful than she could have dreamed! And now she was sitting, her hunger coming rushing down on her like a feral cat! Pansy suddenly felt her hunger too, as she remembered how little she had eaten in the past few days. The unicorn with the sparkly horn laddied bowls of creamy orange soup and set the bowls in front of them, along with a plate of fresh, crusty gluten-free bread. (Unicorns are terribly sensitive to gluten.) They ate the soup in big slurping mouthfuls, and next came the salad, which tasted of vinegar and springtime and the delicate sugar of flowers, and then came the meatloaf, which was rich and savory, and the French fries, which were crispy and just right. And last was the pie, and it was just an ordinary piece of pie, and by this time the two were so full that they could hardly appreciate it, much less finish every bite. The unicorn stood watching them with its gentle wet eyes, and when they were finished it cleared the plates away and motioned with its nose to a pile of cushions that lay next to the fire and a stack of thick velour blankets, meaning that they should curl up there on the cushions and maybe nap. Blearily full, they stumbled over to the cushions and collapsed next to the fire and a stack of thick velour blankets, meaning that they should curl up there on the cushions and maybe nap. Blearily full, they stumbled over to the cushions and collapsed into their deep softness, pulling the blankets up around them and going into the softly crackling fire. The unicorn settled down across the hearth, its knees folded neatly on a tasseled pillow, and watched them, curiously, and with a look of heavy contemplation. Pansy turned away to stare at the fire, but she could feel the unicorn's dark eyes like warm stones resting on her back, and at last she sat up, and turned, and asked the unicorn if it was thinking about anything in particular, and if so, what. It was only wondering, said the unicorn, that tomorrow, when you two shed your human forms and become great glittering unicorns like us—I was only wondering what colors you might you two shed your human forms and become great glittering unicorns like us—I was only wondering what colors you might...
Madge nodded agreement, and the two lay back in the nest of your thoughts will be clearer. “You are too tired to come to a decision, and in the morning maybe the answer will come to you in your dreams. Or maybe etched on its face. By and by it spoke, nodding at the pillows, And now what? The unicorn watched them, infinite patience when they had almost ceased to believe that it even existed. They’d worked so and she climbed aboard to go to school. exhaust and early springtime. The bus came, its doors opened, clumps of grey snow, the sky shot with stars. The air smelled of standing at the bus stop in the early morning dark, fishing pulling at her hair. She was reliving a memory from childhood, rose-colored stones, and the nice-tasting soup… inspirational banners flapping in the wind. And the warm, prancing. And the nutmeg wind is blowing—there’s plenty of clover. The days being a unicorn. “If you don’t become unicorns, you cannot stay here! You cannot live here in your human, mortal body. If you do not become a unicorn, then you cannot stay!” the unicorn huffed, and tossed its mane a little in the firelight. “What did you expect?” “What did I expect?” mumbled Madge, mostly to herself. Her eyes were looking down, at the blanket in her lap, and her hand was absentmindedly tugging at her hair. “What did I expect…” Pansy was quiet, too, and looked at the palms of her hands. They were still with their thoughts, and a new sort of feeling, a feeling that they couldn’t quite describe, something akin to disappointment. The unicorn saw their sadness, and shifted a leg on the tasseled pillow, uncomfortable. “There, there,” said the unicorn. “It’s not so bad. You’ll like being a unicorn. I like it! The sun is most always shining, the nutmeg wind is blowing—there’s plenty of clover. The days pass with their own slow current. There’s no sense of urgency here, no great crisis to live through or overcome. Only sweet where it kept those inspirational banners flapping in the wind. And the warm, rose-colored stones, and the nice-tasting soup…” Pansy still stared at her hands, deep in thought. She did like prancing. And the nutmeg wind was nice, the way it kept those Magde was also thinking hard, staring off at nothing, hand did like Magde gasped. The unicorns! What had happened to the city, and why were they back in this meadow? How had they gotten here? Surely they hadn’t been carried on the back of the unicorn with the cat—all that motion would’ve woken them up. “I just don’t understand it,” Pansy was saying, “we hadn’t even made our decision. And now we may never get another chance! Oh! Wherever will we find that unicorn that liked to eat the blackberries? However will we find the city again? Where are we, even?” As Magde sat up in the morning light, listening to Pansy, a dream began to come back to her, like an old Polaroid photograph that takes a few minutes to develop. In the dream she was walking through the forest on a narrow trail, and a rounded log hung in the trees like cotton batting, and lichens stretched from the branches like cobwebs. She was walking with the unicorn, the one who had sat with them the night before, the one with the deep chestnut body and sparkling magenta horn. The unicorn was leading her down the path, into the quiet woods. Madge shook her head. The unicorn stretched its neck out on the cool stone hearth, and watched the fire. Madge and Pansy slept. Pansy woke first, as usual, to the deafening racket of birds. The blackberry brambles that surrounded the meadow seemed to be thick with them, and they flipped to and fro, moving sticks and running errands, shouting at each other. The sun had been up, it seemed, for several hours, and the morning was starting to warm. Any haze had lifted, and the dew on the grass had returned to the atmosphere, come and gone in the night like a ghost. And then Pansy remembered the unicorns. The wall, the tinsel, the plum-colored glass—the city? They had found the city! Pansy sat up with a start, knocking to the grass the sweater she’d used as a blanket. She looked around her frantically. There were only the birds, some yellow grass, and her bicycle, resting on the other side of the stump they’d slept against. There was no unicorn, no nutmeg-wind, no clover. “Oh no!” she cried, and Magde woke with a start, the meadow rushing into her senses like water through a port-hole. “What is it?” She asked groggily, alarmed. “The unicorns!” cried Pansy. “The magical talking unicorns! We’ve lost them!” The unicorn stared at them, surprised. Where are we, even?” Carrot Quinn (carrotquinn.wordpress.com, krotten@gmail.com)
There are so many dawns that have yet to break.