

LET 'ER RIP

BY ROB LOS RICOS

Long before the United States was even a concept, colonial Americans had been expressing their desires for revolutionary changes in their society through the only means available to them: rioting. Many people now counted among our nation's founding fathers argued for years against the violence employed by the American workers — wage laborers, slaves, ex-slaves and seamen — to literally fight against unjust laws and business practices.¹ In the end, conservatives like John Adams and Alexander Hamilton threw in their lot with the violent masses they had previously denounced as "a motley rabble of saucy boys, Negroes and mulattos".² It's not that the conservatives had a change of heart, they merely recognized the impossibility of stopping the people's urges for freedom in their world. The



THE INSURGENT PEOPLE IN THE STREETS IN SEATTLE WEREN'T FIGHTING AGAINST STARBUCKS OR NIKE OR U.S. BANK OR EVEN THE WTO. THEY WERE EXPRESSING THEIR OUTRAGE THAT ENTIRE FAMILIES HAVE TO WORK PICKING COFFEE BEANS OR THEY WILL ALL GO HUNGRY, THAT YOUNG GIRLS ARE SOLD INTO SLAVERY TO WORK IN INDONESIA SHOE FACTORIES AND THAT WEALTHY CORPORATIONS, BANKS AND GOVERNMENTS WANT TO FIND WAYS TO BECOME MORE PROFITABLE, REGARDLESS OF THE HUMAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES.

aristocracy felt a need to try to control and suppress the people's will to fight for liberty or run the risk of being swept aside by the revolutionary masses. It was not by coincidence that the first action of the United States Army was to put down the Insurrectionary forces of the Continental Army which had freed the colonies from British rule.³

Americans have yet to lose that fighting spirit, as evidenced by the battle against the forces of capital in Seattle during the WTO conference late last year. While peaceful protesters were demonstrating once again their ability to absorb kicks, truncheon blows, pain compliance holds and pepper spray, hundreds of other people decided to go on the offensive and physically attack the institutions directly responsible for the exploitation of people in impoverished communities.

Horried by the so-called violence of the insurgence, the liberals and "professional activists" rushed to the defense of McDonald's and Nike. Unlike the conservative elements of the American revolution, the conservative elements of the WTO protests were unable to stem, contain or otherwise control the spirited rebels in the streets. So, in the aftermath of the

people's victory in Seattle,⁴ the conservatives have lined up to denounce the jubilant victors.

There are criticisms to be made about the tactical value of rioting to achieve revolutionary goals. After all, the moment passed, the damage was repaired and business now continues, as usual. Of course, this argument can be applied to any protest. In order to affect real change, a movement must sustain the attack until the social order breaks down completely.

Unfortunately, this sort of willful non-compliance with the existing order has dire consequences. As Frederick Douglas said, "power concedes nothing without a fight."

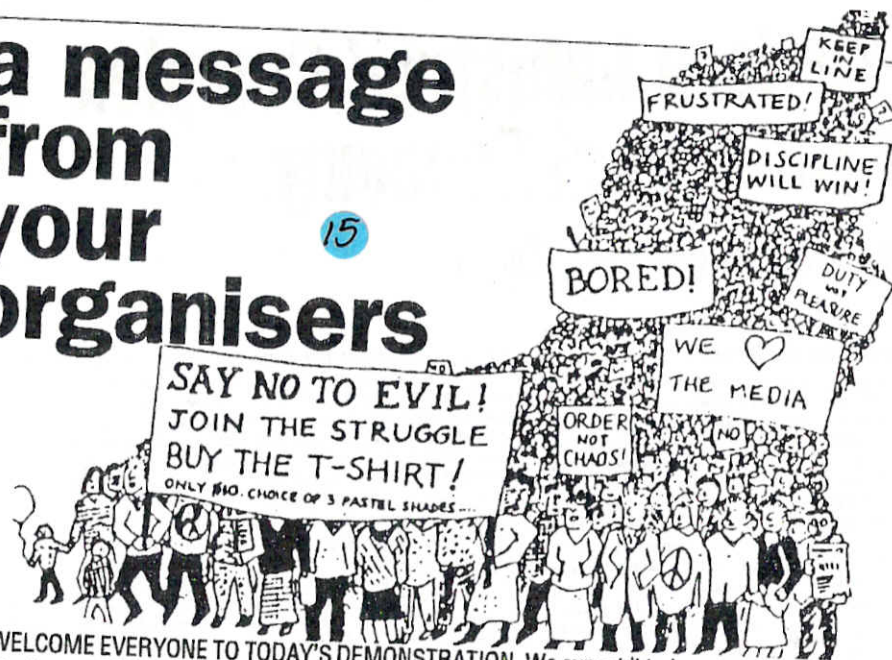
Here in the U.S., most people live in a degree of material comfort very few people in less developed countries experience. Few Americans are willing to jeopardize

their comfortable lifestyles by fighting against the powerful forces that maintain it. There are many who are — in theory — opposed to the destruction of the natural world, the slaughter of animals, the exploitation of impoverished communities people in distant lands and the environment. Yet when riding upon other people's backs like they would animals, the liberal consumer will do anything to ease the suffering of those beneath them except get off their backs.

Social and environmental conditions have reached such a wretched state that the first world consumers are beginning to not just question their roles as consumers, but to reject and actually fight against these roles. The insurgent people in the streets in Seattle weren't fighting against Starbucks or Nike U.S. Bank or even the WTO. They were expressing their outrage that entire families have to work picking coffee beans they will all go hungry, that young girls are sold into slavery to work in Indonesia shoe factories and that wealthy corporations, banks and governments want to find ways to become more profitable, regardless of the human and environmental consequences.

a message from your organisers

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WE WELCOME EVERYONE TO TODAY'S DEMONSTRATION. We expect it to be one of the largest this country has ever seen. Let us march as one to show our government how upset we are about the state of the world.

For this demonstration to be effective we must march with dignity and unity. Comrades, a DISCIPLINED march is essential if we are to avoid losing the support of the media, the international press and the police. So please remember to follow the RULES AND REGULATIONS of the demonstration. And please OBEY all commands given by the marshals and the police, who will be working together throughout the demonstration to ensure peace and order.

At the end of the march there will be a long rally, with speeches by several very important people. After the rally, please disperse as quickly as possible and go back to your homes. Remember, DISCIPLINE is of the utmost importance. WITHOUT IT, EVERYTHING WILL COLLAPSE.

RULES AND REGULATIONS

In order to help you channel your anger and frustration in a constructive way, the organising sub-committee has suggested the following slogans which you may like to chant:

"Major, Major, Major, Out, Out, Out!" and "What do we want—a change of leaders. When do we want it—in due course."

NOTE ~ The following chants are NOT acceptable: "Bombs, bombs, bombs not jobs" and "Burn it down, burn it down, burn that fucker to the ground".

2. The march will be flanked on both sides by uniformed marshals. Please do NOT break the formation, and do NOT, on any account, attempt to communicate with passers-by, without prior authorisation from the publicity sub-committee.

3. Running is STRICTLY forbidden.

4. If you spot any extremists, do NOT approach them, but inform the marshals or the police, who are qualified to take the appropriate action.

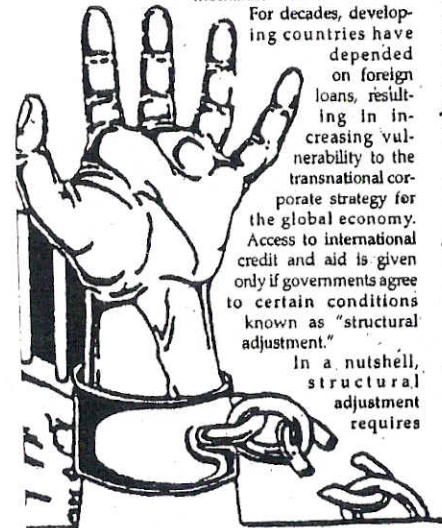
Today's events are the culmination of months of planning aimed at achieving maximum boredom, as a gesture of solidarity with the people on whose behalf we are marching. With your cooperation, we can make today a massive success and start building for a repeat performance next year.

The Prison Industrial Complex and the Global Economy

Eve Goldberg and Linda Evans

ome to the New World Order.

proliferation of prisons in the United States is one piece of the puzzle called the globalization of capital. At the end of the Cold War, capitalism has gone on an additional business offensive. No longer impeded by an alternative socialist economy or the threat of national liberation movements supported by the Soviet Union or China, multinational corporations see the world as their oyster. Institutions such as the World Trade Organization, World Bank, and International Monetary Fund, bolstered by agreements like NAFTA and GATT, are putting more and more power into the hands of transnational corporations by squeezing national governments. The primary mechanism of control is debt.



For decades, developing countries have depended on foreign loans, resulting in increasing vulnerability to the transnational corporate strategy for the global economy. Access to international credit and aid is given only if governments agree to certain conditions known as "structural adjustment."

In a nutshell, structural adjustment requires

cuts in social services, privatization of state-run industry, repeal of agreements with labor about working conditions and minimum wage, conversion of multi use farm lands into cash crop agriculture for export, and the dismantling of trade laws which protect local economies. Under structural adjustment, police and military expenditures are the only government spending that is encouraged. The sovereignty of nations is compromised when, as in the case of Vietnam, trade sanctions are threatened unless the government allows Camel cigarettes to litter the countryside with billboards, or promises to spend millions in the U.S.-orchestrated crackdown on drugs.

The basic transnational corporate philosophy is this: the world is a single market; natural resources are to be exploited; people are consumers; anything which hinders profit is to be routed out and destroyed. The results of this philosophy in action are that while economies are growing, so is poverty so is ecological destruction, so are sweatshops and child labor. Across the globe, wages are plummeting, indigenous people are being forced off their lands, rivers are becoming industrial dumping grounds, and forests are being obliterated. Massive regional starvation and "World Bank riots" are becoming more frequent throughout the Third World.

All over the world, more and more people are being forced into illegal activity for their own survival as traditional cultures and social structures are destroyed. Inevitably, crime and imprisonment rates are on the rise. And the United States law enforcement establishment is in the forefront, domestically and internationally, in providing state-of-the-art repression.

Within the United States, structural adjustment (sometimes known as the Contract With America) takes the form of welfare and social service cuts, continued massive military spending, and skyrocketing prison spending. Walk through any poor urban neighborhood; school systems are crumbling, after school programs, libraries, parks and drug treatment centers are closed. But you will see more police stations and more cops. Often, the only "social service" available to poor people is jail.

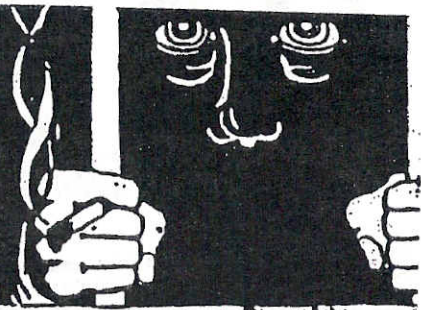
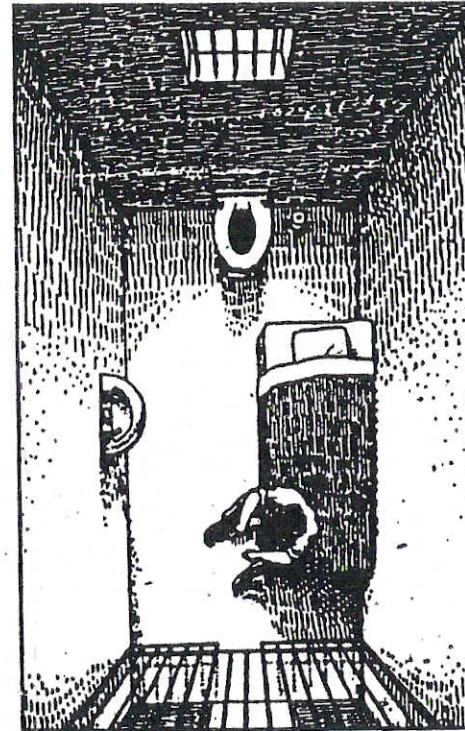
The dismantling of social programs, and the growing dominance of the right-wing agenda in U.S. politics has been made possible, at least in part, by the successful repression of the

civil rights and liberation movements of the 1960s and '70s. Many of the leaders — Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, Fred Hampton, and many others — were assassinated. Others, like Geronimo ji Jaga Pratt, Leonard Peltier, and Mumia Abu-Jamal, have been locked up. More than 150 political leaders from the black liberation struggle, the Puerto Rican independence movement, and other resistance efforts are still in prison. Many are serving sentences ranging from 40 to 90 years. Oppressed communities have been robbed of radical political leadership which might have led an opposition movement. We are reaping the results.

The number of people in U.S. prisons has more than tripled in the past 17 years from 500,000 in 1980 to 1.8 million in 1997. Today, more than 5 million people are behind bars, on parole, probation, or under other supervision by the criminal justice system. The state of California now spends more on prisons than on higher education, and over the past decade has built 19 prisons and only one branch university.

Add to this the fact that increasing numbers of women are being locked up. Between 1980 and 1994, the number of women in prison increased five-fold, and women now make up the fastest growing segment of the prison population. Most of these women are mothers leaving future generations growing up in foster homes or on the streets.

Welcome to the New World Order.



Prison Statistics

- 2,700,000 people are either locked up in county, state or federal prisons, or are under legal supervision.
- Each week, 1,600 more people go to jail than leave.
- The overall prison population has risen 200% since 1980.
- The female prison population has risen 275% since 1980.
- 90% of women in prison are single mothers — there are 167,000 children with incarcerated mothers.
- In 1980, 33% of federal prisoners were people of color; in 1995, 64%.
- African Americans constitute 13% of drug users but 33% of drug arrests, 55% of drug convictions, and 74% of prison sentences.
- In 1995, 52% of all crack cocaine users were white, 38% were African Americans. However, of those sent to prison for crack offenses, 88% were African American, only 12% were white.
- 1,471 African Americans per 100,000 were incarcerated in 1993; 203 whites per 100,000 were incarcerated.
- For non drug offenses, African Americans get prison that average about 10% longer than Caucasians for crimes.
- It costs more per year to send a person to prison than to Harvard University for a year.
- Private corporations like Eddie Bauer and Lexus employ prison slave labor. Prisoners work without rights or protection.
- In 1994, 92% of federal inmates were incarcerated for non-violent crimes.
- More than 40% of inmates are jailed on nonviolent crimes.
- Prisoners with HIV have little or no access to qualified medical attention.
- More than 100 political prisoners in the United States are serving long terms not for crimes committed but for their beliefs and activities.

EUGENE ACTIVE EXISTENCE

SEVEN WEEK REVOLT!

EUGENE, OREGON
APRIL 20-JUNE 18, 2000

WE ARE
the LIFE
GROWING
BETWEEN
the CRACKS
in the
PAVEMENT



The street fighters in Seattle tasted a bit of what real power is like. For a time, they owned the center of a major American city and they determined that they would not allow business to continue as usual. Now that they've tasted their own power, they'll hunger for more. Will there be more, continuous pressure against suicidal consumerism until it collapses?

Perhaps as important as the actual fighting will be how the so-called traditional opposition will react to it. Will they, as they did in Seattle, jump to the defense of Nike? Will they climb down from their positions of privilege, or must they go down kicking and screaming, desperately clinging to their car keys and cell phones?

It is not even ironic that many of these same people who denounce property destruction in American cities also claim to support the Zapatistas and other armed insurgents — abroad. It's not ironic — it's imperialistic and racist to sit back in a comfy chair and let other people provide your cheap food, clothing, fuel and electronic gadgets for you, while cynically encouraging them if they rebel against their circumstances.⁵

Just as rioting spread through the Americas until colonialism was swept aside by the revolutionary urgings of the many, varied people yearning for liberty, the continued uprising of the masses of indigent ex-consumers will one day break the stranglehold capitalism has on our world. ■

Footnotes:

(1) Gary B. Nash, *The Urban Genocide: Social Change, Political Consciousness, and the origins of the American Revolution*, Harvard Press, 1979.

(2) John Adams' description of the crowd fired upon by British soldiers commonly referred to as "the Boston Massacre." Adams was the defense attorney for the British captain who ordered his soldiers to shoot. See Hiller B. Zoebel, *The Boston Massacre*, Norton, 1970.

(3) David P. Szatmary, *Shay's Rebellion: The Making of an Agrarian Insurrection*, University of Massachusetts Press, 1980.

(4) According to the Mayor of Washington, after the anti-WTO riots: "when you have to call in additional police forces from out of town and send in the National Guard, you're basically saying "the anarchists won!"

(5) For a more complete discussion on the failure of pacifism as an instrument of social change and the difference between principled pacifist activity and cowardice dressed up in moralistic jargon, see Ward Churchill, *Pacifism as Pathology*, Arbeiter Ring Publishing.

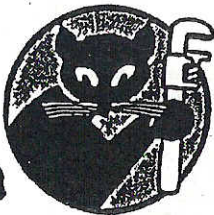


IF EVERY FACET OF OUR LIVES IS MEASURED, TIMED,
BOUGHT AND SOLD, THEN CAN WE BE SAID TO BE ALIVE
OR HAVE WE BECOME ANIMATED MACHINERY?

TO TURN AWAY FROM THIS HORRIFYING EXISTENCE
IS TO BECOME AN OUTCAST, TO DRIFT OFF
INTO MARGINALIZATION AND CROSS
THE BOUNDARY INTO ILLEGALITY.

A Case Destruction

by Marshall



For

How much longer will we be able to live with ourselves as we submit to authority and plead for it to rectify the gross immorality of its actions? How many more stories do we have to cry through until we realize that the creation of tragedy is what happens when the powerful use their power? How sick must this world become before people say 'no more' and act decisively? So many different examples can be provided to show that the state of the world is already so far beyond anything acceptable that I have to marvel at how well we've been trained not to notice. I know that many socially and ecologically conscious people prefer to focus on what's good in life so they can survive emotionally. I think it is very important, though, to be honest about what we're facing when we decide how to act.

As a mental exercise for activists, I'd like everyone to take a moment to visualize just part of what we're trying to end. For example, close your eyes and take your imagination inside just one factory farm for "food animals." Think about the pain and suffering that tens of thousands of chickens suffer through as they dream of death mercifully arriving. They cannot move for lack of space. They are blinded and cannibalized by their cagemates. They choke on the thick fumes of excrement everywhere. Their bodies are infested with diseases; their feet bleed and grow to envelop the wire floors they stand on. They hallucinate from tumors that grow on the nerves severed where their most important body part, their beaks, are painfully sliced off.

Consider that this world is full of factory farms. The same world is full of men who beat the women in their lives. It is full of cinderblock buildings where the life is ritually drained from every growing child. Try to deal emotionally with just these obscenities for only a few minutes. Some people are filled

with sadness, some with anger, most with both when they open themselves even partially to the honest state of the world. I believe that burning fury is as healthy a reaction as we can have. I believe that things are so bad that to stop short of attack is hellishly, sickeningly absurd.

There is a large debate full of arguments and counterarguments concerning the destruction of property in defense of life. I believe that in order to even engage in those arguments, we must have part of our emotions turned numb to the world we're trying to change. Otherwise, arguing about whether or not to destroy things seems ridiculous.

I understand that many people, even activists, choose to turn away from this pain and anger. Many of us prefer to focus on the kind of positive experiences we want to fill the world with. In reality, social change does not occur in a vacuum, or even primarily within ourselves. For example, your non-violent festival outside the WTO conference was going on in streets lined with McDonalds, Starbucks and jewelry stores. We must engage with a very threatening

opponent and get a little dirty.

I spend a lot of time arguing in defense of property destruction as a tool for social change. I will briefly share some of those arguments for those who are trapped in their heads, or who have silenced the part of their heart that moves a mother cow trapped in a dairy to scream every time she's robbed of another child she was raped to produce and lactate for.

I should preface these arguments with a few fundamental statements. I believe that the only effective way to deal with problems is to dig as deep as possible to address their

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root causes. I believe that, at root, almost all of this is made possible by our alienation from ourselves, each other, the earth, and the power to fill our own needs (e.g., food, safety, learning, decision making). I believe we can reconnect. Also, I do not argue that property destruction is non-violent. I think that's a petty, pleading argument that sidesteps the real issues. When I use the word violence, I mean physically imposing your will on something or someone else. In my mind, violence against people is rarely a good idea, even where we're at today. I may feel differently when violence against material objects has done all it can, but that's far from the case now.

ARGUMENT #1: "VIOLENCE AND DESTRUCTION ARE THE PROBLEM, NOT THE SOLUTION."

RESPONSES: Violence, from eating to self defense, is a natural part of life that we are alienated from by privilege. The problem is, instead, institutionalized violence: super-powerful, insanely funded by extortion, wielded by thoroughly indoctrinated authoritarians who exploit their constructed power, expend huge amounts of energy to maintain the institution itself, and only use their violence for real people's protection as much as is required to maintain a facade of legitimacy.

Another interesting response is the homeopathic analysis: that it takes a dose of the symptom to move the body to cure its disease.

ARGUMENT #2: "VIOLENCE IS PATRIARCHAL AND AUTHORITARIAN."

First, tell that to an animal mother defending her child. Next, tell that to someone marginalized enough that they must rely on their own abilities to protect themselves. Again, here is another case of missing structural analysis. The difference between violence and state-sanctioned violence is very significant. It is akin to the difference between learning for yourself and going to school. Arguing that educating yourself, with the help of fate and your friends, is patriarchal and authoritarian sounds like a real challenge. However, it is easy to see how schools could be criticized in both those ways.

ARGUMENT #3: "DESTRUCTION PREVENTS THE FORMATION OF A MASS MOVEMENT."

In reality, a direct confrontation with our oppressors is very appealing to many of society's most marginalized members. Likewise, with enough cultural work and dialogue, many pacifists and reformists can be persuaded to join in a struggle for fundamental change that poses a credible threat to power. Finally, the world demands fundamental change, and it may not be realistic to focus on creating widespread support for that, especially here in the first world. We may

need to gather as many people as we can, for action and support, then get the job done.

ARGUMENT #4: "DESTRUCTION LEADS TO BAD MEDIA COVERAGE."

That's true, and it must be taken into account. Mediated relations, as between activists and the news-consuming public, are highly susceptible to manipulation. While media is important, I believe that the only relationships that will ever be healthy are the direct ones. Ever the most slanderous press creates name and issue recognition that can later increase receptivity to our media and dialogue. Besides, most people today know that the media is biased.

ARGUMENT #5: "SMASHING THINGS ACCOMPLISHES NOTHING."

By reappropriating windows for their own purposes, people take power back from property, its owners, the police and politics. It provides economic and cultural incentive to reconsider exploitive behavior that would otherwise only be rewarded. The only state that a plate glass window at McDonalds should exist in is smashed to bits all over the street. There is so much destruction behind every McDonalds that it is invaluable to bring some more to the forefront of its image for everyone to see.

ARGUMENT #6: "VIOLENCE PROVOKES RETRIBUTION FROM POWER."

Another true statement. However, endangering the opulence and hegemony of our rulers in any way makes them very angry. If we are serious about fundamental social change, if we believe that our problems will not be solved until our rulers have their power taken from them, then we must prepare to defend ourselves. This defense will be necessary whether we threaten power with violence or non-violence, as was demonstrated in Seattle. I fear that this is the argument most people are really moved to pacifism by. I'm sure that there are some people with a respectable, spiritual relationship with non-violence that is based on more than privileged delusions. Given the state of reality, I don't think that's what we need. ■

