

**on the
current
crisis**



**& the potential
for revolution**

Front cover: Riga, Latvia—January 2009

Back cover: Mahalla el-Kubra, Egypt—April 2008

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This text was written in a relatively short period of time in an effort to spark awareness and discussion of the current global situation, its pitfalls and possibilities, from a perspective which rejects domination and exploitation in all forms, which wants to put an end to all of the divisions imposed by class, nation, gender and so on in modern society. It is an analysis offered as a tool for use by anyone interested in radical change, not as a report on the facts of current global trends and unrest. We recommend you do your own research and keep up via these and other fine internet ources:

news.infoshop.org

ainfos.ca

bombsandshields.blogspot.com

...and of course, by experimenting with putting the revolution into practice in your own life. Theory should be used up in battle!

Foreword: Class, conflict and crisis



Port-au-Prince, Haiti—April 2008

It's hard to know where to begin this story, as it concerns situations exploding right now around the world, as well as thousands of years of class struggle, cycles of conflict and accumulation which make up so much of what we know as history. Hard times in the economy of the rich means political attacks on the common people. It is a moment where social and technological “progress” could provide the means to extract more profit by separating us from our survival in new ways. But it is also a moment when counter-attack against the ruling class could bring about total social change—a revolution in which all the existing system's defenders like institutions, cops, commodities and money will be swept off the field.

This spring: as prices rise and wages drop, food riots and guerrilla attacks occur around the globe. Into the fall, “mass incidents” among the uprooted in China's

sprawling manufacturing zones, and millions due to be turned out of their homes in the U.S. and Europe. In Greece, widespread rebellion among students, youth, and immigrants causes the police to run out of tear gas within weeks. In Iceland, protestors smash the windows of the world's oldest parliament, and the government resigns. This past month has seen burning barricades and blockaded border crossings in northern Mexico. More and more people have been attacking the governments and economies that rule them, from the Yellow Sea to the Caribbean, the Baltic to San Francisco Bay. What is going on? Why are people acting like this? What do they want? Is it the same thing you want?

Throughout the world, these and other events are being linked to the so-called "credit crisis" everyone is talking about. It's obvious that something massive is shuddering through the globalized capitalist world we now inhabit—a growing storm which could be the sign of its coming end. So, how we respond depends on what we want to see left in its wake. A revitalized empire of capitalist nation-states? A more socialistic Pepsi system to replace capitalism's Coke? Or something else entirely? Considering these and other questions, we will seek the roots of the crisis in the foundation of the modern system.

Capital, productivity and money have ruled for so long, most of us can't imagine living another way—or even the possibility of living another way. But this failure of imagination does not correspond to a lack in reality. For example, food doesn't come from the supermarket, it comes from the earth. If we planted gardens in every lawn and golf course, if we looted every supermarket and military base, we could feed ourselves. There are a million other ways we could live, but the elite have a different plan for the world.

So it is a question, then, of what has been inserted between us and our ability to provide for ourselves. This separation from power over the conditions of our existence is what creates class—not simply a lack of material possessions. People who have been dispossessed are forced to sell their labor or face state discipline: Marx and others have called this class the *proletariat*. Anarchists have spoken of *the exploited and excluded*; in the 18th century we were called *the hewers of wood and drawers of water*. We fill the prisons, service industries, welfare rolls, militaries and slums. We live by hourly wages, welfare, crime, or some combination. Whatever you want to call us, the defining quality of our existence is not simply that we don't have enough things, but that we have little or no control over our lives: we are controlled by social power structures. As long as this has been the case, we have fought against this condition.

There are some who would replace capitalism with what they call a “higher” form of social organization. But we don’t need to replace capitalism or the class system, any more than we need to replace a brain tumor. The only common element of our class identity is our exploitation and lack of control; so we are united only in our negative project of destroying the economy which requires our exploitation, and the states and other hierarchal structures which enforce it. We fight to do away with class—then we will live as we see fit.



Athens, Greece—December 2008

“We are in Civil War: with the fascists, the bankers, the state, the media wishing to see an obedient society. There are no excuses, yet they once again try to use conspiracy theories to calm spirits down. The rage that had accumulated had to be expressed and should not, by any means, end. Throughout the world we are making headlines; it was about time that people rise up everywhere. The generation of the poor, the unemployed, the partially employed, the homeless, the migrants, the youth, is the generation that will smash every display window and will wake up the obedient citizens from their sleep of the ephemeral American dream. Don’t watch the news, consciousness is born in the streets.”

—Association of employees of the suburb of Agios Dimitrios in Athens

1. Into the present

Some people managed to replace the tumor of capitalism with a Marxist tumor; however, most of these have reverted to capitalism, since capitalism run by state bureaucrats is only a slightly less efficient version of capitalism run by businessmen. With the collapse of the Eastern Bloc starting as maybe the most potent reminder, for about a decade the main source of social conflict was recognized as that between people and power, owners and owned, workers and work. The economic restructuring that took place in the wake of this capitalist triumph pushed more and more people around the world deeper into dependence on the central systems of capitalist economic organization, the fluctuating markets. Working class solidarity and power has been largely broken up by the progress of technology and social engineering, as well as the mass displacement of people all around the world leaving their pillaged native lands in search of employment—refugees of the mindless, typhoon-like violence of economics. It has been argued that the main characteristic of the modern working class is now its precariousness: some have suggested the name *precarariat*.

But capital, too, is precarious. It needs us to keep working and following the rules, and to this end it spends heavily on police, prisons, surveillance systems and so on to keep us in line. Capital requires the continual circulation of commodities, so a prolonged disruption could be very bad for the economy.

About 7½ years ago, this phase of capitalist restructuring—which had provoked resistance throughout the world, particularly the West and the Global South—came to an end and was replaced by a more forceful, nationalistic, warmongering period around the world—the “War on Terror” of the global bourgeoisie. But the war machines, not surprisingly, have become bogged down, and so has the economy that depended on them. A number of risky investments went very badly, and now the responsible ruling class is escaping with massive hand outs drawn from public funds. We are getting stuck with the bill, in the form of social spending cuts, rising unemployment, and in many parts of the world, shortages of basic necessities such as food and fuel. This “crisis,” which is really just more business as usual, has also given momentum to a new cycle of resistance and repression, this time on a truly global scale. We are supposed to keep busy fighting each other for the crumbs from the master’s table. But we are also capable of flipping the whole damn table over.

2. Response from below

Unsurprisingly, the U.S. bourgeois has selected a head of state with a knack for reassuring them that everything is going to be fine. (Expect to see many more silver-tongued liberals in high places soon, particularly Iceland and perhaps France and Greece.)



Manila, Philippines—June 2008

But everything is not going to be fine. Social unrest has reappeared again in the metropolis of capital. Across southern and eastern Europe, in Iceland, southern China and even the Bay Area of California, a force of widespread negativity appears that hungers not for “replacements” or reforms, but the destruction of all barriers to the power of our class. In North America and Europe, revolutionaries have stepped up campaigns of sabotage targeting the property of banks and governments. Every attempt is made to explain away the riots as economic discontent (as if they expressed a desire for a “healthier” capitalist economy), or sometimes as outrage over police abuses (as if cops could be anything but guardians of the state and economy) or for the “rights” of immigrants (again, more important is the “right” of states to banish or imprison people from the “wrong” places). The sabotages are simply ignored for the most part, or explained, along with the rioting, as pointless, meaningless, irrational violence. But what do they really express, these interruptions of society’s gleaming, mass-produced, right-angled facades?

As Os Cangaceiros (rebels against the French prison system expansion of the 1980s) observed, “Hooliganism is an immediate expression of dissatisfaction.” If there is misery to be found in work, and the world that forces us to work, there is joy in destroying it. These interruptions communicate nothing beyond themselves: bodies manifesting their desires in violence against the most sacred foundations of our social order, property and the rule of law. Consider how often cars are flipped, smashed, or set alight, showing up in so many news photos like temporary monuments of revolt, the only monuments the working class has or will ever erect for itself. The omnipresence of the car in modern society, its domination of space, its stinking exhaust, its vacuum-like effect on wallets: one of the great democratic, technological wonders of the modern age seems to be nothing but a magnet for proletarian fury.



Dongguan,
China—
November
2008

Rioting and sabotage have been proletarian weapons since time immemorial: ways in which our desires acquire force, and our class, power. But what will it take to carry the destructive project through to its conclusion? We wouldn't say, as a Marxist might, that the “crisis” provides us with a free ticket to revolution. Such crises are periodic; obviously, the material conditions become much worse for most of us. But, it also is a moment when the onslaught of development and progress lets up. People becoming critical of the structures which got us into this mess may desire to become powerful and go on the offensive. This is what we are seeing right now. Those who desire existence beyond control and beyond class are not interested in a “healthier” capitalism, or for that matter, progress with its encroaching enclosures or democracy with its endless dialogues. We want our lives for our own, and we are tired of waiting.

3. Who's gonna pay?

“In a future revolutionary period, the most subtle and most dangerous defenders of capitalism will not be the people shouting pro-capitalist and pro-statist slogans, but those who have understood the possible point of total rupture. Far from eulogizing TV commercials and social submission, they will propose to change life ... but to that end, call for building a true democratic power first. If they succeed in dominating the situation, the creation of this new political form will use up people’s energy, fritter away radical aspirations and, with the means becoming the end, will once again turn revolution into an ideology.”

—Gilles Dauvé

So, this is not just a complaint about our material conditions—it is a response to the elite’s attempts to make us deal with the consequences of the crisis they created, which has now become an opportunity for them to escape with the profits while we face a shortage of even the crumbs falling from their table. It is a response to finding ourselves at their mercy. It is a refusal to sit still and submit to the worsening of our conditions by obeying their dominance over our existence. And it could be our opportunity to dramatically transform the organization of human social life—a time to rise up, to take what we need, and to bring new ways of living into being (or to breathe new life into ways that predate 10,000 years of insitutional authority, if you prefer).

Of course we want better conditions, and no doubt, some of us would be contented by that. But for those of us who want to move beyond hierarchy, class, the supremacy of material survival and all the dependence that requires—making us subject to continual processes of crisis and destruction—we must move beyond this interpretation which is so useful to those who would be the new bosses. This demands casting direct action, no matter how dramatic, into a new direction, a new strategy which is focused on liberation from our conditions of class and control, and makes no compromises on this. Make no mistake, there is no shortage of bosses-in-waiting, and they are watching unfolding events very carefully—watching, getting involved, and trying to grab the reins by creating “counter-institutions” and political parties, harnessing the force of our revolt in order to propel themselves to power by striking a new deal between the productive forces and the exploited multitude, renewing the false peace of a society at war with itself.

After all, there are things we lack, but all we lack are not just things: class is, once again, a matter of power or access to the means of our own existence. So freedom is not our degree of “protection” granted us by the state from its own power, just as well-being is not simply the amount of welfare or jobs granted us for the sake of the system’s stability. This quality, this difference, must color all we think and do. It must define our condition of seeking to reclaim control of our own conditions. And it must be the starting point for any attacks we launch on the elite. We must simply take whatever we need in order to survive and fight. We cannot “fix” the economy even if we wanted to: tipping the balance will mean making the ruling class pay. It will be the end of paying for progress with our lives, our hours, our blood.

4. Our bailout

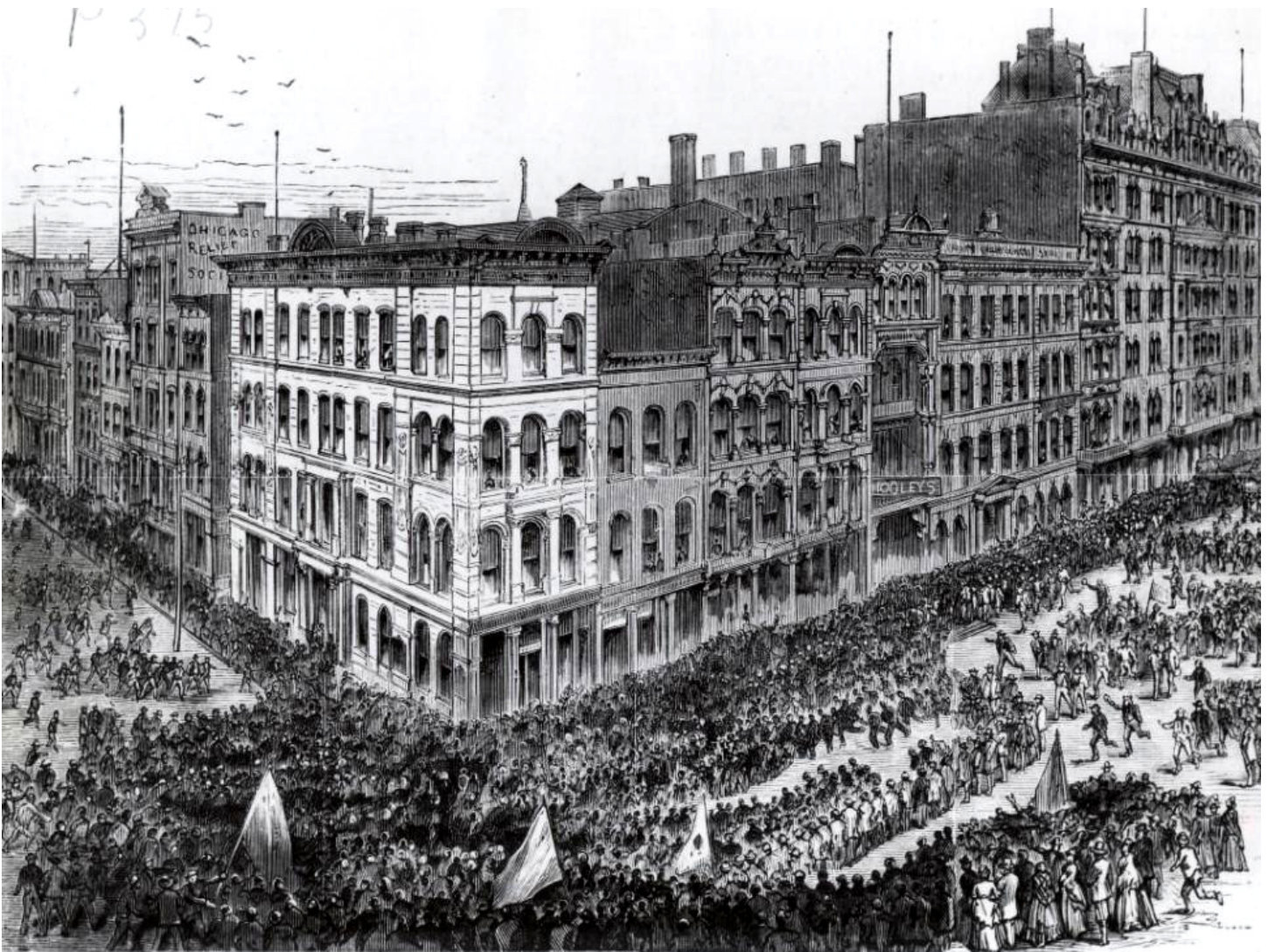
“Fuck welfare, we say reparations.”

—*Dead Prez*

In the past the elite have regained social control in such situations through buying off those willing and able to compromise with some greater material security, and suppressing those who won’t. This may or may not be possible today. We can direct our efforts towards making it less possible. To the typhoon of capital, we can only oppose the typhoon of insurrection. There is no precise roadmap to the unmappable freedom of a post-proletarianized future: we can only gamble and experiment. But we can look at past “crises” and their effects, and their relation to class conflict. Of course, a thorough historical overview is as beyond the scope and intent of this text as a thorough detailing of present day struggles, but suffice to say that in many cases, contracting economies have provoked rebellion from proletarian masses with few ways out. These are the days that frighten the bosses and cops: when the workforce—the exploited class—is backed into a corner, like any animal, it’s most dangerous.

The depressions of 1837 (caused by real estate speculation, much like this one) and 1857 sparked food riots in New York, Philadelphia and other cities. In the depression of 1873, 20,000 unemployed workers—many of them anarchists—marched under banners demanding “Bread or Blood!” in Chicago, winning greatly expanded welfare payments in the city. However, the public at large continued to suffer during the “Long Depression” 1873-97, a period which

“coincided” with capitalist accumulation through new technologies like the internal combustion engine, the assembly line, electrification and the telegraph (the “Second Industrial Revolution”).



Chicago, Illinois—December 1873

The Stock Market Crash of 1929 and ensuing Great Depression came at the end of a decade of intense mechanization and urbanization in the U.S.—that is to say, the building up of a precarious labor force in the cities. Vast numbers of people were impoverished, and responded directly. Throughout the country, the unemployed began to carry out mass looting and organized raids to provide food for themselves, their families and communities. In March 1929, two months after the crash, over a thousand people waiting in line for bread from the Salvation Army in New York City attacked and looted passing trucks delivering bread to a hotel. Across the country massive demonstrations began to occur in almost every city, some under banners reading “Fight—Don’t Starve!” Many of these gatherings turned into battles with the police, as the rich feared

they were losing their grip on “public” space to hungry, angry, leaderless mobs. *Bread or Blood* is a threat, not a question. How do we gain leverage? We carry out our threats—or at least enough of them to make the bosses fear the power of our class; to remind them they are outnumbered and cowardly. And as the second banner slogan suggests, we can use public action to communicate and find solidarity with our peers, rather than to communicate political messages to politicians. We could create situations in which to act as a social force on behalf of our own *well-being*—and against all management and all political relations.



Monterrey, Mexico—February 2008

More recently, the piquetero movement of the Argentine economic collapse of 2001 saw extensive use of blockades of major roadways, bridges, large stores and government buildings. Like always, the demands are for better material conditions, because we need them but not because that’s all we care about. The formation of an insurgent sociability must be also part of our reason for fighting. Like the U.S. unemployed movement of the 1930s, the piqueteros have tended towards informal and autonomous organization. Many anarchists have favored this kind of organizing to carry out attacks on the class enemy, and to defend our class: loosely structured, held together more by the periodic demonstrations than by regular and formal affiliations; they gather momentum from direct action victories which yield money or food or a halt to evictions.

We lose momentum not simply when we are jailed, but when we compromise with the logic of order, of pacification and of “Parties” that represent us. Our politics is that of *direct action*.

Another way we can impact the situation is by attacking key elements of the social machinery which the elite need to control us, and without which their control will fall apart that much faster. As mentioned, the modern global economy requires continuous circulation of commodities, and continuous sources of energy. Its arteries are the communication and transportation networks and also the electrical grid and its sources. This infrastructure is widespread and not easily defended. In oil-producing regions of the global south, like Iraq, Colombia and Nigeria, attacks on oil infrastructure are common. In Canada, First Peoples and their allies have a tradition of highway and rail blockades in their resistance to colonization; in Europe, anarchists have a tradition of fighting against rail systems, and in the UK to road construction. The U.S. has a long and under-reported history of attacks on the electrical grid. Little is known of intentional destruction of fiber optic cables, although they are fragile, often buried close to the surface and form the backbone of major telecommunications capacities.

The elite will also attempt to find new sources of capital, no doubt through new technologies like biotech and nanotech which offer them control of life and matter to an unprecedented degree. Technologies of social control will also continue to extend their scale and scope, like GPS, RFID and surveillance linked to sophisticated analytical “data-mining” software (pattern recognition, identity resolution, voice recognition and other biometrics). This social control will also enhance the regime of borders and prisons: capital only moves freely as we are fenced in. It is up to us to find the weak spots in these barriers. Resistance to these confinements will enable the formation of links of solidarity against our common foes.

And this is, really, the point. The end of the present miserable situation and the birth of freedom is not to be found in the sum total or quantity of destructive acts, but in the quality of new social relationships. These will be able to come into being in the absence of dominating structures, and more particularly, in the process of destroying them.

We should also take note of where capital, both financial and political, is still expanding: prisons and security, certainly, also “green” technologies and businesses. The ecological movement itself has been recycled by capitalism, whose “eco-friendliness” so popular these days is simply a way of trying to

fit its insatiable appetite for “resources” to the reality of our finite earth, and to mobilize us once again for reasons of mere survival when it is the relations between human beings which have got us into this horrible ecological mess in the first place. We should not be appeased in the slightest by all the appeals they make to sustainability, since it is profit and power they want to sustain, not ecosystems, and in any event, not our freedom. If we really do want the world to live we are better off destroying the system that’s killing it than filling its needs as buyers of energy-saving lightbulbs and eco-conscious voters.

5. Swarm and destroy

When they elite talk about rioting and public disorders, they talk of “mob mentality,” of a gathering of people becoming charged and descending into “mindless,” animalistic behavior. According to theories of “crowd psychology,” others may be drawn into this vortex of craziness and lose their identities and ethics as well. And yet, some of us feel more ourselves than ever while in struggle alongside our community. Consider the intricately coordinated flocking and swarming behaviors of birds, bugs and fish: it actually indicates a great degree of awareness of oneself and those around. The leaderless (literally *an-archic*) behavior of swarms shows the possibility of spontaneously coordinated self-organization. And it is obviously true that many people may want and feel drawn to join into making such a break from business as usual. The question is, if police don’t stop it, *what does a riot become?*

The instability of capital, the tension towards freedom and resistance within all relations of control, means that revolution is always *immanent*—that is, its possibility is always close at hand, even if it is not literally *imminent*, or about to happen. We don’t know what will happen, of course. Here we disagree with marxism and with all models of an evolutionary progress which will eventually end misery, oppression, etc. The only progress we see unfolding is the grinding to dust of human beings, the earth and all its inhabitants between the gears of capital and technology. This is a process our revolution will conclude only by interruption, or in other words, *insurrection*: a total, violent and qualitative break with existing society and history, in which the suppressed desires of individuals can flow forth and destroy the structures within which we are caged.



Oakland, California—January 2008

This process could be seen at work in the Oscar Grant riots in Oakland, where a gathering of people to protest a police murder wound up unleashing a much broader current of rage, against stores, cars, and ruling class-imposed order in the city itself, followed by a full week of nights of social conflict both open and clandestine. Or in Greece, where much better-established self-organized anti-authoritarian communities went on the offensive during a similar moment of outrage, and in its wake, many thousands of youth and “ordinary people” not only participated in street fighting but began to take control of their schools, workplaces and neighborhoods. Oaxaca in '06 would be another recent example. The point is that society is like a piece of fabric with a tear in it, and if someone pulls on either side of the tear, the whole thing could be torn apart.

In order for the self-organized attack to spread in this way, we should keep in mind not just the quantitative affect of our tactics but their quality of being reproducible. Is it something a lot of people could do without dedicating their existence to militancy? If so, why shouldn't they? As tears appear in the fabric of class society, what can we do to make them bigger? It is urgent to be able to communicate about the attacks happening from both sides—the moves and counter-moves of social war.



**Onward: Setting fire
to the future**

“Revolutionary conditions will not fall out of the sky on to our laps, we have to reach up and rip them from the sky or live a life of perpetual misery. Flesh and blood people, who love and hate, who eat, sleep and shit, can create social revolution because we are capable of far more than is obligated to us in this world suffocated by exploitation.”

—an anonymous participant in the recent unrest in Greece

We understand that not only do we not need these structures, we need to get rid of them—that the supermarket is not feeding us but starving us, of not just food but freedom and happiness. And then we might burn and loot it. Revolt is not abstract, it is intimately specific: authority affects our lives, and our wills assert themselves against it. This conflict within all hierarchal social relations is known increasingly to anarchists as *social war*. It is the tension present within all class societies to upset the precarious balance of power, and knock the elite from their pedestals. This includes not just class but race, gender, nationality, sexuality, and all the other categories they have invented as walls to keep us within.

The revolt of the precarious against the conditions which enforce our precarity must not stop at anything short of their complete destruction. The “peace” of obedience to managers, bosses, leaders and “business as usual” has only ever, can and will only ever spell continued misery for us and our struggles. So our business is not to compromise.

The destruction of existing systems and structures is necessary for free individuals and communities to flourish. This freedom may come to be felt most clearly through the process of destructive social revolution itself. Projects which seek to escape capital and authority, to create community outside of it, like community gardens, squats, off-the-grid/back-to-the-land projects, etc, are useful to the extent that they contribute to supporting revolt. In other words, infoshops may have a lot to contribute to insurrections, but opening an infoshop doesn’t, by itself, bring the insurrection closer. Positive projects are necessary but incomplete as a revolutionary strategy.

There is a famous anarchist quote about “building the new world in the shell of the old.” Many have used this line to advertise projects such as co-operative businesses as effective tactics in themselves, without attacking the existing world. In fact, in this case the word “shell” means something more like “ruins.” (Similarly, the observation of the French Situationists that “revolt is therapeutic” has been often misinterpreted as “therapy is revolutionary.”)

The destructive project is not only messy, difficult and dangerous, but it is not an end in itself. Both during and after, we still have our lives to lead, but the point is living them as self-determined individuals—not as a class. This is where the usefulness of our analysis, of any words we may transmit towards you in an attempt to affect your thoughts and behavior and to inspire the expression of your desires, your longings for freedom, joy and meaning, reaches its limit. Our greatest hope is the end of our relevance and role as anarchist revolutionaries, through the end of our existence as a class and of collective identities defined by relations of authority. We look for paths toward this in whatever situation. We hope you will take this to heart, and share it with the world through whatever means you can. Remember *we are everywhere*. Our rebellion does not begin in this or that place for this or that reason; it is a transmission appearing on different frequencies, as necessary and continual as our breath.

Solidarity to all ungovernables, and fire to this world.
March 2009



Mogadishu, May 2008

And here are some more suggestions of cybernetic non-places to ransack for inspiration and information to arm the aspiring insurgent!

Prole.info—online texts for the angry wage worker

Modesto Anarcho—the Central Valley's journal of insurrectionary class struggle—geocities.com/anarcho209

Anti-politics.net—online texts and real-world distribution

325—news on anti-prison struggles, insurrection and autonomous resistance throughout the world—325collective.com

Prol-position.net—newsletter with global reports and analysis on work, exploitation and the fight against them

Amoryresistanceia.blogspot.com—resistance news and views from throughout the Americas in both English and Spanish

Fire to the Prisons—an insurrectionary anarchist quarterly and distro project—myspace.com/alongingforcollapsepress

Anarchist News—news of interest to revolutionaries—anarchistnews.org

Insurgent Desire—an archive of writings expressing hostility to work, authority, progress, and domination in all forms—insurgentdesire.org.uk

Direct Action Reports from Greece—directactiongr.blogspot.com

...from Germany—directactionde.blogspot.com

...from the U.S.—socialrupture.blogspot.com

...from Canada—confrontation.wordpress.com

...from Greece, but more in English—greeceriots.blogspot.com

The Institute for Experimental Freedom—subversive texts and aesthetics—it-est-futurum.blogspot.com

Tarantula Distribution—anarchist/communist press and distro—socialwar.net

A Murder of Crows—short-lived but brilliant publication on the theory and practice of revolt—geocities.com/amurderofcrows1

Independent Media Centers—worldwide network of open-publishing radical media (global hub site)—indymedia.org

Loot the supermarket of ideas—take what you can use and burn the rest!



“We have lived through a considerably warm December and a situation that shows the lack of social peace clearly. Social peace only lives in the imagination of those that cannot understand that reality is characterized by a permanent civil war, with a revolutionary side that rebels against this democratic monstrosity. Rage replaced fear and instead of approval, negation appeared. The month of December, as a sign for times to come, made a very clear division between those that feed the Power, maintain and defend it, and those that fight it. Now is not the time to look back in nostalgia to the ashes that the insurrection left in its path. We have to understand and express the signs of the present and the future. The signs that already exist, and those to come. The signs of a relentless social war.”

Ilias Nikolau
Amfissa prison
January 19, 2009