



# ***WILLFUL DISOBEDIENCE***

***Selections  
from Volume 2, #1-6***

**Anarchist theory  
and analysis**

***Venomous Butterfly Publications***  
818 SW 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave., PMB 1237  
Portland, OR 97204  
USA  
[acraticus@angrynerds.com](mailto:acraticus@angrynerds.com)

This is to be expected, since as anarchists we do not see our activity as separated from our lives, but rather as an expression of the way we view and choose to live life. Thus we put the whole of our being into these actions. Our passion for freedom and intensity of life goes into our projects, so how could it not affect the relationships of affinity we choose to develop?

But what is essential about the affinity group is that it is a method for organizing small actions of the sort necessary for attacking the many facets of power that we confront everyday, which avoids developing a cumbersome formal organization and allows for the fluidity necessary for the development of an intelligent anarchist analysis and practice.

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## **INTRODUCTORY NOTE**

This pamphlet contains the theoretical and analytical articles from *Willful Disobedience*, volume 2, # 1-6. *Willful Disobedience* is intended as a tool for developing an insurrectional anarchist projectuality. To grasp one's life projectually is to take it as one's own and determine what one is going to make of it, rather than conforming to the roles and relationships imposed by the social order. One's projectuality becomes explicitly insurrectional and anarchist when one recognizes that self-determination has to go hand in hand with destructive attack against all authority, every institution of power and every form of social control. Then the search for tools, methods and relations of affinity through which we can develop this projectuality begins. It must be clearly understood that this projectuality toward insurrection and anarchy is not a cause to which one sacrifices oneself, but the necessary practice of self-realization in the present world. We fight exploitation and domination, because *we* do not want to be exploited or ruled. Our selfish generosity recognizes that our own self-realization can only be completed in a world in which every individual has equal access to all that he or she needs to realize her or himself as a singular being—thus, the necessity to destroy all authority, the entire social order, in order to open the possibility of everything life can offer. The practice of an insurrectional, anarchist projectuality works itself out in specific projects of action in which we begin to build the sorts of relationships we desire as part of the struggle against the present world and for the lives we desire. Obviously, this leaves no room for democratic dialogue, the arguments of opinion separated from life. Only projectual discussion of ideas that are to be lived is worthwhile in this context. I have brought these texts together here to be used for moving such discussions forward as a means for creating practical anarchist projects.

Wolfi Landstreicher

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## **MILLENNIAL BULLSHIT: Y2K and the Creation of Social Consensus**

As 1999 faded into historical oblivion and the year 2000 came on stage in this arbitrary game of measured time, anyone observing the media spectacle of the official millennial celebrations was witness to a vulgar display of self-congratulatory smugness. The technological infrastructure and the social consensus of faith in this infrastructure had held. Everyone was happy, looking with joy and hope to the next millennium and the new “wonders” that it would bring. Or so the plastic faces on the television, the monotonously insincere voices on the radio and the empty phrases in the press told us.

Of course, there were moments of tension. When it was announced that three missiles had been launched in Russia, Peter Jennings’ face expressed something faintly reminiscent of mild concern. Fortunately, a military expert reassured us that these missile launchings were “non-reportable”, because they had traveled less than 599 kilometers. And furthermore, these were scud missiles that Russia had launched quite intentionally at Chechnya. So all is well—except for those Chechens caught in the crosshairs of those missiles.

It was shortly thereafter that blackouts hit several neighborhoods in Los Angeles including downtown L.A., South Central, East L.A., Silver Lake and the neighborhood where I was staying. A battery operated radio kept my friends and I informed of the smoothness of the Y2K transition. These blackouts, like those in Philadelphia were apparently caused by fous weather, which also affected the communication between the various radio personnel. So though technology was breaking down on small levels here and there, all was well. The Y2K bug had been averted. These were just the normal crises of the cumbersome system.

When the electricity came back on the television presented images of the first ATM user in New Zealand (one of the first nations to “enter the new millennium”, starting its new year many hours before Los Angeles) to show the triumph of

technological banality. And the announcers regularly contacted the Y2K emergency center to inform us there were no major problems: the planes kept flying, the ATMs continued spilling out cash, production and consumption carried on apace. It was business as usual. Indeed.

Over and over, the media brought the message home: technology and capital have once again overcome a crisis (which, of course, they themselves created). The world is getting better every day. And everyone who is in their right mind is happy with the present social order.

But in these same events, and even in the images used to portray them, I see something different. Whatever arbitrary change has occurred on the calendar, existence itself has not changed—not in any fundamental sense. States still launch bombs—and this is “non-reportable”, of no real concern, certainly nothing that should upset our celebration. Capital continues to implement technological systems of social and biological control increasingly eroding the bases of individual freedom and self-determination. And the technological monster lumbers on never quite under anyone’s control, not even that of its supposed state and capitalist masters. Thus, we are kept perpetually in crises which have no element of adventure, on the edge of disasters too banal and pathetic to call forth any sort of heroism.

The Y2K story served the powers that be well. It kept people’s minds focused on one particular possible disaster, on one glitch in the system. But the most significant disaster of this social order, the one we all live through every day, is not a glitch, a mere malfunction in dating. It is the fact that we have all been made dependent on an enormous, lumbering juggernaut that none of us can control, and that every day it destroys more life and erodes more freedom. In such a situation, those who want to create lives based on their own self-determined desires and passions can find no joy in any future based on the continued development of the present reality. Rather our joy is found in the struggle to destroy this present reality and, in the process, create new ways of being in which individuals can make their own lives freely as they desire.

## THE AFFINITY GROUP

*“To have affinity means to have knowledge of the other, to know how they think on social issues and how they think they can intervene in the social clash. This deepening of knowledge between comrades is an aspect that is often neglected, impeding effective action.”*

Having chosen the path of direct action, of unmediated attack against power, and having chosen to act where one is now, the question of how to organize these actions arises. Practically, the desire to see one’s own struggle against the social order become a social struggle shows itself in the desire to act with others. For the types of actions most consistent with an anarchist insurrectional perspective—small actions that can be easily imitated and improved upon, using unsophisticated means that are available to anyone—the affinity group provides an effective method of organizing.

Let’s be clear from the beginning, an affinity group is not a permanent organization that one joins. It is a method for organizing an action based on affinity between those taking part in the action. So the essential first step is the development of relationships of affinity. Affinity is not a matter of feeling good around each other. For the purpose of an insurrectional practice, affinity develops through the process of getting to know each other as comrades on an ever deepening level—that is coming to understand how the other understands the struggle against this society and how they feel they can intervene in it. Through discussion, such questions can be clarified, strengths and weaknesses made evident and possibilities for shared actions revealed.

It is when the possible projects of action become evident that certain of those who have been developing affinity come together as a group with the specific purpose of carrying out a particular action. When this project is completed, the particular group disbands as such, but the relations of affinity continue.

In the course of carrying out actions together, affinity will deepen and strong bonds may grow between those involved.

of the environment combines with the stress of daily survival to create cancer, heart disease, immune system breakdown and increasing levels of mental distress and disorder from which those in power seek to protect themselves with medical care that most of us could never afford—and which plays its own role in the toxification of this world.

Capitalism will not provide a solution for the disasters it causes. It is a system of stop-gap measures, and, increasingly, as the new technologies come to the fore, a system of tinkering with ever tinier atomized bits. Unfortunately, in the face of economic precariousness and environmental disaster, survival tends to take precedence over life and joy. And in this way, the rule of capital penetrates even into our minds, as we find ourselves succumbing to the use of stop-gap measures, of the methods of crisis management, in an attempt to guarantee our—and the earth's—survival. Thus, the strange phenomenon some of those who call themselves anarchists using litigation, petition, even the electoral process in the attempt to save a patch of forest, stop a particular development or prevent the destruction of an indigenous culture. The problem is not that people struggle for these specific aims, but that in desperation they lay aside their ideals, their desires and their dreams, and use methods of struggle that only reinforce the economy of disaster that rules existence today.

The struggle against this present existence in which misery and disaster are the norm must, in order to have a chance, base itself in our desire to live full, passionate lives, on the joyful intensity we create in our lives in spite of the existence imposed on us. Only then can our struggle move beyond the careful measurements of crisis management, beyond the stop-gap measures for guaranteeing survival at the expense of life that merely aid capitalism in maintaining and expanding its rule, instead embracing those methods of struggle that move toward insurrection, toward revolution, toward the unknown. Our present existence is a toxic prison. There is no way to know what lies beyond the walls. But here we know we are being killed and this can only end when our love of life moves us to tear down the walls.

## **A VIOLENT PROPOSITION: Against the Weighted Chain of Morality**

When dealing with the question of how to battle the social order, there is no place for morality. Anyone who desires a world without exploitation and domination does not share the values of the society that spawned them. Thus, it is necessary to avoid getting drawn into its viewpoint—the dominant viewpoint with all that implies.

The dominant viewpoint in the present era is that of democratic dialogue. All are to come together to discuss their perspectives, argue over their claims, debate their opinions and negotiate compromises guaranteed to enforce the power of those who claim to represent us and to disappoint all parties (except those in power) equally. Isn't our democratic equality a beautiful thing?

Within this viewpoint, revolutionary action ceases to be activity chosen by individuals in terms of their inclinations, capabilities, situation and desires. Instead it must be reified into a dichotomous choice given moral connotations between violence and nonviolence. For anarchists, who—in theory, at least—determine their own actions on their own terms, this should be a false and meaningless dichotomy.

The central aim of anarchist activity in the present world is the destruction of the state, of capital and of every other institution of power and authority in order to create the possibility of freedom for every individual to fully realize herself as he sees fit. This is not a moral principle, but simply—by definition—putting anarchy into practice. And it is a violent proposition. No apologies should be made about this. I am talking about the destruction of the entire social order—of civilization, if you will—and such an upheaval is, without question, far more violent than any hurricane or earthquake.

But the significant question is how each individual will act, and that, for anarchists, is determined by each individual in terms of their desires, dreams, capabilities and circumstances—in terms of the life they are trying to create for themselves. In this light, it only makes sense that anarchists would reject morality,

humanism and any other external value in deciding how to act. Even efficacy would be rejected as an essential determinant, though, of course, one would try to succeed and would put all of oneself into any self-chosen activity in order to make it as strong as possible. But effectiveness is not the primary question—the desire to attack the institutions of domination and exploitation where one can is.

In this light it becomes clear that we who call ourselves anarchists have no use for dealing with such questions as: “Is property destruction violence or not?”; “Is this an act of legitimate self-defense?” and so on. We have no reason to try to make such artificial distinctions, since our actions are determined precisely by our desire to attack and destroy power. These distinctions between “violence” and “nonviolence” or between “legitimate self-defense” and the violence of attack are based in the hypocritical morality of power that serves no other purpose than to place weighted chains on our ability to act.

Since the demonstrations against the WTO in Seattle, representatives of the mass media have been looking for anarchists to question about violence and property destruction. We will never be able to win over the media or to be presented “fairly” through them. So speaking to them on their terms, using their moral rules as guidelines in determining how we speak about these matters and following their protocol when we speak to them is absurd. The best way to speak to the media on this question is shown by the action of three Italian anarchists—Arturo, Luca and Drew—who beat up a journalist who dared to invade their comrade’s funeral.

hold power in them. As has been said many times, there are people who make these decisions and they have names and addresses.

They also share a particular social position. As the rulers of this social order, they benefit from it in terms of power and economic wealth. (That they do so at the expense of their individuality and any real enjoyment of life does not decrease their responsibility for the present existence.) While some of the disastrous effects of their decisions may have taken them by surprise, it cannot be honestly said that they acted blindly. After all, these are the same people who had no problem with showering a small predominately agricultural country with herbicide in an attempt to destroy its economy. The environment is not their concern; power and economic expansion are.

When capitalism developed the technological system ideal for its expansion, the industrial system that began in the shipping industries which then provided the resources for developing the manufacturing industries, the door was opened to a world of daily misery and ongoing disaster. Whether it be the genocide against indigenous people who did not adapt quickly enough to their enslavement to the needs of capital, the illnesses and injuries that the regime of work imposes on workers, the increasing precariousness that faces everyone who is not of the ruling class, misery is the order of the day in this society.

To fully understand why this is, it is necessary to realize that capitalism thrives on crisis. Its order is an order of crisis management. For the rulers of the social order this is not a problem. They are well protected from the consequences of the crises that they sometimes quite intentionally induce. Those at the bottom, those who have been excluded from any real control over the circumstances in which they live, suffer the consequences of this system.

The industrial system, which is so necessary to the expansion of capital, has been an environmental disaster from the beginning, offering William Blake some of his most frightening poetic images. The famous London fog of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was, in fact, industrial smog which accompanied high rates of tuberculosis among the poorer classes. Today, the toxification



## THE ECONOMY OF DISASTER

*“...the most stupefying characteristic of today’s society is its ability to make ‘daily comfort’ exist a hand’s breadth away from catastrophe.”*

In the middle of October in eastern Kentucky, a coal mine pond gave way, releasing 200 million gallons of sludge into streams, killing fish, washing away roads and bridges and fouling the water supply. The tar-like sludge spread into the Ohio River. But such disasters are not so uncommon. One need only consider the cyanide spill that happened in Romania at the end of January spreading as far as Yugoslavia and leaving a few hundred tons of dead fish (not to mention birds, otters and other creatures) in its wake, or the spillage of radio-active material at Tokaimura, Japan that caused major environmental damage for a radius of several miles around it in October of 1999. And of course, we cannot forget Bhopal or Chernobyl. But these are the most spectacular disasters, the ones that could not be made invisible (though even disasters of this sort may, in time, become so common that they cease to be news—consider that there 45 coal mine ponds that were said to be at higher risk of failure than the one that collapsed in October). Disaster is, in fact an ongoing aspect of our present existence. The estuary at the mouth of the Colorado River is quickly dying, most likely due to the effects of hydro-electric dams. Chemical pollution has spread death from the mouth of the Mississippi River well into the Gulf of Mexico. The ozone layer disappears along with the forests and the plankton that feed it. And the melting of the polar ice caps has forced scientists to admit to the reality of global warming. When one adds to this the more blatantly intentional disasters caused by the attempts of the great powers to teach the lesser powers the meaning of democracy by bombing the shit out of the powerless, it is clear that life in the present is always lived on the edge of disaster.

When the litany of disasters that surrounds us is sung, it is easy to feel that we are dealing with the inevitable, with an unavoidable fate. But this is not the case. Every one of the disasters described above can be traced to the functioning of specific social institutions and the decisions of the people who

## THE QUESTION OF ORGANIZATION

In developing an insurrectional anarchist projectuality, one is inevitably face with the question of organization. Such a projectuality is developed through specific projects of action and it is necessary to figure out how one will go about accomplishing these. Recognizing the necessity of individual agency in creating revolution—and further, taking the revolution as one’s own realization, as necessary to the development of the freedom to create one’s life as one desires—an individual developing such a projectuality will find a spontaneist perspective that merely waits for history to bring the uprising of the masses and denies the efficacy of conscious action aimed at the creation of revolution useless. Those organizations that seek members—unions, parties, federations and the like—and that equate the revolution with the power of their organization subsuming the individual into the group are equally useless to those who struggle for themselves, their ideas and desires.

Rather as one develops this projectuality through various projects of action, the question of organization is precisely the question of how one develops the tools and relationships one needs and applies anarchist methodologies in a way that allows one to accomplish the desired action. Organization in this sense is not a thing, but a process that can accurately be thought of as the relationship between my project and myself.

An essential component in the development of this projectuality is the acquisition of knowledge—certainly of the tools one learns to use and of the methods one learns to apply, but more significantly, of oneself, of others and of the surrounding reality. From this relationships of affinity can develop, affinity being precisely that mutual knowledge between individuals that makes it possible for them to act together. It creates relations in which delegation has no place, relations of mutual enhancement—relations that may easily develop an intensity and passion that goes beyond the project in which they originate.

From such relationships, affinity groups can form for the specific task of realizing a particular action. The group will be

the gathering together of just those elements necessary for accomplishing the task and will consume itself in the realization of the action. Thus the problem of the organization that subsumes the individual does not develop.

There are many other questions to be explored, discussed and acted upon, questions of the projectual relationship of anarchists to riot situations, to mass uprisings and other situations of large-scale revolt. We are certainly not evangelists or marketers of ideological commodities, so we cannot act the same way in such situations as the various political groups seeking cadres. Those of us who are seeking to create an insurrectional anarchist projectuality because the present world is too small for our desires and dreams, those of us who recognize that the destruction of the present reality is necessary to our self-realization, need to deal with these questions seriously, because for us revolution is not a cause outside ourselves. It is our life, our fierce desire to embrace the fullness of existence that has been denied to us.

domestication itself—from the beginning. For those of us for whom life is not mere survival, for whom wonder, beauty, passion and joy are the essence of existence, for whom the uniqueness of each living being is the basis for a world of free relating, the task is tremendous: the destruction of the digitalized existence that has been imposed upon us and the creation anew each day of ourselves as unique and amazing beings in relation with those we love.

machine manufactured by god with a purpose beyond itself. Scientists have long since left the conception of higher purpose behind. The cybernetic universe serves no other purpose than that of maintaining itself in order to maintain the flow of bits of information. What this means on a practical social level is that each and every entity exists for the sole purpose of maintain the present social order. Each individual is a tool for this purpose, and these tools can be adjusted as necessary to maintain a flow of information—which is to say profits—that allows this society to continue.

Of course, however degraded, individuals still exist. The promoters of biotechnology are forced to convince us of its benefits. If the idea of biotechnology as a means for fighting world hunger has lost all credibility in the face of such horrors as the terminator technology and the patenting of genetic materials, in the realm of medicine, biotechnology has managed to present a much more benign face. Genetic hypotheses of the origins of cancer, alcoholism, schizophrenia, drug addiction and increasing numbers of other diseases, disorders and behaviors are now accepted as commonplaces in spite of the fact that real evidence for this nearly non-existence, most of it based on conjecture. Yet the media propaganda works, producing a willingness on the part of many to accept “good” medical use of biotechnology, that is, a willingness to be treated as a cybernetic machine that can be made to function more precisely through the manipulation of bits of information.

The potential horrors of biotechnology—genetic pollution, the escape of genetically engineered organisms into the environment, the totalitarian use of cloning—only call for regulation of this technological system, to prevent its “bad” use. But if it is the fundamental ideology behind this technology that we question, its degradation of individual living beings into mechanisms for the flow of bits of information, then reform becomes useless. If we are to save the dignity of the individual, the beauty of life, the wonder of the universe, then we must act to destroy this technology and the social system that produces it. And we cannot forget that biotechnology is simply the latest, most sophisticated version of this degrading ideology which has been inherent in industrial technological systems—and in

## **Editorial from *Insurrection*, September 1989**

Anarchists and revolutionaries are such not because they say they are or write articles and programmes ending them with slogans or symbols of anarchism. They are such because they want to do something against oppression, i.e. they want to denounce and attack repressive systems and all those who hold them together.

To fully understand this simple statement we must take a step further. Before attacking it is necessary to know whom and what to attack and to understand why to attack. Otherwise one ends up acting like a mad bull charging about wildly, and which gets slain sooner or later.

What can we do in order to know whom and what to attack? Simply inform ourselves. Capital and the State are transforming themselves rapidly. With developments in electronics a vast restructuring is taking place in production and control. The huge industrial complexes are now spreading over the whole social territory, linked together by electronics and telematic cables. The whole planet will soon be covered in a thick network of communications that are at the basis of the present system of production, consequently also present-day exploitation. So we know what and whom to attack.

What can we do to understand why to attack? This is quite simple. The industry of the past could have been conquered by the revolution and put to peaceful productive use. Today's industry is mainly electronically operated by people who have no real operative knowledge. It will never be usable for social good except in a minimal part. The huge electronic communications systems on which present-day production-repression is based will certainly never be usable. That is why it is necessary right away to begin to attack and destroy it, even in the proportions that are fitting to our capacity to attack at the present time.

Between moving and staying still, we prefer to move. The restructuring that has reinforced capital's capacity to produce has also opened new cracks. The enormous communications

network that runs through the territory of every advanced industrial nation is certainly one of those cracks.

We must strike inside this. With small actions, not big military operations that are beyond our material possibility and outside the logic of the new capital. It is precisely small destructive actions, sabotage spread over the whole territory, that is the most fitting arm with which to fight the class enemy.

equations that seem to solve a particular problem and may cause a blip on the screen of a machine that serves no other purpose than to make such blips in a gigantic laboratory.) Here science completely discounts observation to the point of equating the alleged results of “mental experiments” (and now computerized simulations as well) with those of material experiments. The concrete world we experience is nothing. The world of data, of bits of information, is everything—it is reality.

Biotechnology fits perfectly into this cybernetic view of the universe. The science of genetic has done to life what atomic and sub-atomic physics did to the universe—broken it down into data, bits of interchangeable information. And just as in the “new” physics, the material universe as we experience it ceases to be of importance except as a vehicle for the interaction of quanta, so in the genetic perspective, the individual living being and its relation to its environment are of no importance in themselves. They are merely vehicles for genetic information, which comes to be seen as the essence of life, undermining individuality, vitality, free relationship and holistic coherence.

In fact, what this perspective does is digitalize life. Our being is no longer thought of as consisting of our body, our mind, our passions, our desires, our actions our choices, our desires and our relations in a unique dance through the world, but rather as a series of interchangeable bio-bits with a potential for being adjusted through manipulation by experts.

The social framework for this perspective had already been set in motion long before the “discovery” of DNA gave it the defined material for the information bits. Capitalist development, particularly in the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, turned the citizen (already a part of the apparatus of the nation-state) into a producer-consumer, basically interchangeable with all others from the point of view of the social order. The integrity of the individual had already been severely undermined to serve the needs of the social machine. Is it then such a great step to transforming the individual into nothing more than a sum of genetic parts that are interchangeable with the part of any other “living” tool?

The earliest modern scientists were mainly devout christians. When they imagined the machine of the universe, it was as a

## **BIOTECHNOLOGY AND THE DIGITALIZATION OF LIFE**

I have contended for years that technology is not neutral, that it carries within itself the ideology of the ruling forms of domination and exploitation for which it is created. If this has not been obvious in earlier technological developments, the growth of biotechnology makes this clear. Following the methodology of modern science, which strives to break everything down into its smallest components in a supposed attempt to “understand” it, biotechnology undermines the integrity of the individual and the possibility of free interaction, instead enforcing a mechanized view of life and a dependence on “experts” to keep the mechanisms functioning.

From its origin, modern science has viewed the universe as a vast machine. In such a mechanistic perspective, the method for achieving an understanding of how the universe functions is to break it down into its parts and study them in isolation. Thus, the scientific method has never been merely the empirical method—the method of observation. Empirical observation had to be confirmed in the isolation of the laboratory through controlled experimentation.

The mechanistic view of the universe met the needs of capitalist development quite well. As capitalism developed along with the technological means through which it controlled the exploited classes and the materials of the earth, the scientific understanding of the universal machine changed as well, providing an ideological justification for the developing methods of exploitation and domination. While some have tried to pass off the (now almost a century old) “new” scientific perspectives of relativity and quantum physics as an end to the mechanistic perspective and an opening to “mysticism” in science, it would be more accurate to say that Newtonian mechanistic science has given way to a cybernetic mechanism—the universe transformed into a mathematical construct made up of bits of information, of quanta. (It is worth noting that most, if not all, sub-atomic particles are, in fact, only mathematical

## **POLITICS OR LIFE?**

Activism is not rebellion. Activists are specialists in political action, which is to say, they are a type of politician. Their actions are something separated from their lives, either a hobby or a career to which they dedicate a certain amount of time. The bases of these actions are causes and issues carefully separated from any total analysis or grand vision. In a very real sense, for the activist, whatever promotes the cause, regardless of its personal significance to the activist or its broader significance in terms of the social order, is legitimate. Thus, petitions, voting, delegations before whatever authority, lawsuits, civil disobedience, and the like are all equally acceptable as long as the aim of these actions remains the presentation of demands before the appropriate authority that then takes the decisive action on the matter, leaving the activists to continue their symbolic games. This makes it easy for some activists to embrace a nonviolent morality and turn their backs on those whose lives demand the fullness of struggle, if such a morality fits their limited political agenda.

The decision to rebel against the social order is a decision about the totality of one’s life, a decision to refuse precisely that separation which creates politics and activism. Central to this decision is the refusal to let one’s life be delegated, the refusal to make demands, because one has chosen to take what one desires, to create what one wants for oneself. The actions one takes are not separate from one’s life, but are its passionate outgrowth, springing from the desires and dreams of a free spirit. These actions are aimed at the utter destruction of the social order so that new possibilities of living can be explored by everyone. Thus, they also aim at the destruction of every form of politics including that of the activist. Specialists have always been usurpers, taking an aspect of the fullness of life, draining it of vitality and turning it into a vocation separated from the flow of life. This is precisely what the rebel rejects, what the anarchist aims to destroy, favoring the fullness of life in revolt to the hollow, servile politics of activism.

## **BEYOND THE STRUCTURE OF SYNTHESIS**

Anarchists of all tendencies refuse the model of hierarchical and authoritarian organisation. They refuse parties, vertical structures which impose directives from above in a more or less obvious way. In positing the liberatory revolution as the only social solution possible, anarchists consider that the means used in bringing about this transformation will condition the ends that are achieved. And authoritarian organisations are certainly not instruments that lead to liberation.

At the same time it is not enough to agree with this in words alone. It is also necessary to put it into practice. In our opinion an anarchist structure such as a structure of synthesis presents not a few dangers. When this kind of organisation develops to full strength as it did in Spain in '36 it begins to resemble a party. Synthesis becomes control. Certainly in quiet periods this is barely visible, so what we are saying now might seem like blasphemy.

This kind of structure is based on groups or individuals who are in more or less constant contact with each other, and has its culminating moment in periodical congresses. In these congresses the basic analysis is discussed, a programme is drawn up and tasks are divided covering the whole range of social intervention. It is an organisation of synthesis because it sets itself up as a point of reference capable of synthesizing the struggles taking place within the class clash. Various groups intervene in the struggles, give their contribution, but do not lose sight of the theoretical and practical orientation that the organisation as a whole decided upon during the congress.

Now, in our opinion, an organisation structured in this way runs the risk of being behind in respect of the effective level of the struggle, as its main aim is that of carrying the struggle to within its project of synthesis, not of pushing it towards its insurrectional realisation. One of its main objectives is

imprisonment throughout the social terrain, in which the necessity for economic expansion has precedence over the health of the planet and joy in life, in which the only options offered to us are those which enhance power and capital at our expense, in which one can only find freedom in a struggle that defies all odds against the entire order of existence that has been imposed on us. Effective action toward this aim is action that defines itself in terms of our desire to determine our existence for ourselves here and now. Anything else will only reinforce power, and from the standpoint of insurrectional anarchist practice that is not only ineffective and poor strategy, but immediately self-defeating in the strongest sense of that term.

struggles in terms of this vision. Since this vision is one of the destruction of all rule and the development of self-determined lives and relationships, the methodology of our struggle needs to reject compromise and negotiation with power as well as the delegation of our ability to act to any so-called representative, leader or organization. Thus, the basic elements of an insurrectional and anarchist methodology would include: direct action—acting directly to achieve the aim desired rather than making demands to an authority to act in one’s place; autonomy—the refusal to allow any formal organization with its prescribed ideology and program of action to determine how one will struggle, but rather organizing one’s activities informally with others who choose to act together to accomplish their aims; attack—the refusal of any compromise, mediation or accommodation with those in power, always recognizing them as the enemies of self-determination and their offers of negotiation as ploys to undermine revolt. This methodology offers no guarantees that large-scale insurrection will develop or succeed, but it does guarantee that any struggle carried out this way is self-determined, the activity of those in struggle and not of their self-proclaimed leaders and representatives. Those who take this as a basis for their activity in the world will be creating their lives for themselves—in struggle against the world as it is and against all odds. When this methodology is used in constant struggle against specific concrete aspects of power, it is the basis for developing a project aimed at building an anti-authoritarian, anti-capitalist insurrection.

So it is only on the basis of such a clear anarchist vision and the development of a methodology that reflects this vision, that questions of tactics, strategy and effectiveness have meaning. The various methods of petition and negotiation—letters and phone calls to representatives (of power), litigation, symbolic appeals to the conscience of the powerful, etc.—may, indeed, be effective in “freeing” a particular prisoner, stopping a particular development, protecting a particular 100 acres of forest or gaining a particular civil right, but by delegating the actual decisions to the masters of this world, these methods undermine self-determination. Our aim is the destruction of a social order in which prisons exist and spread the atmosphere of

quantitative growth in membership. It therefore tends to draw the struggle to the lowest common denominator by proposing caution aimed at putting a brake on any flight forwards or any choice of objectives that are too exposed or risky.

Of course that does not mean that all the groups belonging to the organisation of synthesis automatically act in this way: often comrades are autonomous enough to choose the most effective proposals and objectives in a given situation of struggle. It is a mechanism intrinsic to the organisation of synthesis however that leads it to making decisions that are not adequate to the situation, as the main aim of the organisation is to grow to develop as wide a front of struggle as possible. It tends not to take a clear and net position on issues, but finds a way, a political road that displeases the fewest and is digestible to most.

The reactions we get when making criticisms such as this are often dictated by fear and prejudice. The main fear is that of the unknown which pushes us towards organisational schema and formalism among comrades. This safeguards us from the search hinged on the risk of finding ourselves involved in unknown experiences. This is quite obvious when we see the great need some comrades have for a formal organisation that obeys the requirements of constancy, stability and work that is programmed in advance.

In reality these elements serve us in our need for certainty and not for revolutionary necessity.

On the contrary we think that the informal organisation can supply valid starting points for getting out of this uncertainty.

This different type of organisation seems to us to be capable of developing -contrary to an organisation of synthesis-more concrete and productive relationships as they are based on affinity and reciprocal knowledge. Moreover, the moment where it reaches its true potential is when it participates in concrete situations of struggle, not when drawing up theoretical or practical platforms, statutes or associative rules.

An organisation structured informally is not built on the basis of a programme fixed in a congress. The project is realized by the comrades themselves in the course of the struggle and during the development of the struggle itself. This organisation

has no privileged instrument of theoretical and practical elaboration, nor does it have problems of synthesis. Its basic project is that of intervening in a struggle with an insurrectional objective.

However great the limitations of the comrades involved in the informal kind of anarchist organisation might be, and what the latter's defects might be, the method still seems valid to us and we consider a theoretical and practical exploration of it to be worthwhile.

g.c.

## **INSTRUMENTAL LOGIC AND ANARCHIST PRINCIPLES**

*“Between tactical dogma and strategic expectations I choose neither the one nor the other, for I would be transforming anarchism, which for me is an ethic, a way of seeing and living life, into an ideal to be realized at any cost, whereas there can be no separation between theory and practice...”*

*“I believe that the anarchist choice cannot be subordinated to future events but that it must during its actual course bear the mark of difference, pleasure, dignity.”—Massimo Passamani*

Fairly frequently in anarchist circles, one will hear calls for us to be more effective, to act more strategically. Undoubtedly, there is a place for such calls, particularly when there seems to be so much confusion about a revolutionary anarchist project and so little creative intelligence aimed at creating one. But most of the time in these calls for strategy and effectiveness the significance of choosing to be an anarchist and the meaning of an insurrectional project get lost precisely because of the lack of a clear understanding of what these would mean in our lives. Thus, such calls often end up producing an instrumental logic that parallels that of capitalism and the state and can even reach the point where some anarchists call for voting or writing letters petitioning congress people, judges and other authorities to take action for us. It is therefore necessary to clarify some basic principles of anarchist thought and practice and, thus, lay the foundation for an anarchist insurrectional project.

While the basic meaning of anarchy is the simple negation of all rule, the positive aim would be the freedom of each individual to determine how she will live directly through his own activity in relation with those with whom she chooses to interact and create the conditions of life. Such a vision demands a practice in which that which is envisioned already exists. Thus, before considering strategy, tactics and effectiveness, we want to develop a methodology by which to create our lives and



It should be clear from all this that there is an agenda behind democracy. The “common good” that it works for is actually the good of the present social order. What else do we really have in common beyond the fact that we are all exploited and dominated by this order? So the “common good”, in fact, means that which is good for the continuation of exploitation and domination. By drawing us into the process of fictitious participation outlined above, democracy becomes the most truly totalitarian political system that has ever existed. Our lives come to be defined in terms of its processes in ways that no other political system could accomplish. This is why democracy is the state structure best suited to the needs of capital. Capital needs to permeate every moment of life, to define it terms of the economy. To do so requires a transformation in the nature of human beings, the transformation of living individuals into producer-consumers. Democracy, by transforming the self-creating individual into a citizen of the state, that is into a cog in the social machine, in fact helps capital to accomplish this project.

So, in reality, this is what democracy looks like: an empty existence devoid of vitality, given to the endless repetition of the same activities not of our choosing, compensated with the right to chatter on and on about that on which we cannot act. To wed revolution to this pathetic ideal would create a meager revolution. To wed anarchism to it would rain the life from all our finest passions and leave a stunted caricature for the amusement of academics and cultural theorists. Our revolution can't grow from such paltry ideals; it must spring from the great dreams of those who will not compromise their lives.

## **“WE DO NOT WANT MODERN LIFE”**

Although Europeans first set foot on the island of New Guinea in 1511, it remained largely untouched by civilization until recently. Its lush jungles and mountains made for a situation in which the people of one valley often had never even seen those of the next valley. As recently as the mid-1990's, there were 14 *documented* tribes that had never been contacted directly by outsiders; one can assume that there may still be several undocumented tribes as well. But modernization has begun to be imposed as the tentacles of expanding capital seek to reach into the most hidden niches for resources and people to exploit.

In 1963, Indonesia took control of West Papua—the western part of New Guinea. In a sham referendum called the “Act of Free Choice”, which took place in 1969, 1025 tribal people were coerced into proclaiming that they chose to remain part of Indonesia—in fact, being manipulated into mouthing phrases in a language that they did not know. Thus, the Indonesian control of West Papua came to be recognized by the UN in 1969.

Of course, Indonesia had not waited for official recognition of its control to begin the economic exploitation of West Papua. Mining operations run by Freeport MacMoRan, Inc., in conjunction with Rio Tinto Zinc and AMRO Bank, have been tearing up the earth and dislocating the Papuan natives since the early 1960's. In the Mamberano basin, which runs through some of the most beautiful and diverse forest regions on earth, numerous developments are being planned without a care for the environment or the people of the area. A complex of hydroelectric dams are planned which will supply energy for the development of heavy industry and agriculture. Other planned developments include a nickel processing plant, a copper smelter, a stainless steel industry and a project using electricity to split water into hydrogen and oxygen to make fuel for “green” cars—a good example of the relationship of “alternative energy” to industrialism in its most destructive forms. Freeport MacMoRan has already devastated the Aykwa River and forced

the relocation of the Amungme people from their native highlands to lowland areas where they have succumbed to diseases that they never encountered in their home valley. Other companies involved in the development of the dam project and the subsequent industrial development of the area include Ferrostahl, Siemens and Hochtief of Germany. A number of Australian firms are also involved.

Exploitation of resources, environmental destruction and dislocation of people are essential for the expansion of capital, particularly in undeveloped areas. The people of these areas have created ways of living in harmony with the environment that make money and, therefore, jobs completely unnecessary to their existence. But in this condition, such people are utterly useless to capital. So it moves in and begins destroying the environment that provides for the life of the indigenous people. It forces them to move from their forest homes into towns where the abundance that surrounded them in the jungle is locked into an impoverished form only accessible through money. And how does one get this money? By selling oneself into slavery to the projects that stole one's home and life away. Forced from the leisurely existence of their forest into the social environment of capital, they encounter not only social degradation and alienation, but also a myriad of diseases their bodies never had to deal with in the valley where they were born. So as with all such dislocations, those happening in West Papua are for all practical purposes a death march.

*“We are not terrorists!  
We do not want modern life!  
We refuse any kind of development:  
religious groups, aid agencies, non-governmental  
organizations.  
Just leave us alone, please!”*

Armed struggle against the exploitation in this area can be traced back to the 1500's, when the people of Biak Island of the coast of West Papua took up arms against colonialism. It is not surprising that this struggle would begin so quickly after encountering colonial power. It is part of the indigenous culture

this context that democratic dialogue exists, this context in which we have really been deprived of the ability to express anything real, anything living, anything with depth or passion. No wonder the democratic state so readily grants the right to “free expression”, it has already made the reality impossible.

From the beginning, the capitalist, democratic state has tended to flatten ideas in this manner, but the development of mass media on a large scale has provided the technology necessary for universalizing this process. As life itself is flattened by work and commodity consumption, as the activities people go through every day become increasingly standardized and meaningless from any personal perspective, the media becomes our source of information about what is significant, what is “really happening”, what there is to do, say and think. Here, we find the separation between decision and action in its completeness. We read about this policy, see scenes from that war on television, hear of some corporate misconduct on National Public Radio; and we all have our opinions that we can express in the numberless polls and surveys, in letters to editors or congress people, in elections. But these opinions will never lead us to take real action that puts our lives at risk. After all, they are based on stories from the newspaper, from television, from the media, tales from which the life has been drained before we ever heard them about events quite distant and unreal. Meanwhile our own lives tick by as always in the tedious repetition of work and pay.

Opinion, the idea flattened and separated from real life, gives us the illusion of freedom. After all, can't I express my opinion? Can't I have my say? This is the supposed beauty of democracy. The entire process by which opinion develops, this process of separating ideas from life and flattening them into the basis for pub talk and opinion polls is the basis for the general consensus by which democracy justifies itself. It presents itself as the one political system that, unlike other political systems, allows the free discussion about all political systems. That such a construction determines the outcome of any such discussion in advance should be obvious. What is less obvious is the option that is left out: the refusal of every political system.

The fact that democratic systems serve power becomes more obvious when we examine the nature of democratic participation. Democracy starts with the assumption that the “good of all” (or “the greatest good for the greatest number”) takes precedence over the needs and desires of the individual. This collectivist assumption dates back to the early days of capitalism when it was worked out in the writings of utilitarian philosophers such as John Stuart Mills and Jeremy Bentham. Thus, a political decision-making process that separates decision from action becomes necessary. Decision and execution of the decision must be separated in order to guarantee that “the good of all” is, indeed what is carried out.

But what is this “good of all”? In practice, it could just as readily be called “the good of none”. Within the democratic system, the method for finding the “common good” is to bring all sides or their representatives together to negotiate and come to a compromise. But what really is the nature of compromise? Each gives up a little of this, renounces a little of that, sacrifices a bit of the other thing (leaving aside the fact that a few are in a position to be able to sacrifice much less than most), until whatever they may have first desired has disappeared in the haze of the democratic “good of all”. Here then is democratic equality: Each leaves the table of negotiation equally disappointed, equally resentful, equally taking solace in the fact that, at least, the others lost as much as oneself. In the end it is only the two-headed hydra of power, the state and capital, that wins from this process.

The separation of decision from action and the consequent process of negotiation and compromise have the effect of flattening ideas. When ideas cannot be lived in practice, grappled with on the terrain of one’s actual existence, the vitality drains out of them. When, in addition, They must always be put into a form aimed not at real discussion or debate, but at negotiation, at finding common ground, they flatten into a two dimensional form of thinking that fits well into a binary logic. Thus, democratic opinion is born, the massified world views that can be measured in opinion polls and voted for in elections. Such flattened ideas are, in fact, just another form of commodity in the capitalist marketplace. And it is only within

of these region to take up arms to fight that which one hates without hesitation. So among those who encountered colonial rule and exploitation, armed struggle has been consistent here.

Shortly after Indonesia took control of West Papua in 1963, the Free Papua Movement (OPM) started. This formalization of an armed struggle that has been going on for centuries is problematic. Can the OPM avoid the weaknesses of formalization? Can it avoid becoming a political entity based on delegation and open to negotiation and compromise? In fact, it is difficult to know from here to what extent the OPM is a formal organization and to what extent it is simply a rallying cry for the struggle. It is claimed that the OPM and the indigenous people of West Papua are the same, that the OPM is not a movement above or ahead of the people. Recent actions by various tribal groups in which they took over towns and halted commercial and governmental activities in order to gain specific objectives fits with this claim, as does the OPM’s refusal to use the forms of hierarchical statist military structures, preferring to use traditional forms of tribal warfare.

The movement has also manifested a clarity about the nature of government, capitalism and the nation-state that is rare in such liberation struggles. A newsletter of the movement clearly states that the struggling people are not interested in replacing one government with another because they are not interested in administering capitalist exploitation themselves. Rather they want to end exploitation. They say they do not want a nation-state called West Papua. Rather, “we want... to be left alone as we have been and as we are. It does not matter if we are regarded as primitives. It does not bother us if we are seen as cannibals. It is of course okay for us if we are just with penis gourds and illiterate. It is our life, and it is our business. And we want to live just as we are forever. We want to be battling among ourselves and it is fine. It does not destroy as much as modern community is doing... We do not want others to regard us as useless and then sell us to capitalists. We are humans and we are fighting back against exploitation.” For those struggling in West Papua it is a matter of trying to maintain a way of life in which the state and capital have never developed against an external onslaught from these institutions. This provides a

clarity that those rising up in the midst of well-developed capitalist and state structures often lack—a clarity based on direct knowledge of what is lost when the state and capital are imposed.

But there are also indications that the OPM is not completely free of nationalist sentiment. And a willingness to negotiate. One of the most frequent actions of protest there consists of the raising of the West Papua flag at official buildings—an action that certainly appears to symbolize a desire for a unified nation, not for tribes living traditionally. Can the artificial unity created in this way be readily dismantled when it is no longer useful to the movement? But more significant is the fact that OPM delegations have gone to talk with officials of the Indonesian government, the UN and other powers to try to negotiate West Papuan independence. Do they really think that these powers would allow West Papuans to return to their tribal existence in the forests with no government to administer this existence, to work out compromises with other powers and, in the end, to renew the destructive sell-off that Indonesia has pursued for the past 38 years?

The freedom movement in West Papua is in a difficult position. Its demands are not negotiable within the framework of capitalism, so the OPM's attempts at negotiation are futile. A stateless society without money or commodity exchange, without development or industrial exploitation has no place in the framework of capital, and that framework now encompasses the globe. Only in a world from which this framework has been eradicated can the infinity of possible ways to live, including that of West Papuans, blossom and flourish. From this it becomes clear that solidarity with the freedom movement of these people needs to take the form of clearly insurrectional attacks aimed at the destruction of the state and capital, the structures of civilization, in their totality, attacks that may indeed target specific exploiters of the land and people of West Papua as part of an attempt to bring an end to all exploitation.

## THE PALTRY IDEAL OF DEMOCRACY

In recent years, the ideal of democracy has achieved global dominance. Organizations from the U.S. government to the EZLN to the United Nations call for more democracy on both the local and the global scale, and many revolutionaries let themselves be drawn into this chorus of bleating sheep and calling shepherds. A mythology develops in which the goddess Democracy is flanked on the one side by Liberty and on the other by Justice and together, it is said they will bring peace and prosperity to the world.

Reality, of course, never lives up to the myths by which it justifies itself. The ideas, perspectives and social systems promoted by the rulers of the present society are those that serve to maintain and expand their power. In this light, those who seek the destruction of the social order would do well to look at democracy with a cruel and penetrating eye in order to examine its real nature. I think we'd find this "goddess" to be, in fact, a shabby deceiver, wooing us into our enslavement, wed to the masters of power.

To understand democracy as it actually exists in the world, one must understand the nature of state power in its current form. In recent years, state power has decentralized itself. By this I do not mean that real power has spread into the hands of more and more people. Rather the administration of power has been spreading itself across the social territory through the development of an increasingly diffuse and complex technobureaucratic apparatus. This apparatus is the social and physical body of the democratic state.

Democracy is the political form best suited to the needs of capitalism. Capitalism needs a populace that is, at the same time, under control and voluntarily participatory. After all, these are the traits of the perfect consumer. So it should be no surprise that the actualization of capital's global project is going hand in hand with attempts to enforce the creation of democratic states throughout most of the world.

*Always ready to exalt any diplomatic solution that puts things in a democratic framework. Always ready to erase, deny, any hypothesis that goes against the present state of affairs. In South Africa, the strikes in the mines or the revolts in the ghettos in their reporting are always inspired by unions or because of the color of their skins. We never got news from Iran and Iraq of all the proletarians on each side who were hanged because they refused to fight in a war they did not feel a part of. The solution to the "Palestinian problem" is to be found in the recognition of the inalienable right to a state led (naturally) by the PLO.*

*No.*

*No, we don't agree,*

*we don't believe anything anymore!*

*Whoever comes out into the streets in the occupied territories of Israel as in South Africa, does it to rebel against the material conditions that capital imposes on their lives.*

*Conditions that in order to be reproduced require social peace, the elimination of any conflictuality that is not symbolic.*

*But we are not interested in symbols.*

*We know perfectly well that the system of capital is our enemy and survives thanks to men who are quite identifiable and to precise structures such as the banks.*

*These are the final links of a chain that supports the continuation of oppression and exploitation. It does so with precise instruments (such as the International Monetary Fund) that organize the exchange of goods and the subsequent starving of entire peoples.*

*Only if it is carried to within the class struggle will the struggle of the Palestinians be ours.*

## OUTSIDERS

**(The following text originally appeared in Italy in relation to the proceedings by public prosecutor Marini against Italian anarchists.)**

It is known that individuals tend to unite as life drives them to build relationships with each other.

But this union does not constitute a Community as such. For that to occur, the relationships between people must consolidate, crystallize, institutionalize themselves through established rules. People change from free individuals, who meet on the basis of their desires and the satisfaction of their needs, into members of a community, into citizens: "that public thing that has supplanted the human being".

The law welds these unions and links the citizens both in the sense that it maintains the unity between them and in the sense that it determines the limits of their movements, obstructing their freedom. So law is not at all a bulwark that has been built in defense of freedom, but is rather its negation. Where there is law, there cannot be freedom, because the task of the law is to be that of mediating relationships between individuals, sacrificing an infinity of individual freedom in the name of a single social utility. The amputation carried out by the law finds expression in the old adage, "my freedom ends where the other's begins, which indicates a fear of the possible expansion of freedom and pretty well sums up the meaning of community.

But Community, which emerges under the pretext of reciprocal convenience, very quickly gives itself priority over all other interests, making its own conservation its sole aim, so that its citizens become stunted due to the compromises and mediations accepted in the name of the good of all, but to the exclusive benefit of the customary few.

Now, since community in its state form does not concede the possibility of opting out to anyone, what happens when some one refuses to barter their freedom in exchange for citizenship in any community whatever? The answer is simple: exclusion.

The community excludes, but by distancing difference, bases itself upon it and justifies itself through it, so that difference comes to belong to the common space at the very moment in which it is expelled. There is no place beyond the state, no elsewhere in which to enclose anyone who does not follow the rules of the game. Everyone is inside.

The community does not seek acceptance on the basis of its results, but on the basis of its enemies. And since the enemies of the democratic community are terrorism, totalitarianism, the Mafia, madness and drugs, it sets itself up as the only alternative. This is why it continually needs to produce false enemies.

The community has to outlaw anyone who does not take its oath of loyalty—an oath which has no need of the solemnities of religion or of the old ideologies since it is repeated and confirmed in the choices of daily life.

The *ban*, a term from ancient Germanic law, means both the banner of power and the act of expulsion. Every authority requires a ban. And whoever does not accept submission, whoever does not call exploitation well being and repression security is banished from all communities of obedience.

But even those who are outside of the community are compelled to make a new community, a new band, of their exile so that one can be kept in it from the moment she is excluded. Power must bring troublesome and rebellious individuals back into the group.

The state always has a favorable attitude toward any group that demands its rights. Thus repression is avoided in this case, because it has already functioned as a preventative mechanism.

So there is no real difference between “reactionaries” who want to expel that which is different and “progressives” who invite the different into their homes, so long as they stay in their place and obey the rules. Only the label on the straightjacket changes. Furthermore, the “progressives” willingly help the “reactionaries” carry out their plans as is shown by their approval of the decree against immigration. First, an individual must show that he is not dangerous, then she must work and pay taxes. At this point, black or white, rich or poor, they become a citizen, welcomed by the community.

## **THE PALESTINIAN CONFLICT**

It is difficult to know just what is happening in the recent conflicts between the Palestinians and the Israelis. News reports are limited, emphasizing leaders and states, body counts, religious differences and, above all, the need for social peace. One remembers the Intifada of the late 1980's, this spontaneous uprising in which young people armed with sticks and stones dared to attack the Israeli military. The movement of that time seemed to be free of the control of the statist PLO as well as, for the most part, that of Islamic integralist movements. Unfortunately this autonomous rebellion did not last. The earliest reports of the recent struggle were reminiscent of reports of the Intifada, but the PLO and various “radical” Islamic groups have been quick to move in attempting to recuperate the struggle. It is difficult to know how successful they have been. The following text is a translation of a leaflet distributed on January 29, 1988 during a blockade of the “Cariplo” agency in Milan In solidarity with the Palestinians in struggle. I think its message applies today:

*Who says you can die for a state at the age of twelve?*

*Who believes that behind the stones thrown and the bottles launched against the Israeli soldiers there is the desire to see oneself represented in a Parliament of Palestinian politicians?*

*Who has an interest in making us believe that the objective of this insurrection is that of substituting the bible-thumping baton wielders with those with the Koran; the double-breasted bosses with those in kaftans?*

*What is the real reason for the goading reports that the radio, TV and newspapers are reserving for the events taking place in the Gaza ‘strip’?*

*The same attention reserved for the Iran-Iraq war when the dead were hundreds each day. Or when the Italian fleet was heading in that direction? A true bombardment of news all filtered however through “common sense”. The journalists are always ready to condemn excess on one side or the other.*

## **WHY WE ARE INSURRECTIONALIST ANARCHISTS**

by  
Alfredo M. Bonanno

—Because we are struggling along with the excluded to alleviate and ultimately abolish the conditions of exploitation imposed by the included. —

—Because we consider it possible to contribute to the development of struggles that are appearing spontaneously everywhere, turning them into mass insurrections, that is to say, actual revolutions.

—Because we want to destroy the capitalist order of the world which, thanks to computer science restructuring has become technologically useful to no one but the managers of class domination.

—Because we are for the immediate, destructive attack against the structures, individuals and organizations of Capital and the State.

—Because we constructively criticize all those who are in situations of compromise with power in their belief that the revolutionary struggle is impossible at the present time.

—Because rather than wait, we have decided to proceed to action, even if the time is not ripe.

—Because we want to put an end to this state of affairs right away rather than wait until conditions make its transformation possible. These are the reasons why we are anarchist, revolutionaries and insurrectionalists.

And anyone who doesn't desire to integrate herself will nevertheless find herself labeled in such a way as to incorporate her into a group. Thus, some anarchist individuals who want to rise up against this equality of slaves are presented as a "subversive association" or an "armed gang". If it is true that law and peace are necessarily linked (in the sense that every authority must define the territory in which to enforce its power), the society that we are living in is one immense concentration camp. Only by rising up as individuals without belonging to any group, to any "gang" (armed or otherwise) can we turn our back on every enclosure.

# INSURRECTION

by  
Alfredo M. Bonanno

*(The following text is taken from Insurrection #4, May 1988)*

A part from a few not very significant fringes, the international anarchist movement shares theoretical positions of a revolutionary character. The liberal-democratic vein, important as far as it shows a possible line of involution remains on the margins.

In turn almost the whole of the revolutionary anarchist positions—with different nuances—see insurrection as a necessary phase along the road to revolution.

But this insurrection is seen as a mass revolt due to certain socio-economic forces that serve to set it off. The role of the anarchist movement is to limit itself to understanding these conditions and economic and social contradictions to make them more comprehensible to the mass. Basically a role of propaganda and counter-information.

Often even the anarchist comrades who see the need for violent struggle against the structures of repression without half-measures limit themselves to this part of the analysis and do not feel obligated to go further. The mass—they say—must do everything themselves. Anything else would be authoritarian on the part of the specific anarchist organization and could turn out to be disastrous.

This idea might have been logical when nearly the whole of the anarchist movement was in positions of synthesis, i.e., in the dimension of the big (or not so big) quantitative organizations. Through the instrument of the syndicalist organization they planned to address the whole of the social and economic struggle into a situation of waiting for a breaking out of the revolutionary moment.

There is a different way to envision revolution in an insurrectional key in our opinion.

We consider that the anarchist organization, so long as it is informal, can contribute to the constitution of autonomous base

specific circumscribed aim, it is a temporary formation—one that ceases to exist once the aim is accomplished. Thus it remains informal, without membership.

With this informal basis, once we recognize that our own freedom will remain impoverished as long as the masters continue to control the conditions under which most people exist, depriving us of the ability to freely determine our own lives, we recognize that our own liberation depends on intervention in the struggles of the exploited classes as a whole. Our involvement is not one of evangelism—the propagandistic method would place us on the same level as political movements, and we are not politicians or activists, but individuals who want our lives back and therefore take action for ourselves with others. Thus, we do not propose any specific anarchist organization for the exploited to join, nor a doctrine to put faith in. Rather we seek to link our specific struggle as anarchists to that of the rest of the exploited by encouraging self-organization, self-determination, the refusal of delegation and of any sort of negotiation, accommodation or compromise with power, and a practice based on direct action and the necessity of attack against the structures of power and control. The point is to encourage and participate in specific attacks against specific aspects of the state, capital and the various structures and apparati of control. Since our purpose is to struggle against our own exploitation with other exploited people, certainly with the aim of projecting toward insurrection, there can be no guaranteeing of any results—with no organization striving to gain members, we can't look for an increase in numbers. There is no way to know the end. But though we have no guarantees, no certainty of accomplishing our aim, success is not the primary reason for our struggle. The primary reason is that not to act is the guaranteed defeat of an empty and meaningless existence. To act to take our lives back is to already regain them on the terrain of struggle, to already become the creator of one's own existence, even if in constant battle with a monstrous order determined to crush us.



the anarchists have some special understanding of things that makes them the *de facto* vanguard of the revolution.

So for the purpose of creating our insurrectional project we want to organize informally: without a formal theoretical basis so that ideas and analyses can be developed fluidly in a way that allows us to understand the present and act against it and without a formal practical orientation so that we can act with an intelligent projectual spontaneity and creativity. A significant aspect of this informal organization would be a network of like-minded people. This network would base itself on a reciprocal knowledge of each other which requires honest, straightforward discussions of ideas, analyses and aims. Complete agreement would not be necessary, but a real understanding of differences would. The aim of this network would not be the recruitment of members—it would not be a membership organization—but rather developing methods for intervening in various struggles in an insurrectional manner, and coordinating such interventions. The basis for participation would be affinity—meaning the capacity to act together. This capacity stems from knowing where to find each other and studying and analyzing the social situation together in order to move to action together. Since there is no formal organization to join, this network would only grow on the basis of a real affinity of ideas and practice. This informal network would consist of the tools we develop for the discussion of social analyses and the methods for intervening in struggles that we create.

This network is basically a way for individuals and small groups to coordinate their struggles. The real point of action is the affinity group. An affinity group is an informal, temporary group based on affinity—that is real knowledge of each other—that comes together to accomplish a specific aim. Affinity develops through a deepening knowledge of each other: knowledge of how the other thinks about social problems and of the methods of intervention they consider appropriate. Real affinity cannot be based on a lowest common denominator, but must include a real understanding of differences as well as similarities between those involved, because it is in the knowledge of our difference that we can discover how we can really act together. Since the affinity group comes together for a

nuclei which, as mass organism, can programme attacks against structures of social, economic and military repression. These attacks, even if circumscribed, have all the methodological characteristics and practices of insurrectional phenomena when not left to the blind forces of social and economic conflict, but brought into an anarchist projectuality based on autonomy, direct action, constant attack and the refusal of compromise.

In a word, this is the insurrectional conception that we are inviting all comrades interested to assess with critiques, analyses and debates.

## **INDIVIDUALISM AND COMMUNISM**

### **THE AIMS OF ANARCHIST REVOLUTION**

The anarchist insurrectional project is a revolutionary project, that is to say a project that aims at the destruction of the present society and the creation of new ways of living. The aim of this revolution is the removal of every social limit that prevents individuals from creating their own lives in terms of their own desires and dreams and determining what relations they want to create in order to accomplish this. But such an aim implies other aims as well.

The social system of capital separates most people from the conditions of existence. This compels the vast majority to accept the mediations of work and commodity consumption in order to maintain a minimal existence at the expense of their lives, desires and dreams, of their individuality. The artificial economic scarcity imposed by capital leads to a competition that is often promoted in the United States as the basis of "individualism" in spite of the fact that it creates nearly identical mediocre existences in which life is subsumed in survival.

It is possible even within this social context to take back one's life, the conditions of one's existence, to a limited extent, by choosing to live on the margins as an outlaw. But such a decision can only be a first step if one does not want to isolate oneself. It puts one in the position of being at war with society as it exists. And one's enemies—the masters of this order—have far greater access to the means of existence than the marginalized outlaw. So if this individual revolt is not to fall into the realm of futile gestures, it must move toward a revolutionary perspective.

This perspective develops when one recognizes the necessity of destroying the social order, of utterly demolishing the state and capital. If all individuals are indeed to be free to create their lives and relations as they desire, it is necessary to create a world in which equality of access to the means and conditions of existence is reality. This requires the total destruction of economy—the end of property, commodity exchange and work. Thus we see that the generalized realization of individual

to use in action, informality is essential—only here can its forms be expressions of real needs and desires.

So our desire to create insurrection moves us to reject all formal organization—all structures based on membership and the attempt to synthesize the various struggles under one formal leadership—that of the organization. These structures for synthesis share a few common traits. They have a formal theoretical basis, a series of doctrines to which all members are expected to adhere. Because such groups are seeking numbers this basis tends to be on the lowest common denominator—a set of simplistic statements with no depth of analysis and with a dogmatic tendency that militates against deep analysis. They also have a formal practical orientation—a specific mode of acting by which the group as a whole determines what they will do. The necessity such groups feel to synthesize the various struggle under their direction—to the extent they succeed—leads to a formalization and ritualization of the struggles undermining creativity and imagination and turning the various struggles into mere tools for the promotion of the organization. From all of this it becomes clear, that whatever claims such an organization may make about its desire for insurrection and revolution, in fact, its first aim is to increase membership. It is important to realize that this problem can exist even when no structures have been created. When anarchism promotes itself in an evangelistic manner, it is clear that a formal theoretical basis has imposed its rigidity on the fluidity of ideas necessary for developing real analyses. In such a situation, the practical orientation—the modes of action also become formalized—one need only look at the ritualized confrontations by which so many anarchists strive to get their message across. The only purpose that this apparently informal formalization serves is to try to convince the various people in struggle that they should call themselves anarchists—that is, to synthesize the struggles under the leadership of the black flag. In other words to gain numbers of members for this formal non-organization. Dealing with the media to explain who anarchists are seems to enforce this way of interacting with the other exploited in struggle, because it reinforces the separation of anarchists from the rest of those exploited by this society and leaves the impression that

## ***SOME IDEAS ON INSURRECTIONAL ANARCHIST ORGANIZATION***

Once one has decided not to put up with being ruled or exploited and therefore to attack the social order based on domination and exploitation, the question of how to go about this arises. Since those of us who rise up in rebellion cannot let themselves be organized by others without falling under a new form of domination, we need to develop the capacity to organize our own projects and activities—to put the elements together that are necessary for acting projectually in a coherent manner.

Thus, organization, as I'm using the term here, means bringing together the means and relations that allow us to act for ourselves in the world. This starts with the decision to act, the realization that our thirst to have all of our life as our own requires us to fight against the state, capital and all of the structures and institutions through which they maintain control over the conditions of our existence. Such a decision puts one in the position of needing to develop the specific tools that make intelligent action possible. First a thorough analysis of the present conditions of exploitation is necessary. Based on this analysis, we choose specific objectives to aim for and means for achieving these objectives based upon our desires and the ideas that move us. These means, these tools for action must first and foremost include ways of making our objectives, desires and ideas known to others in order to find affinities, others with whom we can create projects of action. Thus, we look to create occasions for encounters and discussion in which similarities and differences are clarified, in which the refusal of false unities allow the real affinities—real knowledge of whether and how we can work together—to develop. These tools allow the projectuality of individuals in revolt to become a force in movement, an element propelling toward the insurrectional break. Since affinity is the basis for the relations we are aiming

freedom goes hand-in-hands with the best aspects of the anarcho-communist ideal and can only be achieved through a revolutionary transformation.

But such a revolution is not a gift granted by abstract History. Here the full significance of individual rebellion shows itself. When we reject every deterministic view of revolution, it becomes clear that the actions of individuals in conscious revolt against the social order are essential for building a revolution. Those individuals who reject all exploitation, who refuse to put up with a world that demands that one buy survival at the expense of one's dreams and desires, at the expense of life lived to the full, seek out the tools and methods to destroy this social order. From this the analyses, projects and actions that are the basis of an insurrectional anarchist projectuality can develop.

## TECHNOLOGY AND CLASS STRUGGLE

The developments in technology over the past sixty years—the nuclear industry, cybernetics and related information techniques, biotechnology and genetic engineering—have produced fundamental changes in the social terrain. The methods of exploitation and domination have changed, and for this reason old ideas about the nature of class and class struggle are not adequate for understanding the present situation. The workerism of the marxists and syndicalists can no longer even be imagined to offer anything useful in developing a revolutionary practice. But simply rejecting the concept of class is not a useful response to this situation either, because in so doing one loses an essential tool for understanding the present reality and how to attack it.

Exploitation not only continues, but has intensified sharply in the wake of the new technology. Cybernetics has permitted the decentralization of production, spreading small units of production across the social terrain. Automation has drastically reduced the number of production workers necessary for any particular manufacturing process. Cybernetics further creates methods for making money without producing anything real, thus allowing capital to expand itself without the expense of labor.

Furthermore, the new technology demands a specialized knowledge that is not available for most people. This knowledge has come to be the real wealth of the ruling class in the present era. Under the old industrial system, one could look at class struggle as the struggle between workers and owners over the means of production. This no longer makes sense. As the new technology advances, the exploited find themselves driven into increasingly precarious positions. The old life-long skilled factory position has been replaced by day labor, service sector jobs, temporary work, unemployment, the black market, illegality, homelessness and prison. This precariousness

## THE INSURRECTIONAL PROJECT

An anarchist insurrectional project requires a method that reflects the world we desire and the reality of the world we seek to destroy. Acting in small groups based on affinity fits both of these requirements. Power in the present world no longer has a real center, but spreads itself throughout the social terrain. Acting in small groups allows projects of attack to spread across the terrain as well. But more significantly, this method brings one's aim into one's method—revolt itself becomes a different way of conceiving relations. Anarchists always talk of refusing vanguardism—but such a refusal means refusing evangelism, the quantitative myth that seeks to win converts to an ideology of anarchism. Acting in small groups to attack the state and capital puts anarchy into practice as the self-organization of one's own projects, in relations based on affinity—real knowledge of and trust in each other—rather than adherence to a belief system. Furthermore, this sort of action, liberated from the quantitative, does not wait until “conditions are right”, until one is guaranteed a large following or until one is certain of the results—it is action without measure. Thus, it carries within it the world we desire—a world of relations without measure.

us. For this very reason, we must not hedge our bets. We must be ready to risk all. Resistance, because it is defensive, merely seeking to impede the progress of power, is a hedged bet. If we remain at that level, it means certain defeat in the face of the odds—and, I might add, a most ignoble defeat, the defeat of those content with mere survival. Our revolt must be so fierce that it moves us beyond resistance, that it moves us to risk our all in order to truly live and destroy the social order.

guarantees that the wall created by the new technology between the exploiters and the exploited remains unbreachable.

But the nature of the technology itself places it beyond the reach of the exploited. Earlier industrial development had as its primary focus the invention of techniques for the mass manufacturing of standardized goods at low cost for high profit. These new technological developments are not so much aimed at the manufacturing of goods as at the development of means for increasingly thorough and widespread social control and for freeing profit from production. The nuclear industry requires not only specialized knowledge, but also high levels of security that place its development squarely under the control of the state and lead to a military structuring in keeping with its extreme usefulness to the military. Cybernetic technology's ability to process, record, gather and send information nearly instantaneously serves the needs of the state to document and monitor its subjects as well as its need to reduce the real knowledge of those it rules to bits of information-data-hoping, thus, to reduce the real capabilities for understanding of the exploited. Biotechnology gives the state and capital control over the most fundamental processes of life itself—allowing them to decide what sort of plants, animals and-in time-even human beings can exist.

Because these technologies require specialized knowledge and are developed for the purpose of increasing the control of the masters over the rest of humanity even in our daily lives, the exploited class can now best be understood as those excluded from this specialized knowledge and thus from real participation in the functioning of power. The master class is, thus, made up of those included in participation in the functioning of power and the real use of the specialized technological knowledge. Of course these are processes in course, and the borderlines between the included and excluded can, in some cases, be elusive as increasing numbers of people are proletarianized—losing whatever decision-making power over their own conditions of existence they may have had.

It is important to point out that although these new technologies are intended to give the masters control over the excluded and over the material wealth of the earth, they are

themselves beyond any human beings control. Their vastness and the specialization they require combine with the unpredictability of the materials they act upon—atomic and sub-atomic particles, light waves, genes and chromosomes, etc.—to guarantee that no single human being can actually understand completely how they work. This adds a technological aspect to the already existing economic precariousness that most of us suffer from. However, this threat of technological disaster beyond any one's control also serves power in controlling the exploited—the fear of more Chernobyls, genetically engineered monsters or escaped laboratory-made diseases and the like move people to accept the rule of so-called experts who have proven their own limits over and over again. Furthermore, the state—that is responsible for every one of these technological developments through its military—is able to present itself as a check against rampant corporate “abuse” of this technology. So this monstrous, lumbering, uncontrollable juggernaut serves the exploiters very well in maintaining their control over the rest of the population. And what need have they to worry about the possible disasters when their wealth and power has most certainly provided them with contingency plans for their own protection?

Thus, the new technology and the new conditions of exclusion and precariousness it imposes on the exploited undermine the old dream of expropriation of the means of production. This technology—controlling and out of control—cannot serve any truly human purpose and has no place in the development of a world of individuals free to create their lives as they desire. So the illusory utopias of the syndicalists and marxists are of no use to us now. But were they ever? The new technological developments specifically center around control, but all industrial development has taken the necessity of controlling the exploited into account. The factory was created in order to bring producers under one roof to better regulate their activities; the production line mechanized this regulation; every new technological advance in the workings of the factory brought the time and motions of the worker further under control. Thus, the idea that workers could liberate themselves by taking over the means of production has always been a delusion. It was an

## BEYOND RESISTANCE

While resistance to repression and the advance of capital is, indeed, necessary, it is not a sufficient response to the present situation. Resistance is merely an attempt to be friction in the path of the present order to impede its progress. As such, it is essentially a defensive stance, an attempt to merely hold one's ground. It ends focusing so completely on what one is resisting that one forgets the reason for one's struggle. From a position of relative material weakness—as against the powers that be that are well armed and well positioned—resistance by itself is inherently a losing battle. Focusing on the worst aspects of capital and the state, we simply find ourselves perpetually up against an enemy who keeps shoving us back. Were we in a position where mere resistance could actually stop the progress of the present order, wouldn't it make more sense to use that strength to tear the system down?

But even from a position of relative weakness, attack—destructive action power in the places where it is most vulnerable—is a much more intelligent road to take than that of resistance. Such attacks certainly require some knowledge of the enemy, but do not rise from a focus on the enemy. Rather they rise from the desire to create one's life as one's own, to pursue one's own chosen direction in life without compromise or constraints. This leads one into conflict with the social order, clarifies the nature of the state and capital and exposes its weak points. With this knowledge we can develop our projects of destructive action against the dominant reality.

Freedom is best understood as the expansion of possibilities, the destruction of all limits imposed by this or any other social order. As such, freedom calls for destruction in the very practical sense we have been talking about. Those of us who want to make our lives our own, to grasp the possibilities we have been denied, to smash every limit, have everything against

examination, such as a paper or a review, capable of supplying indications on a wide range of problems and of becoming a point of reference for continually verifying affinity or divergence of opinion between groups and individual comrades.

Secondly, these specific groups can also form base structures involving the exploited in specific areas of struggle, not as an element of growth in the specific movement. In this view, it becomes dispersive to give life to a permanent structure to confront specific problems. The base structures have a single objective. When this objective has been reached or the attempt fails, the structure either widens into a situation of generalized insurrection, or dismantles as the case may be.

It should be stressed here that although the element holding the informal organization together is undoubtedly affinity, its propulsive element is always action. If it limits itself to the first alone, all relations will become arid in the byzantine perfectionism of whoever has nothing better to do than to try to hide one's will to do nothing.

The problems that have been touched on here deserve more going into and we invite all comrades to take part in the discussion of them.

understandable delusion when technological processes had the manufacture of goods as their primary aim. Now that their primary aim is so clearly social control, the nature of our real struggle should be clear: the destruction of all systems of control—thus of the state, capital and their technological system, the end of our proletarianized condition and the creation of ourselves as free individuals capable of determining how we will live ourselves. Against this technology our best weapon is that which the exploited have used since the beginning of the industrial era: sabotage.

## THE INFORMAL ORGANIZATION

(This piece is taken from *Insurrection*, issue 4, May 1988)

The informal anarchist organization has nothing to do with programs, platforms or flags but is based on a common affinity between comrades whose objective is to intervene in struggles in an insurrectional direction. In that way it is possible to be present in and heighten the class struggle.

Anarchist groups and individuals are often spread over the territory with little contact between them and few ideas on methods and possibilities of intervention in social reality.

There is a certain presence in some areas, especially of a syndicalist nature. In others there is action against nuclear installations. The widest area of intervention is that of counter-information and propaganda.

An anarchist movement that is really active and incisive needs two main factors: an agile and effective instrument and an objective that is that is sufficiently clear in perspective.

We think the informal organization and insurrection are concrete possibilities that present themselves at the present time.

...The organization of synthesis, based on the congress and political program, is a structure that because of its internal characteristics and the mechanisms that support it, cannot be a valid instrument for comrades wanting to move in an insurrectional perspective. Political programs and platforms are organizational models which, from an insurrectional point of view have seen their day.

One thing that is indispensable in the informal anarchist organization is reciprocal knowledge between members. This and affinity among comrades is what characterizes the informal form of organization.

We have all reached anarchist positions through time, maturing certain convictions concerning social problems. We also have some idea of how to intervene in social reality and the relative strategic choices to be made. Well, let us go into these problems, ascertain whether we agree on certain points, show each other how we think.

Certainly, it is easy. It is nevertheless indispensable to confront one another. Without this no kind of informal structure or informal relationship is possible.

The informal proposal does not mean that one has to agree on every single problem that arises. Affinity does not possess a uniform level of intensity. Knowledge of another is an infinite process that reaches greater or lesser depth according to the circumstances and the objectives one is trying to reach.

The basic project of an informal anarchist organization has, in our opinion, the objective of intervening in struggles in an insurrectional logic. This organization does not give one area privilege over another, does not have a stable centrality. It singles out an objective which at a given moment presents a particularly acute area of social conflict and works in a perspective of insurrection.

The debate is open on this point. Criticisms that insurrection is not a valid proposal today sometimes confuse insurrection with the old "propaganda by the deed". On the contrary we think that the insurrectional project gives itself the aim of attacking power in each one of its manifestations by the stimulation of the anarchist informal organization, but always with mass participation, showing in deed the possibility and validity of such attacks.

In that way it is possible to be present in the class struggle and heighten the level of it.

We see the informal organization therefore as a number of comrades linked by a common affinity. The wider the range of problems face as a whole, the greater their affinity will be. It follows that real organization, the effective capacity to act together, i.e. knowing where to find each other, the study and analysis of problems together, and the passing to action, all take place in relation to the affinity reached and has nothing to do with programs, platforms, flags or more or less camouflaged parties. The informal anarchist organization is therefore a specific organization that gathers around a common affinity.

Undoubtedly it will tend towards a growth in numbers, but this is not the main aim of activity. As the organism born in this way develops it will give itself common means of intervention. First of all, an instrument for debate necessary for analytical