

# ***Willful Disobedience***

***Selections from Volume 3***



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**Theory and Analysis for Discussion,  
Debate and Development of an  
Insurrectional Anarchist Project**

It is a delightful paradox that utopian **dreamers** are so often accused by utopian **schemers** of only being negative – always criticizing but never making positive proposals. Such accusations have been flung at anarchists, surrealists, libertarian communists and so many others. Yet when these vibrant dreamers choose to become schemers, their schemes always seem to fall short of the critique offered by their dreams. This is no accident. When one rejects all hierarchy, all domination, all representation, then one cannot present a completed vision of the world that one desires. Rather it would be a world that transform in every moment with the desires, needs and aspirations of those who live in this world freely interacting coming together in love or common interest, separating when conflict of desires moves them in different directions. It would be no paradise, but a constant, adventurous journey without end full of loves and hatreds, joys and sorrows, real conflicts as well as joyful intercourse of all sorts. And those who strive to impose their schemes of a perfect world, a paradise, who strive to force this journey to a predetermined end, are as much my enemies as the current institutions of domination that impose so many barriers to this journey. So, indeed, like all utopian dreamers, I am a great negator – I seek to destroy every barrier to the marvelous journey of a free existence.

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## Plundering the Arsenal

*“The heritage of revolutionary movements  
can no longer form a tradition to safeguard...  
or a program to realize,  
but must become an arsenal to plunder  
for the ongoing use of new revolutionaries.”*

The history of revolt is probably as long as the history of domination and exploitation. There have always been those who will not submit, who will defy god and master even against the greatest odds. And this history of revolt includes significant social struggles, uprisings of the multitudes of the exploited to throw off their chains in social revolution. Over the past few hundred years, these social upheavals have helped to create a revolutionary awareness that has manifested particularly in anarchist and communist theory, social analysis and practice.

This same period saw the rise of capitalism, the bourgeois revolutions that transformed the state giving rise to democratic domination (as well as other more blatantly totalitarian forms), industrialism and wage labor. But over the past sixty years or so, consequences of these transformations that were not previously fully comprehended have combined with significant ongoing changes in the ways in which domination and exploitation operate facilitated by new developments in military, police, industrial and so-called post-industrial techniques, methods and systems, developed to meet the needs of continuing social reproduction, making it necessary for clear-headed revolutionaries to develop new conceptions of the nature of the struggle against the ruling order. And so the question arises of whether the analyses and theories of the past—and the history in which they developed—have any significance for the present anarchist movement.

Certainly, adhering to the theories and analyses of the past as revolutionary truth is useless. The veneration of Kropotkin or Bakunin, Goldman or Malatesta can only transform anarchist theory and practice into a museum piece, and museums are generally showcases for that which has died.

In the same way, an uncritical approach to past uprisings does us no good. The Paris Commune, Spain in the 1930's, Hungary

whose marvelous tongue  
engorges the flattening flies of  
the midnight sun.  
Once again the dances find  
a universe within the spreading thorax  
of a hummingbird  
who sings of dreams  
that scamper past the limited  
utopias of those who accept  
the measurement of rulers.  
I have clothed myself  
in vaginal splendor  
in those times when insurrection  
spread its aphrodisiac face  
across the horizon  
and the wombats found their pleasure  
in a cup of minstrel wine  
left by the eyeless girl  
whose lovely dreams went far  
beyond the world of drawers.  
For hours we danced within  
midnight flowers licking the petals  
of our skin which was the paper  
of a manifesto of lust  
that spread its seed throughout  
the continent of daydreams  
and found the land of silver-backed  
gorillas laughing at the amber fluid  
of a lovely dreamer of symptomatic  
beams,  
and the days flourished through the vibrancy  
of beer and love.  
One day we would find our dream  
and it would not be an Eden  
but a voyage to unknown places.

-3-

“I am in love with a dream, and the moisture between my thighs is utopia.” So spoke the dark eyes of a woman whose beauty was a mist that drew me into its marvelous obscurity. Her earlobes sang of insurrections exploding through her nipples caressed by silken fingers and the wings of butterflies.

The poetry of true utopia rests within the heart of desire. It is at war with the schemes that would define every moment of life. The bureaucrat’s vision of paradise where everything is perfect and nothing is human, where love is forgotten and dreams are ignored, this is the enemy of poetry.

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Where are the fiery-eyed utopians, those whose passions have no patience, those whose hearts burn so hot that their eyes flash flames of madness, the madness of utopia and love that has not divorced itself from lust? It has been far too long since I danced naked on a wild, barren hilltop that rises from a singing forest with other wild dreamers, leaping to kiss the moon.

Here is the difference between utopias: Those of dreams glimmer in the moments that spark revolt, that move us toward insurrection. Those of schemes are never seen in the present except in the form of holocausts and genocides, the holy wars of true believers, because schemes must rid themselves of the unpredictable. Dreams, on the contrary, depend on the unpredictable, thus on the **passion** of love, the erotic spark of lust. It is not by chance that revolt is a lover seen backwards through a cup of (mushroom?) tea.

-5-

Dark shining eyes  
like an octopus dreaming  
caress the cavity of my mind,  
plunging into caverns  
where the flowers of desire  
glow in iridescent midnight blue  
like the thorax of a tree frog

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in ’56, Paris in ’68 and so on become meaningless from a projectual revolutionary perspective when they are mythologized. The ongoing struggle from which they arose disappears, and they become relics—a string of “glorious” defeats. I have no interest in participating in the creation of a Museum of Anarchy and Insurrection. I want to create anarchy and insurrection as lived realities.

But the refusal to venerate and mythologize the revolutionary past is not the same as simply rejecting it out of hand. Just as the order of domination has a history that we can examine in order to gain a greater understanding of how to fight against it, so too the struggle against this order has a history, and to simply claim that it is irrelevant to us today is to sacrifice significant weapons that we could use in our struggle here and now.

It has been said that in order to relaunch the wager of revolution, “it is necessary to put the past back into play.” But when placed in a museum to be venerated or buried in a graveyard to be ignored, the past cannot be put into play, because it has been transformed from an activity, a movement of struggle, into a dead thing. The anarchists and revolutionaries of the past developed their analyses, theories and visions not as doctrines in which to believe, but as weapons to be used against the ruling order. Certainly, much of it is irrelevant now (some of it—syndicalism, workerism, formalism and the fetish of organization and numbers, faith in progress and technology—were probably obstacles from the start), but if our intent is not merely to promote a new ideology, a new revolutionary faith; if our struggle is for the reappropriation of our lives here and now and the destruction of all that stands in the way of that project; if our aim is indeed the transformation of social relationships, the creation of a world without domination, exploitation, hierarchy...; then we will see the revolutionary past as an arsenal to be plundered, joyfully grasping whatever is useful to our present struggle. If we cannot grapple critically with the past, we will not be able to grapple critically with the present, and our current struggle will be a museum piece, a mere showcase of ideology, another game of spectacular roles that may be appealing to the media, but are of no relevance to the real struggle to destroy this society.

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## **BOLIVIA: Revolt Continues to Boil**

As the Bolivian government, under president Jorge Quiroga, strives to enforce social peace through murder, torture and general repression, the exploited continue to rebel fiercely. Like all real large-scale struggles, this one is not always coherent nor does it always question the totality of the relationships of domination and exploitation, but the practice of revolt has certainly carried this struggle in an insurrectionary direction (encouraged both by Bolivian anarchists and by certain indigenous people from cultures in which hierarchical relationships and formalization are nearly non-existent).

The latest round of protests, blockades and battles with the armed guards of the ruling order was sparked by the expulsion of Evo Morales from the Bolivian parliament. But the movement very quickly left behind much of its reformist baggage. It is likely that this is due in part to a practice of collective, autonomous, direct action in struggles that have been going on over the last two years. A communiqué from the Bolivian anarchist group, Juventudes Libertarias, dated February 6, gives a description of aspects of the struggle:

“[...] Facing the violence of the State/Capital, the proletariat is defending itself. In the last month, three soldiers and a policeman have been finished off in Chapare; while in Sucre a group of small debtors, defending themselves from foreclosure, threw gasoline at a squad of police and set them on fire. In the locality of Pocitos, thousands of border workers made a group of elite police flee and burned the border post with Argentina; on 2<sup>nd</sup> February last, a march of thousands of workers, coca farmers, college students, small debtors, teachers, health-workers, water-workers and workers without retirement ended up throwing stones, firecrackers and paint at the police station in the city of Cochabamba, in protest at the ferocious repression exerted by the elite forces—the ‘dalmatas’—accused of torturing political prisoners with electrical charges applied to the gums, finally a group of young people dressed in black threw a homemade bomb, which injured five policemen, including a senior officer.

freedom, that dreams of a life lived fully **as our own** can only be realized by living our struggle here and now **as our own** without any willing compromise with the institutions of domination. Disaster surrounds us, but our lives must not be defined by it. In its midst we must continue to dream and to grasp our dreams, transforming them into our reasons for revolt.

-2-

It is clear that we are living in a world moving further and further into horror and misery. Sometimes in the name of great ideals, more often nowadays quite blatantly in the name of naked power, the rulers of this world pursue policies that homogenize and impoverish existence, spreading disaster everywhere. But this is not really so new. Didn't Columbus begin to spread this process (already well under way in Europe) when he brought a religion that gloried in death and an economy with an insatiable appetite, eating everything in its path to produce shit, to a world already thriving with human life, as well as that of plants and animals unknown in Europe? Thus, a process euphemistically called colonialism, more accurately described as genocide, began to spread throughout the world, slaughtering and enslaving people everywhere, kidnapping black Africans to enslave them in the Americas, all after having dispossessed the peasants of Europe, forcing them into destitution and survival by any means necessary. This process of dispossession has advanced to the point that now our language diminishes and it often seems that even our thoughts are not our own.

The masters of this world tell us that we cannot go back. And they are right as far as they go. We cannot go back. The world has changed too much and we have changed too much. But though we can't go back, this does not mean we must go forward. If the path we are on can only lead to a drab and lifeless horror and if the passage back is blocked, then we must go **elsewhere**, the elsewhere of the unknown that is insurrection, the utopian dream. If Columbus helped to forge a path that meant misery for nearly all of humanity, then we must diverge absolutely from all known paths, to enter into the marvelous of wild, uncharted desires.

## DREAMING IN THE FACE OF DISASTER: *Thoughts on Utopia*

-1-

A world of disaster... this is all that capital offers, all that it has ever really offered, but now it can't even hide this behind the apparent abundance of goods. The world falls apart as it becomes one huge poisonous supermarket. Desperation abounds in its many guises. The loss of values, of principles, a desperation that is willing to take any action, and so mostly acts in ways that reinforce the current order of things. The apocalyptic visions of collapse, the dreams of the hopeless, replace revolutionary desire. If joy can't ever be ours, if wonder and the festival of revolt are beyond our reach, at least we can imagine the collapse of our misery, the fall of the horror, even if it must take us down with it (all but the elect few who will somehow survive in its poisonous ruins). So the "dream" of some is nothing more than the belief that this sad, impoverished vision is the only possibility, because the other possibilities that they imagine, variations on the continuation of the present desolate survival, seem so much worse.

But isn't the worst aspect of our current desolation precisely the impoverishment of imagination, the death of every utopian dream that is not a program, a scheme, i.e., a conception of how to continue the present existence? Certainly, at this point, our hatred of the present reality requires the strength of dreams, of desire, of the utopian **journey** that is the opposite of every utopian program, of the utopian experiment that rejects all schemes. Capital can only provide the final answer, the final solution. But final solutions only bring death. Life is continual questioning, experimentation, exploration. So as everything closes down around us, we cannot follow suit, letting our dreams drown in the misery of realism, pragmatism and utility. Now, more than ever, we need to grasp all the marvelous force of impossible dreams expressed in the fiercest of insurgent principles, in the refusal of compromise, with the fullness of our passion and our reason. Not out of a desire for purity (which is always an illusion), but from the realization that dreams of freedom can only be realized in

"Over the last two weeks, Cochabamba has become the epicenter of the protests, with thousands taking to the streets, raising barricades, making bonfires, setting vehicles on fire in some cases and attacking shops selling luxury goods, as well as the court building, laying barbed wire and glass to stop the passage of the brutal body of police, that finally arrived, capturing even children of 11 years of age and using heavy arms [...]"

"The social movement in Cochabamba, which includes coca growers, demands the abolition of parliament and the formation of a popular assembly [...]"

"The iron resistance of the cocaleros movement is partly explained by the flexible organization it practices, being based on horizontal, communitarian traditions of the ayilu and ayni, which have a self-managing tradition.

"A similar organization has also been developed by the natives of the plateau, who this week have added to the mobilizations by cutting the routes, together with farmers of other regions [...]" (The full text of this communiqué can be found at [www.infshop.org/inews](http://www.infshop.org/inews) by checking the South America topics.)

The struggle in Bolivia has several interesting factors. It is a struggle of all of groups of the exploited, each with their specific problems and experiences of exploitation; but recognizing their struggle in the struggle of the others, they act in solidarity with one another. Furthermore, since the resurgence of struggle in 2000, the method of the struggle has been predominantly that of autonomous direct action. There is evidence that these factors are beginning to promote the development of a revolutionary intelligence, an increasing quickness in seeing through the reformist illusions that could recuperate the struggle, as is evidenced by the call for the abolition of parliament and the development of popular assemblies which could be a way of self-organizing life and the struggle (as long as formalization and the politics that tends to bring are carefully avoided). In relation to this, it is particularly interesting that the traditional informal and non-hierarchical social organizations of many of the native farmers have provided a basis for organizing their struggle along the same lines. Although the communiqué from Juventudes Libertarias did not go into details about why the border post shared with Argentina was attacked, it certainly expresses a potential for

the opening of active international solidarity between the insurgent exploited in Bolivia and those struggling in Argentina.

But, though it seems that the coherence of the struggle in Bolivia is increasing, it still seems to be critical only of the bureaucratic organization of unions, not of unionism itself, and an examination of insurrections going back at least as far as the revolutionary movement of the 1930's in Spain shows that unions have always played a compromising role that has been a key factor in undermining several uprisings (including the Spanish revolution, sacrificed to an "anti-fascist" coalition, and May '68 in France). Furthermore, Juventudes Libertarias mention leaders of various movements who keep the fight "on the level of revenge which eliminates all historical perspective" from the struggle. Nonetheless, the movement is young and strong, and appears to be gaining in perception.

human existence. The old Marxist idea that development of the forces of production would bring about the objective necessity for communism no longer makes sense (even many Marxists now reject this progressivist perspective), unless one means by this, that the havoc wreaked by the industrial/cybernetic juggernaut will make it necessary to destroy the civilization of capital and the state in order for us avoid the parade of ever more devastating catastrophes and the destruction of life. But in this latter sense, it is not a determined inevitability, but a necessity to break out of the habits of acceptance and obedience that one is speaking about. Thus, it is a question of choice, of volition. As one comrade put it, it is not so much revolutionary consciousness, but revolutionary will that the exploited need to develop. The current social order continues not because conditions are not ripe for its destruction (they are, in fact, well past rotting), but because refusal remains isolated and limited, because most people prefer the security of their misery to the unknown of insurrection and freedom.

An anarchist economic analysis would have to include, along with a serious analysis of the relationship of power and wealth, an analysis of the volitional in the continued reproduction of the economy. It is here that the role of desire, of aspirations, of utopian dreams in the development of an insurrectional practice can become an integral part of our analysis, where the poetry of revolt encounters the theory of revolution.



## INSURRECTION IN ARGENTINA

mental constructs that can be useful tools for developing an understanding of relationships. In other words, they are not entities that can act for themselves.

Since “laws” of physics general refer to relationships between entities that, as far as we can tell, have no volition, these “laws” can be applied – to the extent to which they are useful – without taking individuality into account. But in dealing with social relationships – the activities and relationships between individuals with dreams, desires, passions and wills – the volitional aspect cannot be ignored without losing one of the most significant aspects of our situation, one of the most important tools for understanding social reality.

Taking the volitional aspect of social relationships into account removes some assumptions that often appear in Marxist analyses. First of all, one can no longer speak of situations that are objectively revolutionary or objectively non-revolutionary situations. Rather one can only speak in terms of situations in which uprisings are more likely to occur and those in which they are less likely to occur, situations in which uprisings are more likely to flower into revolutionary transformation and those in which they are less likely to do so. But in recognizing the reality of the human will, the capacity to defy circumstances, not only individually, but also collectively, is always there. Thus, as well, one of the more disgusting conceptions of vulgar Marxism – the idea that capitalism, industrialism and the consequent immiseration of the vast majority of creatures on this planet are a necessary development in order to realize communism – is exposed for the determinist ideology that it is.

Once we recognize that all social relationships are the activities of individuals in association with each other, it becomes clear that the continuation of the present social order relies on the willingness of individuals to continue to act and relate in ways that reproduce it. Of course, in order to destroy this order, the choice to refuse the current existence must necessarily become collective, ultimately on a global scale. But from what would this collective refusal arise? The economic and productive forces have developed to the point that they are tearing the planet apart. In fact, any further development of these forces seem to guarantee the absolute destruction of the possibility of a free

In early January, it was difficult to know how events in Argentina would develop. From here in the United States, it was still possible to think that the rebellion there was just a momentary flare-up sparked by the intensification of the economic crisis that Argentina has been experiencing for years, but the struggle continues and is developing in very interesting directions.

Although things were fairly quiet during the first few days of Duhalde’s presidency, this is probably not (as AP and Reuter’s would have us think) due to any real expectation of change. The people of Argentina were far too familiar with the difference between the populist rhetoric of the Peronists and their actual policies. By January 11, demonstrations were a daily occurrence often involving attacks on banks, ATM machines, government offices and the homes of politicians. The poor, the unemployed, farmers, workers and the so-called middle classes—in other words, the full range of those exploited, excluded or marginalized by capital—have been carrying out such actions throughout the country.

But one of the most interesting aspects of this uprising is the apparently spontaneous development of the neighborhood assemblies. According to reports I’ve read, these assemblies first arose on December 20 in neighborhoods in Buenos Aires as a way of coordinating the various activities of struggle. By mid-February, assemblies had arisen in cities through out the country. They continue to function in an informal manner, as a tool of the people in revolt for coordinating their activity. The Argentine Libertarian Federation, an anarchist group, describes these assemblies in an undated article that appeared in translation on [www.infoshop.org/inews](http://www.infoshop.org/inews) on February 26 under the title, “Argentina: between poverty and protest”:

“The destruction of savings through the devaluation of the currency, and the increase in unemployment, hunger and neglect have given rise to a form of struggle in our country beyond the sphere of established politics and public life: the cacerolazos and the neighborhood assemblies. These neighborhood assemblies and their committees have been formed by the unemployed, the underemployed, and people marginalized and excluded from

capitalist society: including professionals, workers, small retailers, artists, craftspeople, all of them also neighbors.<sup>1</sup> Each assembly has its own characteristics, but non-delegation of power, self-management, horizontal struggle and opposition to voting are libertarian socialist slogans one hears frequently.<sup>2</sup> We should also point out that these neighborhood assemblies, which meet on corners in several districts of Buenos Aires [...] also hold weekly coordinating meetings in Parque Centenario (Centennial Park). These have become invaluable spaces for debate and deliberation, not only because of the large numbers attending, but also because of the subjects brought up and considered. The meetings are open and anyone who wishes can participate, so often one hears self-serving speeches by political or union leaders. But the attendees have learned to pick out this kind of ‘cooked’ verbiage.”

From this description, the assemblies appear to remain in the sphere of informality—there is no membership, no ideological framework and no political program upon which they are based. Thus, the assemblies remain a fluid tool for organizing the political struggle without hierarchy or politics. Nonetheless, there are reports that in some assemblies, one hears the “language of party politics”, statements like this: “To get out of this crisis requires more politics, but real politics.” [emphasis added—editor] In addition, certain assemblies have apparently developed “executive committees” to draft agendas for the assemblies—a step toward formalization that could open the door to hierarchy and

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<sup>1</sup> If this listing of those “marginalized and excluded from capitalist society” seems strange to U.S. and European readers, we need to remember that the freeze on withdrawals from banks pushed the so-called middle classes into a state of economic marginalization and desperation comparable to that of 25% of the Argentine population that is unemployed.—editor

<sup>2</sup> The description of these expressions of the practical refusal of hierarchical relationships and formalization as “libertarian socialist slogans” seems to me to be rather opportunistic. The call for such a methodology of struggle does not reflect any political program, not even that of “libertarian socialists”, but rather the refusal of politics and the active desire to replace it with the autonomous self-organization of life.—editor

## **SOME NOTES ON MARXIST ANALYSIS: For Discussion and Debate Toward the Development of a Deeper Anarchist Social Analysis**

Often it seems that anarchists lack much in the way of economic theory, leading to conceptions of revolutionary change that seem to be largely schemes for a change in the form of social management rather than a total transformation of existence. Even anarcho-communist visions often seem more like economic schemes than poetic explorations of possibilities. What little serious economic theory is developed in anarchist circles seems to take the form of half-digested Marxism in which it is difficult to see any specifically anarchist aspects. I do not claim to have a deep knowledge of Marx. I have read *The Communist Manifesto* and the first volume of *Capital* as well as a few fragments here and there, but I have read a great deal by Marxists. There certainly may be many analytical tools that anarchists can steal from Marxism, but we need to do so critically. This article is intended to open up discussion in this area and deals with one particular problem I have with much Marxist analysis. There are others as well.

Marxist analysis is aimed at a revolutionary understanding of the social relationships of capitalism – as such, it is an attempt to understand the activities and relationships of people. Marx developed his theory and methodology to provide the movement toward communism with a materialistic/scientific basis, in opposition to the quasi-mystical basis behind so many earlier communist ideas.

Unfortunately, the mechanistic basis of modern science, particularly in its 19<sup>th</sup> century manifestation, all too readily eradicates what is living from any situation under analysis in order to make it fit into the equations developed. Thus, in a great deal of Marxist theory, the fact that it is relationships between people that are being analyzed seems to be forgotten. Instead, the activities of productive forces, value, surplus labor, etc. end up being analyzed with the reality of human interaction disappearing beneath the economic concepts. But like gravity, evolution, entropy, inertia, etc., these concepts are not material realities, but

gelistic project, to place numbers and visibility in the spectacle above the concrete attempt to live out their revolt and to create their struggle as their own. This leads to an embrace of that capitalistic sort of pragmatism in which the ultimate aims have been lost in the striving for immediate effect – the methodology of the advertiser. To counter this, it is necessary to clarify once again what the anarchist project actually is. It is not an attempt to win followers to a particular belief system. It is not an attempt to make this society a little more bearable. Rather it is an attempt to create a world in which every individual is free to pursue the creation of his life on her own terms in free association with others of her choosing, and thus also to destroy every institution of domination and exploitation, every hierarchy including the invisible one's that grow out of evangelistic and programmatic schemes. With this in mind, we can carry out our struggle by those means that reflect the world we desire and, thus, make our lives here and now fuller, more passionate and more joyful.

the development of a political leadership claiming to represent the struggle.

Thus one important task for Argentine anarchists and anti-authoritarian revolutionaries to consider is exposing and opposing any political or union leader who opportunistically tries to use the assemblies to further his or her own career or who attempts to channel the activities of the assemblies into “the sphere of established politics”. In addition, it is important to oppose all tendencies toward formalization, to stand firmly against any proposal for re-organizing the assemblies in a way that would provide a framework for politicians and self-styled leaders to impose their agendas. I am certain the anarchists in Argentina are quite aware of these dangers and quite vigilant. And I suspect that many who do not call themselves anarchists are equally hostile to anyone who wants to claim to represent them. But for those who have asked me in the past what I mean when I speak of anarchists intervening in a struggle in a way that fits in with their aims, this is precisely the type of activity I have in mind. The aim of the anarchist revolutionary is to recreate life free of domination, exploitation or hierarchy, to develop the self-organization of existence without politics or formalization, without the state or economy, to destroy everything that stands in the way of the full realization of each one of us as unique individuals. And in the course of a struggle like that in Argentina, this aim expresses itself in vehement rejection of all politicians and leaders, even those who claim to support the struggle. After all, though repression is certainly the greatest external threat to the insurrection, the greatest internal threat is its recuperation by politicians and union leaders who are also enemies of real liberation since they too prefer the passivity of the exploited. That is why they offer to act on the behalf of those in struggle.

But for now it appears that the struggle in Argentina is opening. People are exploring and experimenting with new ways of relating and organizing life, venturing tentatively into the unknown. To quote the Argentine Libertarian Federation once again:

“Each of our neighbor's expressions becomes a communitarian thought, charged with questions, where the posing of questions is what counts the most, not their imagined answers. Today we can

say joyfully that words and direct action have begun to coincide. There is reason to hope that all Argentines now know for certain who has been blocking our freedoms, excluding people, forcing our relatives and friends into exile and mortgaging the future of our children and grandchildren.

“Now the fear in our society has turned into courage.”

smash television cameras and attack journalists have a much better idea of how to deal with the misrepresentations of the media.

The economic blackmail of capitalist society will force us to make some compromises in terms of how we get the things we need to live (even robbing a bank is a compromise, since, in fact, we'd rather live without money and banks or the system that creates them). There is not currently a strong enough movement of social subversion to counteract this, one in which the taking and sharing of goods is a widespread, festive practice. But in terms of our various social and personal struggles against this society, no such coercion exists, and one can choose to struggle as an anarchist – refusing to turn to any of the institutions of domination to accomplish the tasks we consider necessary to accomplish the social transformation we desire. Such a refusal means rejecting all the various ideologies and practices of the capitalist cult of efficiency for its own sake – the quantitative illusions that judges a movement in terms of numbers of participants, the pragmatic acceptance of “whatever works”, the fetish of organization which creates invisible hierarchies with its theoretical and practical programs to which people are to adhere. Thus, from an anarchist perspective, the phrase “by any means necessary” becomes counter-revolutionary. It is the opening of the door to the Reign of Terror or the slaughter at Kronstadt.

So if it is to mean anything when we call ourselves anarchists, we need to keep this primary principle in mind: our struggle against this world must be completely our own. Of course, this is no simple task. It requires a the use of practical imagination in order to figure out how to carry out the various tasks that we place before ourselves. It requires a willingness to make a constant critical assessment of what we are doing with the refusal to make excuses. It requires a willingness to recognize our current limits while, of course, perpetually seeking to expand *our* possibilities.

To a great extent, the term “anarchist” has been drained of meaning due to its increasing popularity as a self-description since the fall of the traditional left and particularly since the demonstrations in Seattle at the end of 1999. But this loss of meaning has also been advanced by anarchists who have been in the movement for years, who have chosen to embrace an evan-

to represent the people in struggle or with any form of hierarchy or representation is always the death of the struggle against all domination. Such compromises are the points where either the old power begins to establish itself (as in France in 1968) or the new power begins to take hold (as in Russia after the October 1917 revolution). So this principle, in fact, has a solid foundation.

But this principle is also the primary distinction between an *anarchist* revolutionary perspective and any other revolutionary perspective. All forms of communism call for the eventual withering away of the state. But an anarchist perspective recognizes that the state and every other institution must be rejected from the start, because institutions usurp the capacity of people for self-organization. And it is here that the anarchist wager – the staking of one’s life spoken of above – comes into play. Having not merely called for the eventual end of the state, the institutions of domination and all hierarchy and representation, but having also rejected them here and now as means for carrying out one’s revolutionary struggle, one has no choice but to actually pursue a methodology that relies only on oneself and one’s trusted comrades, a methodology based in autonomy and self-organization, direct action in its true sense – i.e., acting directly to achieve one’s aims for oneself – and total conflict with the ruling order.

Quite clearly there is no place in such a choice for voting, for petitioning the state, for litigation, for promoting legislation of any sort or for fooling oneself that any means by which one legally gains one’s survival in any way reflects an anarchist or revolutionary perspective. But to fully comprehend what it means to carry out one’s struggle in a self-organized manner, it is necessary to recognize the full extent of the institutions of domination. If one refuses to vote because one rejects the idea of being represented, then logically one would also refuse to talk to New York Times journalists or television reporters for precisely the same reason. The image they paint of the anarchist is also a representation, and the argument that we should talk to them in order to put out a more accurate representation follows the same logic as that which calls us to vote in order to get better representation in the halls of government. The anarchists in Greece who

## THERE ARE NO NATURAL CATASTROPHES

(This is based on a text written by anonymous anti-authoritarians at the time of a major flood in Italy)

More than twenty dead, about ten missing, 40,000 evacuated. And hundreds of millions of dollars in damages. As if it had not been raindrops, but bombs falling on their heads. As if it had not been a flood, but a war, devastating their homes. In fact this was so. But the enemy that struck so harshly was not the river or the mountain. These are not, in fact, weapons of vengeance for a nature that we are accustomed to think of as hostile. The war that has been going on for centuries now is not between humanity and the natural environment as so many would like to have us believe in order to guarantee our obedience. Our enemy is our own activity. That is the war. This civilization is the war. Nature is simple its principle battlefield. We caused these powerful downpours by transforming the atmospheric climate with our industrial activity. Our activity has eroded the embankments of the rivers, trashing their beds and deforesting their shores. We have made bridges collapse by building them with defective materials chosen in order to win the contract. We have devastated entire villages by building houses in high-risk areas. We have bred jackals who look for profit in every situation. We have neglected to take precaution measures against such events, being only concerned with opening new sports arenas, shopping malls and metro and rail lines.

And how are *we* responsible? We have allowed all this to happen repeatedly, delegating the decisions that affect our lives to others. And now, after having devastated the entire planet in order to move faster, eat faster, work faster, make money faster, watch TV faster and “live” faster, do we still dare to complain when we discover we also die faster?

There are no natural catastrophes, only social catastrophes. If we don’t want to continue to be victims of unpredictable earthquakes, exceptional floods, unknown viruses and whatever else,

our only choice is to act against our enemy: our way of life, our values, our habits, our culture, our indifference. It is not against nature that we so urgently need to declare war, but against this society and all its institutions. If we are not able to invent a different existence and fight to realize it, we are preparing ourselves to die in the existence that others have decided and imposed. And to die in silence, just as we have always lived.

## ON BEING WHO WE SAY WE ARE

I call myself an anarchist not because the word sounds good, nor because it will make me appear more radical, nor even merely because I desire the disappearance of the state (even Lenin claimed that he ultimately desired this much... when the time was ripe). I call myself an anarchist because I have chosen to go about my struggle against the world of domination in a particular way. In these times when the degradation of language drains words of their content, undermining the capacity for meaningful dialogue, it is particularly important for anarchists to maintain the significance of this term.

It has been rightly said that “anarchism is not a concept that can be locked up in a word like a gravestone”. But this is not because it can mean anything, but rather because, as the same writer said, “it is a way of conceiving life, and life... is not something definitive: it is a stake we must play day after day.” The anarchist is one who chooses to play this stake on her own terms to the extent that this is possible. In particular, the anarchist is one who chooses to carry on his *struggle* on her own terms, without any room for compromise or negotiation with the ruling institutions. This refusal does not stem from a desire for purity, as some have tried to claim, but from the recognition that any compromise on the field of struggle would be a further relinquishment of the lives that have already been stolen from us, the lives we are struggling to take back.

Perhaps the most basic anarchist principle, the one from which all the others spring, is the recognition that freedom can only be realized *in freedom*, that self-determination – that is to say, the creation of lives that are truly *our own* – can only be won through a struggle that is truly *our own*. This is what is meant when we say that our ends must exist in the means we use to achieve them.

This principle is not merely a fine, ethical stance. Above all, it is a hard lesson that has been brought home over and over again in every revolutionary experience. Compromise with the ruling institutions, with the so-called oppositional institutions that claim

**The only certainty possible** is that if dialogue must be concrete to exist, the place where it is practiced and the way in which it is practiced must be equally concrete.

**If dialogue** is staking oneself, then we can stake ourselves only with those who, like us, have very little to lose from a change, those who live the same social condition, exploitation. Any other place of dialogue is illusory. Claiming to dialogue with the masters, for example, makes no sense, because they have an entire world to lose.

**If we want** this staking of oneself to be a collective thing and at the same time profoundly individual, the only way we have for dialoguing is the direct and horizontal way, without delegation. It is not possible to dialogue, then, with the structures that are organized in a vertical manner in which, due to leaders, sub-leaders and spokespeople, some decide for others. Not even with those parties and unions that talk of being on the side of the exploited, let us be clear.

**Only** on these simple conditions, that have nothing to do with democracy, is it possible to dialogue. Only on these conditions will we find the words for doing so.

## THE REFUSAL OF REPRESENTATION

*“To represent or be represented is a degradation, a reduction, both in the sense of symbolic culture and in terms of power.”—John Zerzan*

Of course, it is inevitable in contemporary society that the mass media will broadcast its representations of anarchists and anarchy. And it is equally inevitable that these representations will be distorted and inaccurate, serving the interests of the ruling regime. After all, mass media is part of the power structure.

For this reason, it is as ridiculous to cry over the misrepresentations in the mass media as it is to make a fuss about the excessive use of violence by the cops or about political scandals. As anarchists, we should realize that it is the very existence of cops, governments and mass media that we oppose, not just their excesses.

In this light, attempts to manipulate media representation of anarchists have to be seen in the same light as attempts to hold the police and politicians accountable—that is, as reformist activity. Attempts by anarchists to manipulate the image of the anarchist in the media stem from an idealistic, evangelistic conception of how revolt develops and spreads. It is assumed, in this conception, that people first come to adhere to some ideology of revolt and that this ideology moves them to rise up. It, thus, becomes important to win as many people as possible to anarchist ideas in order to move them to revolt in our way. We need not even take into account the fact that historically not one revolt has started from an essentially ideological basis in order to see the fallacy of this way of thinking. To view revolt in this way is to keep it in the realm of the quantitative, the ideological and the representational—that is, within the bounds of the methodology of this society. It is not only impossible for us to accomplish the anarchist project in this way, but when we use these sorts of methods, we have already defeated ourselves by transforming our lives and projects into images, into mere representations that are, indeed, degradations.

The fact that millions of people may see the New York Times or network television does not mean that we should seek to get an “accurate” representation in these media. An accurate representation of a living struggle against domination or of anything truly living and passionate is impossible; inevitably what will be seen will be a deformation in the interests of domination. Even when we turn our own means of communication—our publications, pirate radio stations, etc.—into tools for propaganda, ways of winning people over, this degradation starts to creep in, because instead of being ourselves and acting on our own terms, we begin to represent ourselves and act to win the hearts and minds of others. This is indeed degradation, as revolution and anarchy cease to be our life struggle and instead become a political program in search of adherents.

So if we are to refuse all representation, we must start by refusing to cooperate with any attempt to represent us, as well as refusing to make ourselves into an image, a representation. Though we can't prevent the media from representing anarchists and anarchy, we can refuse to play along with their game, just as we can refuse to vote or to join the military. These abstentions are all refusals to cooperate with the power structure, refusals to let our lives and activities be defined on their terms

To look at the matter from another direction, striving for self-management of the current social order is both ridiculous and counter-revolutionary, since real, full self-determination of our lives requires the destruction of this order. In the same way the attempt to self-manage one's media image also runs counter to any truly revolutionary project, because it places one's struggle squarely within the framework of representation in its most flagrant and degraded form. As with the state, the cops, capital—as with all institutions of domination—the only revolutionary relationship an anarchist can have with the mass media is a conflictual one clearly aimed at its destruction and brooking no compromise. In relation to the media, this is the minimum meaning of the refusal of representation.

## A BIT OF SILENCE...

*(from Il Viaggio, number 3, January 2002, slightly revised)*

**A bit of silence**, we implore you. Let's allow our steps as eternal travelers that have landed by choice or through necessity on the streets of the city to speak.

**Let's listen to them:** they are steps of galley-slaves. So much is lacking if we want them to become the steps of people who are freeing themselves, and what is lacking above all is the capacity to truly speak with each other, to dialogue. No, we are not referring to the empty and impotent chattering in which we all too often lose ourselves. It has nothing to do, then with the continuous bawl of the television. Dialogue is a concrete thing: it is staking oneself once and for all, it is speaking about the life that we live because we are disposed to change it. We have as much need of this as of the air that we breathe.

**But democracy** takes it away from us, this capacity to dialogue, rendering us noisily deaf and dumb.

**From one side** it affirms freedom of speech, from the other it maintains and deepens social division, that is to say, exploitation and authority. In unfortunate words: the governments and masters are deciding everyone's future; the exploited are free to say as much as they want, as long as, in reality, they can decide nothing. And when speech is separated from its concrete power to change the world, the words themselves are emptied, they lose force and meaning. Deluding ourselves that we are participating in decisions from which we are actually excluded, we lose the capacity to formulate discussions that are not empty and powerless. It is as if we kept a leg immobilized for years and years until it atrophied; afterwards, someone could tell us, “now, walk!” We would no longer walk, we would have lost the capacity and the whole idea of walking. How much space still exists within us for imagining words that change life, then? What is left of our capacity to say and understand them? We don't know with certainty.



the same light. It would be like seeing everyone that uses electricity as complicit in the nuclear industry, an idea that in the end becomes an easy excuse for the holders of power who want to make us feel like their accomplices, with the logic that for one's personal good a collective harm is unavoidable. A logic of the same sort that claims that for the collective good of society – in this case the progress, security and convenience brought by the telephones – it is necessary to sacrifice with an individual harm, the antenna over one's head. In this way, it becomes difficult to rebel any more, feeling on the one hand complicit and on the other, egoistic in one's demands.

So it becomes necessary to understand the snares of psychological terror, because new passages are revealing themselves in which new channels of resistance have opened. Resistance that is, furthermore, quite widespread with innumerable committees and individual actions against the antennae throughout the territory. A struggle that, if it usually has partial objectives, is, nonetheless, frequently carried forward with a deep personal involvement, setting aside sterile and useless institutional methods like the collection of signatures and the appeal to politicians. In reality, one sees road blockades, climbing on roofs or scaffolding with fastenings and lowering placards as well as the blockage of work at the installations. Moreover, some have acted under the cover of night with the heat of fire to destroy these hateful antennae. These last actions are not distinct or separate from the struggle in which they arise. Indeed, let's leave the distinction between "ecoterrorist" and "honest citizen" – useful for dividing a movement of opposition and justifying acts of repression against those who do not disassociate themselves from a practice of sabotage, but rather recognize its importance to the struggle – to the infamous journalists, politicians and armchair environmentalists.

We are interested in a struggle from the base, without hierarchy, specialization or compromise. We think that this is an area in which a partial struggle could become a point of departure for a generalized critique of power, and a consequent practice in which each one chooses the method and moment that he or she prefers.

## AVOIDING MORAL VANGUARDISM

*"What power fears most is anonymous, generalized rebellion. [...] by the use of monograms and programmes we see the creation of an identity that separates revolutionaries from the rest of the exploited, making them visible to power and putting themselves in a condition that lends itself to representation."*  
—from *At Daggers Drawn*

Anarchists have generally agreed that a world free of authority, hierarchy and domination could not be created using vanguardist means. Thus, anarchists have usually avoided the formation of political parties or similar organizational forms to "lead the people" to revolt.\* But other subtle forms of vanguardism can easily creep into our methods and practice if care is not taken to avoid them.

Probably the most widespread form of vanguardism in anarchist circles is that which proposes a kind of evangelistic educational practice intended to spread anarchist ideas among the exploited classes. But I have discussed the problems with this approach before and want to examine another form of subtle vanguardism: moral vanguardism.

In the struggle against the institutions of domination, attack is essential. The social relationships that enforce this social order must be overturned, and this requires the destruction of the projects and structures of the ruling order. While it is true that in order to move toward social insurrection and revolution, such attacks must expand and become generalized, it is absurd to use this necessity as an excuse for doing nothing now. Facing this social reality that is impoverishing our lives and poisoning this world, every act of revolt is justified. But where widespread social insurrection does not exist, it is of great importance not to

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\*I have little knowledge of the nature of the "Liberal Party" started by the Magon brothers in Mexico in the early 1900's as part of that revolution, but the "Organizational Platform" developed in 1926 by the group *Dielo Trouda* had vanguardist connotations clear enough to cause most anarchists of that time to oppose it.

create a role or image of what one comrade called “specialists in destruction” and “specialists in revolution” for ourselves.

There are a number of factors that can play into creating this specialist role. Since acts of vandalism, sabotage and destructive attack are, in fact, relatively common responses to alienation, frustration with the realities of social existence and boredom with a life where most relationships are commodified and most adventures outlawed, it is clearly not the fact that conscious revolutionaries and anarchists carry out such acts that leads to this specialization. Rather the problem lies in the way in which social, political or moral agenda behind the attacks are dealt with.

Exploited individuals without a conscious revolutionary perspective who attack something that diminishes their existence are acting only for themselves in the immediate present and so feel no need to communicate the reasons for their actions. Anarchists and revolutionaries—though hopefully also acting for themselves—carry out their actions in the context of an ongoing project of revolt, and so they often have reasons for wanting to communicate why they took a particular action. So communiqués, signed or not, are issued explaining why a particular act of sabotage, vandalism, arson and so on occurred.

Just as it would be too simple to merely reject this sort of action, it would also be too simple to reject the use of communiqués. In specific circumstances, attacks of this sort with a corresponding explanation may be quite significant in the expansion of social struggle. But if such communications create and/or reinforce a separation between conscious anarchists and the exploited, they become an obstruction in the path of generalized revolt and self-organization.

In the United States, the most common attacks made by anarchists and revolutionaries in recent years have involved the sabotage of environmentally destructive enterprises, animal experimentation and the development of genetically engineered organisms. Communiqués have played a major part in making these actions known. At the same time, the wording of the communiqués, the ways in which they are signed and even the ways in which the actions themselves are communicated often leave a general impression of groups that specialize in the use of sabo-

ties are increasing and more and more people die without being able to clearly link it to a precise cause. Because there are thousands of causes. The invisible but omnipresent harmfulness strikes everyone, and no one escapes from it.

But in this climate, some manifest certainties also emerge, as always. First of all, that neither the reassurances of the experts nor the legal limits placed on the potency of the transmitters will protect us from electro-smog. The latter and the technical organizations appointed to their measurement are solely price-fixing decrees useful for giving the appearance of a situation under control and pacifying the most enflamed minds. We will never grow tired of confirming that we can never expect the protection of our health from that which poisons us: the state and capital in their technologically advanced form. And it is with this conviction, combined with the desire not to see the antennae altered but to make them disappear completely, that we must animate the struggle against the antennae. Then the struggle would have to have different contents and methods.

Also the antennae do not just represent an assault on our health, but are also realizations of a development of technological society toward new forms of economic expansion in alienating communications and control. We must not, in fact, forget that it is not just our phone calls that travel through these waves, but also data and information that in their totality form a huge cage in which to enclose us, signals that keep track of us hour after hour, making it indispensable to behave when near an optimum signaling device like the cellular phone.

In a land already polluted by thousands of antennae, they will not hesitate to bring in just as many more for the third generation of cellular phones, capable of transmitting and receiving not just voices and words, but images as well. But among the 45 million Italians who own cell phones, and among the remaining few who still lack one, fear and discontent increases as well about these sources of waves placed in the neighborhood of schools and housing. Of course, a bit of hypocrisy can be seen here in those who don't want electro-smog but at the same time demand optimum reception with their little phones, but it is necessary not to fall into the trap of considering those who manufacture and disseminate what is harmful and those who are induced to use it in

## THE ENEMY IS QUITE VISIBLE

(from *Terra Selvaggio*)

For several years now, even on the level of the mass media, there has been talk about risks connected with the overabundance of electro-magnetic waves in the environment. Though the most frequently mentioned and feared sources are the transmitters for cellular phones, these are certainly not alone, but are merely the latest on the scene. In fact, radio and TV antennae, radar platforms, high tension wires, military stations and dozens of different electrical high tension wires, military stations and dozens of different electrical household appliances have already been disseminating waves for decades that, even if trifling taken singly, together and with continuous exposure could have effects on the health of living beings.

And if these effects are still largely unknown, or absolutely denied with firmness by a few the usual experts, this is no reason for putting one's mind at ease. After all, the greatest fear is that of the unknown. And in this case, the unknown is not just that of the future reversals in our bodies or those of others), of new incurable disease or of the expansion of cancer-caused slaughter, but also in the invisible nature of the poison in question. If the pure and solid dust of DDT was handled without care or apprehension, as, not surprisingly, other substances still are, perhaps because we don't believe that it's possible for something that we can calmly hold in our hands to kill us, the fear of what we don't know and can't see or touch is another thing altogether. Viruses, bacteria and radiation have killed quite enough, at bottom, and none of us could see or feel them, necessarily delegating the knowledge of and defense against them to science and its people. Their lordships love to describe a fear of this kind as irrational in their greed to control it in order to reduce everything to the vision of their rationality; through measurement, screening, legal limits, appeals to an unstoppable progress, the attempt to make every danger scientific in order to render it palatable, rational to be precise, cannot hide the roots planted so thoroughly into this reality: the cases of leukemia, tumors and dozens of other mala-

tage and arson in defense of the earth and its "defenseless" non-human creatures. If the repeated use of specific names in connection with these actions helps to reinforce this image of specialization, what is probably far more significant in separating those who carry out these actions from the exploited and their struggles is the moralistic language that is so frequently used in the communiqués. The image put forth is that of a moral vanguard of earth defenders and animal defenders putting themselves on the line in defense of the defenseless. It may be that most people who are carrying out these actions do not see themselves in this way, but their communiqués often reinforce this image by substituting moral arguments for a thorough analysis of the relationship of these specific aspects of exploitation to the totality of this exploitative society.

*"The fact that the occupiers center the outcome of their actions of self-organization egoistically around themselves is the best guarantee of the authenticity of what they say."*

—from *Against the Legalization of Occupied Spaces*

The various acts of sabotage, vandalism, reappropriation and other forms of revolt carried out by exploited individuals who do not describe themselves as "revolutionary" or "anarchist" have their basis in the very egoist desire to take back their own lives and find their own pleasures and adventures. Often the situation in which such actions take place encourage an expansive egoism in which collective self-organization provides the basis for trust. Those with causes may change their cause at any time – in line with the latest political fad – and will be viewed by most of the exploited like any other politician.

If we anarchists would also act above all for ourselves against our own domination and exploitation, this would provide us with an authentic basis for expressing the reasons behind our actions. If our analyses provide us with a clearer understanding of how and why to act against domination, our actions will, nonetheless, not be those of a vanguard, but of expansive egoists seeking others with whom we can create that that insurrection that will be the collective self-organization of the individual struggle for freedom.

## THE STATE IS ONE

On July 1, the International Criminal Court will begin its activities. Its proclaimed purpose is to prosecute “dictators and war criminals”. Though the Bush administration opposes it and Congress has passed a law forbidding people at all levels of government from cooperating with it, U.S. lawyers’ associations and human rights groups welcome it.

The current U.S. government opposition to the court can only be looked upon as a conflict over jurisdiction. The U.S. government has made it abundantly clear that it favors global policing and prosecution by carrying out numerous police actions around the world, sending in troops to arrest Noriega in order to prosecute and punish him here, making similar threats against Saddam Hussein and going on an extensive military search to track down Osama bin Laden for prosecution. From this, it is clear that the U.S. simply wants no competition in its current role as world cop, prosecutor, judge and jury. After all, a world criminal court may accidentally prosecute a good dictator or a good war criminal. Or, more significantly, this court may claim jurisdiction over bin Laden – and then where would America’s fine civilized tradition of capital punishment come in?

But in my opinion, Bush and his government lackeys are obviously missing the point. Global state institutions are probable among the best defenders of super-state and corporate power. According to one news story, this new court “closes a gap in international law by holding individuals, not nations or armies, responsible for the most horrific crimes. Here the capitalist/state version of “individualism” is upheld. States, corporations, the current social order are not responsible for the atrocities inherent in their functioning. Rather specific individuals (each more or less responsible for choosing to carry out the role assigned them by the social order) will provide scapegoats. Specific military and political officials (each, indeed, more or less contemptible) who have become a burden to the great powers will take the rap. Thus, once again, the “individualism” proclaimed so loudly by the democratic states acts as a tool for upholding the power of

## (A FEW CONSIDERATIONS)

One of the greatest constraints of this world, of course, is money. A mediation that is not a bridge, but rather a fence between us and what we need to create our lives. It is money that compels us to work (or else to depend on the work of others) and so to sacrifice our lives for survival. The real attack on money must necessarily be an attack on work – that is on the society of work and commodity exchange. This attack starts with a decision to live on one’s own terms. Now once this decision is made (and preferably with a few good friends) the first task is to gather resources, to bring together the tools that are necessary for projecting one’s life as one sees fit. Here there can be no moralizing, no external rules for acceptable methods for gathering tools; there is only the principle of autonomy, of self-determination. The gathering of theoretical and material tools, along with the development of relationships of affinity, provides the basis for the creation of projected lives, and once these tools are gathered, who knows where a small group dedicated to living out their lives in revolt could go? And who knows how widely such passionate fire could spread?

## A DEMOCRATIC REMEDY

Electronic bracelets have been used for several years a means for monitoring individuals placed under house arrest or granted limited parole. They are generally attached to the ankle. This monitoring device is applied to prisoners who can then complete their sentence outside the prison walls while remaining under control through the monitors of the central office of the police that are connected to the device. A democratic solution that satisfies everyone: those prisoners who were sentenced for minor crimes and instead of rotting in the crowded prisons of the homeland can do so in their own house; the citizens who no longer read about robberies carried out by prisoners released at the end of their sentence or into house arrest in the police reports in the daily papers; the state that solves the problem of prisoner control and the overcrowding of prisons. To the humanitarian sensibility of anyone who fears that this measure could pave the road toward a future in which the individual would no longer have any value except as mechanical appendages constantly monitored by power, we respond that the democratic project of ratification and control is before the eyes of all. Free citizens certainly don't escape control when they use credit cards or ATM's, when they telephone from home or a phone booth, when they travel with the cell phone, when they watch television or connect with the internet. So the prisoners have a more annoying, more distinctive piece of tinsel work, but nothing so exclusive. This is the greatness of democracy. Forming replicants from differentiated circuits. Creating the maladies of living and finding the remedies through sweet death.

—*Canariah*

the state and capital, and so for suppressing real individual freedom.

The International Criminal Court, like the United Nations, the World Court and similar bodies, is an international state institution, which, like all state institutions, strives to maintain social peace by any means necessary. It clearly shows that like capital, the state is global, like capital, the state is one.

## NO ACT OF REVOLT IS FUTILE

Class struggle exists in all of the individual and collective acts of revolt in which small portions of life are taken back or small portions of the apparatus of domination and exploitation are obstructed, damaged or destroyed. In a significant sense, there are no isolated acts of revolt. All such acts are responses to the social situation, and many involve some level of implicit complicity, indicating some level of collective struggle. Consider, for example the spontaneous, mostly unspoken organization of the reappropriation of goods and sabotage of the work process that goes on at many workplaces; this informal coordination of subversive activity carried out in the interest of each individual involved is the best anarchist conception of collective activity, because this sort of collectivity exists to serve the interests and desires of each of the individuals involved in reappropriating their lives and carries within it a conception of different ways of relating free of exploitation and domination. But even apparently lone acts of revolt have their social aspects and are part of the general struggle of the exploited. Both for this reason and because of the personal sense of joy and satisfaction that the individual finds in such acts, it needs to be recognized that *no act of revolt is futile*.

Capital, the state and their technological apparatus constitute a worldwide social order of domination. It is therefore necessary for the rebellious struggles of individuals to come together in order to create social revolution. Since even individual acts of revolt have a social aspect and are often more collective in nature than they appear due to implicit complicity, such a development is not so far-fetched should the right circumstances arise. But to be very clear, I am not talking about waiting until the right circumstances occur to act (all too often an excuse for passivity), but rather about seizing the opportunity in the ongoing practice of revolt of taking it further whenever one can.

Social revolution is a rupture with our current mode of existence, an upheaval of social conditions and relationships in which the functioning of political and economic institutions break down. As I see it, the aim of anarchists in this situation is to struggle for the complete destruction of these institutions—the

logical. In so doing the aims of this sort of critique get lost. When the real ideas and practices of individuals get lost behind the battles of the ideological giants, theory and practice are blunted, worn down to fit into the various ideological constructs that represent the sides of this battle. Real affinities and differences are overshadowed by the necessity to adhere to a side in these false debates. And, indeed, we are all called upon to take sides, even when we find none of the options appealing and would rather simply go our own way creating our projects of revolt on our own terms. And, indeed, only by walking away from the false debates can we enter back into real critical interaction with those willing to consciously refuse the methods for avoiding real debate.

Of course, this division of critical activity into three areas was simply done for simplicity's sake. In fact, these aspects of critique are intimately united each flowing into the other as part of the transformative activity of the struggle against this society. To maintain the vitality of our critical activity, of our analyses, our debates and our creation of theory, we must carefully avoid every tendency toward the reification of these activities. We must avoid the idea that we have found the answer, that we need no longer explore or question, but need only convince others that we are right and that they should follow our perspective (how far off is this from being leaders and authorities?). I am not suggesting that we should lack confidence in our ideas, but rather that we should continue to explore and question everything – including our own ideas and practice – with a cruel and incisive eye. Because it is our life and our freedom that is at stake.

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state, property, work, commodity exchange, the technology of social control, every institution of domination—in order to open the field of possibilities for self-organization. Thus, the revolutionary project is essentially negative and destructive. Our aim is not to create counter-institutions to replace the state and capital, but to put an end to the current global situation in which a few determine the conditions under which everyone lives, so that every individual becomes free to create life on their own terms in association with whom they choose. So it is not a political struggle, an attempt to put a political program into effect, but rather a *social* struggle. It is fitting for a movement that opposes all hierarchy and leadership that we should not offer models for a post-revolutionary society. In fact, ideally, there would be no “after the revolution”, but rather an ongoing tension of expanding possibilities, a fluidity of social and asocial relationships that refuse to congeal into institutions but rather center around the creation of desires, interests, projects and passions always based on the conscious refusal to be ruled. Thus, I am talking of a total transformation on all levels of existence that never ends, a leap into the unknown of freedom that offers no guarantees except those that may be found in the resolute determination of every individual never to be ruled again.

## AGAINST COMPROMISE

Compromise is always a matter of renunciation, of giving something up. Therefore, those who portray the refusal of compromise as a closing down of possibilities are perpetrating a swindle, a precise reversal of reality. Compromise functions through reduction. Each individual gives up a bit of herself here, a crumb there, and on and on until all that was, in fact, individual is worn away, and everyone is a cipher equal to each other, an equality defined as each being nothing.

The only possibilities that can exist in such a situation are those that are acceptable (or at least bearable) to all. In this way, the possibility of exploring anything new, any initiatives that open out to elsewhere, is subject to the exigencies of the survival of the group as a whole. Every group formed through compromise, through coming to an agreement by renouncing differences exists in a precarious balance. The repressed singularity of each of its members surges below the surface. And so the unknown—whether a catastrophe striking from the outside or a new initiative from within the group, a proposal to experiment—is always a threat to such groups. Therefore, for the most part, they avoid experimentation, stick to the agreed upon program and only carry out “initiatives” that are really just simple repetitions, maybe with minor adjustments, of what they have always done, in other words, rituals. Doing anything else could create a rupture that would allow the full deluge of difference, of individual desires, passions, ideas and dreams, to burst forth actively in the world with all the conflict this would inevitably involve.

The groups that are brought together by a coercive necessity imposed by the ruling order—nation-states, workplaces, bureaucracies, etc.—maintain their balance through laws, rules, chains of command, methods of discipline and correction, punishments and methods of isolating those who do not conform. Because the state and capital do not allow any “outside” to exist anywhere in the world, the coercive institutions through which they operate are imposed upon everyone, and so force everyone to compromise to some extent. Thus, for example, in order to fulfill our needs and desires and to carry out our projects, those

may prove to be the most trustworthy of accomplices in revolt. Of course, in the development of this critique, we can make use of a myriad of tools, including those which we steal from such academic and scientific pursuits as anthropology and philosophy. But these should never become models for a future society or the center of our critique. If they do, they become ideological chains rather than critical tools of our desire to reappropriate our lives and transform existence in terms of our needs desires and aspirations.

The aim of an anarchist historical critique is to reappropriate the history of the struggle against domination as an unfinished task, to examine the insurrections and revolutions of the past as part of our ongoing struggle so that what can grasp what is useful from them. The appropriate method for carrying this aim out is the demystification of history. I do not mean by this the replacement of “objectively” false visions of the past with “objectively” true ones. Rather I mean the transformation of our conception of history. The “History” that we were taught in school is a string of events (often perceived as a progression) placed on display like exhibits in a museum. Whether “accurate” or not, this represents a mystification in the fullest sense of the word, because it defines History as a thing above us that cannot be touched. The most common radical response to this view is that developed by certain Marxists and Hegelians in which the hand of History is not the dead past, but a determined and inevitable *future*. Since this also places history above us in a sacred, untouchable realm, it is still a mystification. The demystification of history is the recognition that it is nothing more nor less than the activity of human beings doing what is necessary to create their lives and world. Because this activity is mostly unconscious, the rulers are able to control it in their own interests and create the mystified history that supports their continued control. Insurrections are moments when the apparatus of historical mystification breaks down and people begin to see themselves as the protagonists of their own existence, raising the fundamental question of how to go about creating our lives consciously for ourselves. In this light, all past insurrections are part of an ongoing struggle. Their faults and failures are not tales of tragic heroism and defeat, but rather lessons to be drawn on in the continuing struggle for the



## ON THE AIMS AND METHODS OF CRITIQUE

The development of a coherent anarchist practice based on our desire to take back our lives requires the ongoing use of critical analysis on all levels. But, as with the totality of anarchist practice, critique is only useful when one is clear about the aims of the practice and develops methods consistent with those aims. Here as in all other areas of practice, our means need to embody our ends.

For the sake of simplicity and clarity, we can speak of three general areas in which critical analysis is necessary: 1) the critique of the present society, of the institutions, systems and relationships that produce and maintain domination and exploitation; 2) historical critique, the critical examination of struggles, insurrections and revolutionary theory and practice of the past; and 3) the critique of the ideas and practices of the contemporary anarchist movement.

The critique of the present society, of the institutions and relationships of domination, has a very simple aim, that of achieving an understanding of our enemy that is sufficient for the project of destroying it and opening the possibility for free and self-determined living. The method best suited to this aim is one of incisive, iconoclastic attack. Slogans and simplistic proclamations are not enough. It is necessary to examine the practices of the state, capital and all the other institutions of domination deeply. This examination needs to start from our desire to take back our lives as individuals and develop relationships based on free association, and the consequent necessity to reappropriate life on the social level as well. This means examining the ways in which the ruling institutions penetrate into and come to define our daily lives. In fact, the examination of daily life is of primary importance, because this is where one can develop an ongoing practice of conflict with the forces of domination, discovering the weak points that one can attack as an aspect of living one's life. This is also where one could meet those individuals who may not call themselves anarchists or revolutionaries, but who consistently live in defiance against this ruled existence and so

of us who desire a world without money, property or commodity exchange are forced by the current social order to deal with all of these things on one level or another—by working, by stealing, by begging, by offering goods and services in exchange for whatever it is we want. But coerced compromise can nonetheless be met defiantly and with dignity, and one's singularity is maintained in this defiant attitude.

Having to deal daily with the humiliation of the coerced compromises imposed by the ruling order, certainly in our struggle against it we do not want to leave any place for compromise. Since this struggle is precisely against domination and exploitation, it is the place for experimenting freedom. And from an anarchist perspective (by which I mean a perspective that rejects all domination, all hierarchy, all authority), this means the freedom of each individual to determine her own life in free association with whom he chooses. Of course, this rules out any negotiation with the state or other ruling institutions. If we compromise with the ruling order in the way we carry out our struggle, then we are already defeated, because such a compromise would place the determination of the conditions of our supposed struggle against this social order into the hands of those whose interests it serves. They would define our opposition; they would define our struggle. Autonomy would cease to be anything more than a fine-sounding abstract word to be flung around for the warm feeling it gives us.

A sad example of what I mean can be seen in what happened to the occupations struggle in Europe when a significant portion of this movement decided to “struggle” for legalization. What had originated as a movement of direct action and self-organization was largely transformed into a movement for social assimilation and state assistance. Those occupied spaces that refused to have any dialogue with the state often found themselves isolated, and in several instances—Germany providing the most profound example—the movement for legalization effectively provided the basis for crushing the occupations movement. In addition, the assimilation inherent in these negotiations has led to the disappearance of opposition or its deformation into purely symbolic and spectacular forms (the now disbanded *Tute Bianche*, which

originated in legalized social centers in northern Italy, being a prime example of the latter).

But in the process of carrying out our revolutionary project it is equally important to refuse to base our relationships with our comrades on compromise. If indeed our aim is really the liberation of every individual so that each can determine her own life on her own terms with those with whom he feels affinity (and what else could the rejection of all domination be?), then there is no place for renunciation in the name of a greater good and, thus, no place for compromise. This does not mean that each individual must be isolated from every other individual. Clearly, in order to carry out activities together, we need to discuss our aims, our desires, our needs, our ideas, our aspirations. But the aim of such discussion—if we are seeking a world of free relationships—would not be to create a common ground through the denial of real differences, reducing everything to the lowest common denominator. Rather it would aim to clarify the differences, to bring out the singular desires and dreams of each individual involved, to discover the commonality that springs from our enjoyment of each others' singularity (without forgetting that we will not enjoy everyone's singular being), the commonality that is based on real affinity between unique individuals. Such affinity can only be discovered through developing a real deep knowledge of each other, a task which requires that our discussions have the precise aim of discovering our differences, what is unique in each of us, not of suppressing them in the name of a unity that will leave everyone dissatisfied.

The rejection of compromise in our struggle goes hand in hand with the rejection of formality. In order to create a formal organization, it is necessary to create both an ideological framework and a practical program on which the organization is based. The ideological framework marks the boundaries within which theoretical and analytical exploration is permitted, and the practical program marks the boundaries within which practical initiative and projects are to operate. Individuals who wish to participate in the organization must pare down their individuality in order to fit within these boundaries, renouncing those parts of themselves that do not serve the greater good of the organization as a whole. Thus, by its nature, the formal group comes to domi-

to continue to live and act in a mostly unconscious and reactive manner. In other words, they are choosing to remain slaves. One who is serious about putting an end to our slavery knows that this requires each of us to take up the task of being complete human beings capable of acting, feeling and thinking for ourselves. And until we destroy the ruling order of the state and capital, this means consciously taking up the practice of theory with all the effort that entails.

with the multitude of passionate reasons that spring from our desires, aspirations and dreams when they escape the logic of the market and the state. The reversal of perspective through which we come to see the real possibility of transforming our existence makes thinking critical, turns reason into a tool of revolutionary desire and transforms social and historical analysis into weapons for attacking the social order. But only if we are willing to take up the task of thinking deeply, of reasoning passionately for ourselves, in short, of creating theory.

Since revolutionary theoretical practice, from an anarchist perspective, must be the active, critical overturning of the social relationships of ideology and of intellectual specialization, since it must be the reappropriation of our capacity to think for the project of our own liberation, it cannot be the activity of a few recognized theorists who create ideas for others to consume and act upon. Rather theory must be made by everyone. This opposes the creation of a single unified anarchist theory, since this would require the flattening out of all that is vital, passionate and unique in each individual's thinking and would transform theory into a set of doctrines that would put an end to theoretical activity by providing a final answer, the usefulness of which would cease the moment it was declared. It also opposes activism and militantism which separate action from theory, disdainfully attributing the latter to "armchair intellectuals in their ivory towers". This attitude reflects a complete acceptance of the division of labor imposed by this society, and, therefore, leaves those who take this stance subject to incoherent, often unconsciously held ideologies – such as humanitarianism, social obligation, democratic tolerance, political correctness, justice, rights, etc. – that send them spinning off into a jumble of contradictory activities from which the most basic anarchist principles are frequently missing, an alternative form of the mindless busyness through which most people carry out the tasks of social reproduction.

The creation of revolutionary theory is, thus, a practice aimed at the destruction of the current social relationships of specialization, division of labor and expertise so that each of us can take back our own lives, and this aim must exist already in the way we carry out this practice, which is to see that each of us must think for ourselves. Those who refuse this practice are choosing

nate the individuals who participate in it. Since this domination of the group over the individual stems from the boundaries set by the ideological framework and practical program that are the defining traits (along with membership roles and the quantitative delusion), one can say that it reflects the closing down of possibilities that is inherent in compromise.

While we anarchists are quick to discuss which methods of decision-making are most suited to our aims, we seem far less willing to talk about the contexts in which these methods are to be used. Within the context of a formal organization in which the theoretical and practical parameters of discussion are already set and the individuals involved in the decision-making process are members of the organization, i.e., parts of a greater whole, both unanimity\* and majority decision can only operate as a power over individuals in the group, since every decision must be made in terms of the needs of the organization as a whole. Thus, whatever decision may be reached through whatever method, it will always involve the submission of the individual and her desires and aspirations to the group as a whole.

In the realm of informality, where organization is temporary, with the aim of accomplishing a specific task, discussion does not have such parameters, the only parameters being the task at hand. Individuals can bring the whole of themselves, their dreams and passions, their ideas and desires, the whole of their imaginations into it. Since there is no formal structure the survival of which must be guaranteed, there is nothing to fetter the exploration of possibilities. Discussion can center around how to carry out whatever project is being explored in such a way as to realize the desires of each of the individuals involved in carrying it out. In this informal context, at least if it is to realize the singularity of each individual, there is obviously no place for a majority-based method of decision-making. Unanimity is necessary simply because it is the only way to guarantee that the decisions made fully reflect each individual involved. In this case, wholeness is not seen as the trait of a group, but rather of each individ-

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\* *This method is better known in the United States as consensus, but I prefer this term since it distinguishes the method from social consensus, and in my mind lacks certain collectivist connotations that I associate with consensus for reasons discussed below.*

ual involved in the project at hand, who have come together on the basis of affinity, not unity in the name of a higher cause (even if that cause is called “revolution” or “anarchy”). So when significant differences arise there is no need to resolve them through negotiation and compromise. Rather those involved can recognize that they have reached the limits of their affinity and can therefore chose to go their separate ways continuing their struggles as they see fit. So though it is true that within a formal context even unanimity is guaranteed to be a power over individuals, within the context of informality it can be a tool for creating collective projects in which the interests of each individual involved have priority.

As an anarchist, I desire social revolution precisely because it opens the possibility for creating a world in which each individual is able to create her life as his own in free association with those with whom she feels affinity. Social revolution is, in fact, a rupture of existing social relationships, a breakdown of the functioning of social control and so opens out into the unknown, where possibilities for freedom and self-organization may be found. Formal “revolutionary” organizations and “alternative” institutions are formed precisely to avoid this opening into the unknown. How often have I heard some anarchist proclaim the necessity to find something to replace the state and capitalist institutions, as if these have ever served any truly human purpose! But the built-in limitations of these “revolutionary” institutions guarantee not too much will change. They are brakes on the upheaval that is bringing the collapse of the old world. And so they close down possibilities, enclosing them within their own framework, and the world of compromise returns, often with the added brutality of the moral judgments of true believers against those who go too far. The expansion of the possibilities opened up by the insurrectionary break, the full exploration of the panorama of self-determination and of the “collective movement of individual realization”, requires, above all, indomitable individuals who associate on the basis of affinity and the pleasure they find in each others’ singularity, refusing every compromise.

gious fundamentalists tend to see everything through a single, rigid lens, while the “average” person on the street will have a mish-mash of contradictory ideologies through which he interprets her experiences. In fact, outside of the realm of a small minority of “true believers”, a lack of coherence, which makes action for oneself impossible, is a mark of ideological thinking. But most significantly, ideological thinking is passive thinking, thinking in terms that have been determined beforehand by those currently in power, their “oppositional” competitors or the various opinion-making, consensus-building apparati that serve them. In this predetermined social relationship, one does not really think, but merely passively consumes the thoughts that one is offered.

A revolutionary practice of theory begins with an overturning of ideology. The desire to take back one’s life, to determine the conditions of one’s existence, requires a new understanding of the world, what some have called a “reversal of perspective”. This understanding that distinguishes theory from ideology is the realization that this world, with its institutional framework and its circumscribed, hierarchical social relationships, is actually produced by our activity, by our continued resigned acceptance of the roles and relationships imposed upon us. Once we realize that our activity creates this world, the possibility of creating a different world, one based on our desire to be the conscious creators of our own lives, becomes clear. And so we come to face the task of analyzing the world in which we live with the aim of realizing our aspiration to reappropriate our lives and re-create the world on our own terms. This process of thinking critically about the social relationships that are imposed on us, the historical processes of domination and revolt and our own actions taken against this world is theoretical practice.

So the practice of theory already initiates the process of taking back one’s life, because it is the reappropriation of one’s capacity to think for oneself. It is not a matter of opposing a refusal of reason to rationalism, a mere ideological reversal that plays into the hands of the ruling class. Rather, realizing that rationalism is the imposition of a single, dispassionate Reason (the Reason of the state and the market) on all of us, we develop a practice of attacking this single Reason and the institutions that impose it

## REVOLUTIONARY SOLIDARITY: An insurrectionary anarchist perspective

*“Solidarity lies in action. Action that sinks its roots in one’s own project[...] that above all makes us free ourselves...”—Daniela Carmignani*

### ON THE PRACTICE OF THEORY

One of the foundations of the world in which we live (and to which anarchists want to put an end) is the division of labor, particularly the division between intellectual and manual labor. Many anarchists carry this division into their own projects, speaking of theory and practice as two separate aspects of anarchist activity and, in some cases, going so far as to proudly reject theory as the realm of intellectual specialization.

From an anarchist perspective, revolution is a complete overturning of current social relationships, a total transformation of existence. It follows from this that, for the individual anarchist, each project would be an experiment aimed at transforming one’s relationships with oneself, with other people and with the surrounding world here and now in terms of one’s revolutionary aspirations. Thus, the development of an insurrectional project involves the rejection of this division of labor and the consequent recognition that the development of revolutionary theory is itself a practice, a fundamental rupture with the normal way of encountering the world, a transformation of how we relate to it.

As I see it, the basic aim of social revolution is the reappropriation of life in its totality so that every individual can determine the course of her existence on her own terms in association with whom he chooses. Currently, a few people determine the conditions under which everyone must exist, operating through a network of institutions, structures and systems that define social relationships – particularly (but not exclusively) the state and commodity exchange. This imposition of determined, circumscribed relationships penetrates into the realm of thought in the form of ideology.

Ideology can be briefly defined as a predetermined and circumscribed set of flattened ideas through which one views and interprets the world. Ideological thought may be relatively internally consistent or utterly incoherent. Marxist-leninists and reli-

Revolutionary solidarity is not essentially a question of moral, financial or physical support, but something far deeper, because it is essentially egoistically centered. The basis for revolutionary solidarity lies in recognizing one’s own project of revolt in the struggles and actions of others and thus seeing these others, at least potentially, as accomplices in struggle.

Therefore, revolutionary solidarity can only exist when one has a clear project of revolt from which it can sprout. The nature of the insurrectionary anarchist project is the reappropriation of one’s own life in open conflict with every form of domination and exploitation; it is the overturning of existing social relationships and the destruction of all hierarchy and authority and of the commodity system with the aim of opening the fullest possibilities for free association. It is this that forms the basis from which I, as an exploited individual fighting to take back my life and a conscious insurrectionary anarchist, determine and express revolutionary solidarity.

From this it should be clear that I see no possibility for solidarity between insurrectionary anarchists and any group that claims to lead, represent or even (like so many politicians of the democratic left) serve any struggle. In their specialized role as spokespeople for (their version of) whatever specific struggle, hierarchy and authority already exist. They are contenders for power and, thus, its practical accomplices. So it shouldn’t be surprising that at one point or another, the leaders of these groups begin to make demands of the current rulers, demands that are the first step to negotiation and taking one’s place within the current social order.

But every social struggle has many different layers and facets. While various political, union or guerrilla groups strive to impose their “service” on the struggles of the exploited and excluded, many individuals go on carrying out their struggles autonomously, organizing their attempts to take back their lives

and attack what stands in their way in free association with others of their choosing. In any struggle, we find our accomplices, those with whom we can act in solidarity, among these individuals.

And what does it mean to act in solidarity with others in struggle? Above all, it means to carry on our own struggle against every form of domination and exploitation where we are. The state, capital and all the institutions through which they exercise their power constitute a totality, and every attack on a part, even the tiniest subversion, the least expression of self-organized revolt, is an attack on the whole. But there are points where my struggle more specifically intersects with that of others. This is where solidarity can have its clearest expressions. Consider, for example, the uprising that began in Argentina last December. It was sparked by economic policies put into play by specific institutions. These institutions have offices, functionaries, properties and connections with other institutions throughout the world and exercise their exploitative practices everywhere. Specifically target actions against these institutions and their connections anywhere in the world could provide a clear expression of solidarity with those in revolt in Argentina. Similarly, solidarity with prisoners' struggles could find expression in attacks against institutions, corporations and functionaries involved in the prison industry that are often involved in other exploitative projects that affect all of our lives. The possibilities are as broad as our imaginations.

In the same way, solidarity with anarchists who have been imprisoned is manifested by acting as their accomplices, continuing our struggles against the state and capital, the source of their imprisonment. Taking action that makes the link of complicity between our revolt and that of our imprisoned comrades obvious only requires a bit of knowledge and creativity.

Revolutionary solidarity is the active expression of a link between projects of struggle and revolt. It is a relationship of complicity, not of service or support (though under specific circumstances, in the context of mutual aid between comrades, one might incorporate some form of support into a relationship of solidarity). One enters into it in terms of one's own project, without compromise. Thus, as an insurrectionary anarchist, as an

unexpected places like at night at the top of Stromboli). The desire is to know everything – place, time, activities – in order to cry: I am here, I am there, no problem, no worry, nothing unknown; the buried desire for the unknown is utterly dead, replaced by *security*.

Because *waiting* is no longer part of this life, capital urgently needs space and time to be occupied, and no squandering is allowed, no elaboration of fantasy is tolerated except that of accumulating more, no misunderstanding, no anticipation lived with passion, determined by desire, sought after in itself for the satisfaction it brings.

From the most innocent matters to the sadly professional necessities, it is probably the moments by ourselves that most bear witness to the depressing dependence on this prosthesis, from the day trip in the hills to the passage through the desert, the ocean or the mountains, a little red ball on some computer screen indicates the exact point of presence; like an electronic bracelet that transforms the world into the prison it is. Besides, there are challenges here to be sought, but calculated challenges, with a thread of confidence to prevent surprises, whims of the sort in which the only contest is with oneself, as in a virtual game where there is no space for solitary respite, where one is never outside and with a touch one returns to the friendly word, happy and smiling.

I hope that those who attack the high speed train do so not only because of the horrible disfigurement perpetrated against the earth, not only, in short, for the obvious consequences to the planet, but also because of what buying time, paying dearly for it, in order to spend it later growing increasingly fat, means, because of what is no longer a journey, but a displacement between identical places with no sensation of approaching. The journey is dead; capital requires something else.

I hope that those who attack telephone antennae do so not just because of the waves in which we are submerged, that infiltrate into the bodies and minds of individuals, but also in order to be done with the globalization of communications that pursues us everywhere and destroys even the smallest bit of wonder in this world, so dull, so determined, so staidly comfortable.

—*Terra Selvaggio*

## MOBILE PROSTHESIS

This great invention isn't necessary to support a part of the body, but, if anything, a part of the mind. The mobile or cellular phone (this ill-omened name hits the mark so well), this indispensable tool linked to individuals in such a blatantly unhealthy manner, is not just electromagnetic toxicity, nor just a revolution in interpersonal relationships, nor even just a stupid consumerist gadget that fattens the usual pocketbooks as always.

Above all, it is the replacement of that bit of the unknown that this world still reserves for us, the very small wonders of a sought after solitude, of a journey with oneself, of a time away from known and unknown human beings. The terrifying unknown, inconceivable and unimaginable for those who are afraid of their own life, for those who don't want to cut themselves off from the cord that links them to the other puppets of this little sham theater even for a moment, for those who want to know and inform others about their life, or more accurately about their own and other people's physical presence.

Dread of the dark zones where a black line on the display indicates death, fear of death when another line is the foreboding omen of silence. The inability to connect induces states of panic in the frenzied search for a "zone of light" or an energetic fountain where the dead can rise again.

Mechanical gestures draw the prosthesis out by its appendages at nearly perfect development, controlling the conditions of one's connection, of one's life. The fear is that of being outside, of not knowing how to live outside of a vocal presence that is much too often reduced to an exchange of embarrassing banalities, "Love, I have a five minute delay; darling, I've left; dear, I'm in Bologna; sweetest, have you eaten yet; love, I don't know why I called, but I called you just the same..."

Now and in the future, everything must be in its place. Wonder would break a frantically desired monotony, sorry excuse for life, where the daily humdrum is broken by the ceaseless melodies that resound everywhere (from delirious concerts in non-places like the subway, to the solitary symphonies in the most

individual in revolt against every form of domination, exploitation and hierarchy, my solidarity is always only with those aspects of a struggle in which individuals act autonomously to take back their own lives and organize their own relationships and activities freely, striving to destroy everything that obstructs these attempts, particularly the organizations and leaders who claim to represent the struggle.

## REVOLT WITHOUT ID CARDS

It has always been a bit odd to me that anarchists in the United States so often situate themselves among political activists, those specialists in issues and demands, rather than among the outsiders – both those excluded by society and those who choose to live beyond its rules. Are we not, after all, *rebels* above all else, committed to revolt and not reform? In fact, many anarchists think of themselves as the most authentic manifestation of revolt. When they want to see a rebel, they simply look in a mirror. In their eyes, only those who rise up against authority with a fully developed revolutionary consciousness, moved by clear values of equality and freedom and endowed with an immaculate ethic are true rebels and only their activity can be considered revolt. Those spurred only by their daily experience of boredom, restlessness, anguish and the pain of life in this society rather than by a high ideal, may, at best, be granted condescending recognition as manifestations of the horrors imposed by this society.

But, in fact, revolt recognizes neither membership cards nor adherence to the revolutionary program – not even that of the anarchists. No doubt, there is a chasm between Durruti and John Dillinger – that is a given. But what interests me is revolt as such, not merely *anarchist* revolt. And this interest does not spring from a desire to co-opt these, but to free the energy of revolt from the dead weight of a univocal ideological interpretation. Thus, revolt, as I understand it, is not the prudent adherence to an ideal program (that so frequently seems to become, in practice, an excuse for distancing oneself from revolt), but rather a rupture of the order desired and imposed by those in power – the breaking of a custom, a schema, a convention, a dogma. Though the results of such a rupture may be partial when compared with thought-out anarchist revolt, this does not make such a rupture the negation of the anarchist project. It is true that the student who pisses on his school records is not the revolutionary who shoots the king, but who is to say that he couldn't evolve in that direction? In fact, anarchists have always tended to have confidence in the generalization of the subversive virus, in its capacity to spread contagiously – how else have insurrections blossomed

from the rage of the exploited? Revolt intoxicates the senses, stimulates the mind and has an unforgettable flavor; once tasted it enters into the blood forever. But even if this were not so, even if all these unknowns – who escape passivity to become the protagonists of their lives, even if only for a moment – later end up putting up with a comfortable position in a bank, why shouldn't I give space to all the little sparks that break out, if only for a moment, illuminating the dark night to which the rulers of this order would like to condemn us all? Has resignation so thoroughly invaded our hearts that they won't even beat for the child who disobeys?

Of course, as an anarchist, I make distinctions. I have made a conscious choice regarding my life and my struggle, my path is straight as a dagger's blade and I will travel it to the end. But this does not mean that those who have not made this conscious decision, who have not chosen the same path, are my enemies or nonentities to be held in contempt. As an anarchist, I, in fact, feel closer to the one who rebels against the conditions of their life without any political ideology than I do to the activists whose political programs more often than not somebody's ladder for climbing the pyramid of political power.

In response to those who worry about the credentials of those who have carried out such actions, I would remind them that only cops demand IDs. They need to know who to watch in order to protect the social order. But there are also those anarchists who think this way, seeking to protect the good name of the movement by keeping an eye on those who rebel, carefully defining and monitoring their credentials. Like the state's police, those so-called anarchists who want to protect the movement also must feel distrust and even hatred for that which they do not know. Those who have no interest in controlling anyone couldn't care less who was beating a cop, vandalizing a church, pillaging a supermarket, attacking a military facility. When those who carry out such acts are unknown, all that matters to me is the poetry with which they resonate, the marvelous poetry of revolt. Everything else is police conjecture that strives to destroy this poetry.

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