

Endless War: Anarchist antimilitarism and the “war on terrorism”

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Introduction

As the US occupation of Iraq continues along with the Iraqi resistance to this invasion, it is necessary to continue to examine the forces of domination that have led to the current situation of endless war and also to look into the possibilities for resistance.

The invasion of Iraq has been presented as a specific battle in the “war on terrorism”. The alleged evidence for Iraqi possession of Weapons of Mass Destruction and involvement with Al-Qaeda has vanished like smoke in the wind, but since the “war on terrorism” has been a case of bluff and extortion from the beginning, it continues to be appropriate to analyze it in this context.

The texts below have all been written since September 11, 2001. The first several texts — most of which appeared in the newssheet *Neither Their War Nor Their Peace*, of which three issues were published — deal with the “war on terrorism” in general, the attack of Afghanistan and US war-mongering. After the US began to really push its agenda of a war in Iraq, I published two issues of *Insubordination*, a one-page newssheet, the texts of which appear here as “Alternatives or Refusal?” and “An Easy War” (which reality has proven wrong on a number of points). The rest of the texts are translations from Italian texts, articles from *Willful Disobedience* and texts from flyers I published and distributed.

Before the war in Iraq began, it was easy to imagine it ending quickly, but this has not happened. Perhaps more interesting though is the extent of the public questioning of the war before it began. One could have imagined a large-scale anti-war movement developing. Unfortunately, the usual ridiculous activists placed themselves in charge of this movement, and now it seems that little is happening anymore — perhaps because the political shenanigans of ANSWER and Not In Our Name, and the repetition of the ritual mass protest march and rally can only evoke boredom. In any case, those of us who despise all domination — whether of the state in power or the politicians of pseudo-resistance — can continue our own battle against the endless war, encouraging insubordination and attacking the powers that be wherever we are.

Different Here

We don’t see or directly feel the effects of the bombing. Its destruction of houses and whole villages. Its killing of our friends, families and neighbors. We don’t flee for our lives from the death and misery wrought by such systematic destruction.

Here, if you have legal documents and are not a foreigner, you are not expelled. If you are not an immigrant or poor here, the police don’t harass you. Here the effects of soil, air and water contamination is not the same as that of the bombs exploding directly in front of your face. It’s different here.

Instead everyday, while waving the flag of the U.S., ‘citizens’ watch with enjoyment images of villages and caves being bombed with sickening precision. One watches, but doesn’t see.

These images erase the carnage, the smell of death, the blood strewn everywhere. “It is far from here, not of my concern,” cries the detached loyal ‘citizen’. “They did it to themselves by attacking the World Trade Center,” which takes the personal and individual out of the equation.

But these images of carnage, if not approached with seriousness, could well cease to exist merely in the far off distance. They could become something we see, smell and feel directly.

I hear the mechanical drone of World War III in the closer still distance as the Bush administration declares war on the world.

But it is still different here.

Here, as 'citizens' with silence and complicity, in total patriotic tranquility, we prepare the way for World War III.

— from *An Oppositional Voice*

Beyond Selective Service

Among the possible changes I saw in the wake of the attacks of September 11 and the subsequent “war on terrorism” — that never ending excuse for continues US, UN and NATO military operations throughout the world — was the reinstatement of a fully operational draft. After all, the military does provide another place for storing excess people and may be useful in giving them a healthy dose of training in subservience, the acceptance of humiliation and the replacement of thinking with patriotic fervor. And with the drastic increase in the number of preventative police actions deemed necessary to “protect the American way of life” that this new war will inevitable bring about, more cannon fodder will be necessary to feed the poorly aimed American guns. So I was expecting to hear something about the possibility of the draft going back into effect. But it seems that at least some folks in the government hope to take things a little further.

On December 20, 2001, representative Smith of Michigan, in conjunction with representative Weldon of Pennsylvania introduced a “Universal Military Training and Service Act” bill before the House of Representatives. The bill was referred to the Committee on Armed Services. This bill, if passed, would make it obligatory for every male citizen between the ages of 18 and 22 and any other male of that age residing in the United States “to receive basic military training and education as a member of the armed services.” Women would be encouraged to volunteer under the same program, but without the obligation. Those inducted would be required to take from six months to one year of training (to be determined by the Secretary of Defense). But any one who has not finished high school will be required to do an additional six months of training. The only exemptions to this act are those with health problems, those already in military service and those in military academies. Religious conscientious objectors would be exempt from combatant training, but is required to undergo the rest of the training and to do national service of some sort.

This act, if put into effect, would go far beyond current draft laws and beyond anything the US has ever had. It would be a case of mandatory military service for all young men. It is obvious that this bill is being proposed now because of the atmosphere of fear and reactive patriotism brought on by the events of last September 11. Those who are promoting it (and Bush is among them) are hoping that people will be willing to accept the idea of such service in these times.

Though mandatory military service for all young men is new to the United States, it is the norm in much of the world. In countries like Italy or Greece, anarchists are always contending with this system, and strong anarchist anti-militarist activity is common. In addition, it seems that there are informal networks among anarchists in these countries that make it easier for those who refuse to cooperate with this system in any way to get around and continue to live their lives. We would do well to learn from the practices that have been developed in these countries as well as to examine draft resistance in this country, particularly during the Viet Nam war.

It is essential to let people know about this bill (I didn't hear about it until March, and very few people I talk with know about it — it apparently is not being well-publicized) and to make our own refusal to cooperate clear. It is equally necessary to make it clear that our refusal to cooperate does not spring from a pacifist morality, which could accept the compromise of “community” service, but from a vehement hatred of the state and all of its institutions that opposes to militarism and the state in its totality the violence of revolt.

The Significance of a Meaningless Word

There is a point in the degradation of a word, when one is left to wonder whether it is worth the effort to try to salvage the usefulness of the word. Its usage becomes so divorced from its origins and from any specific meaning that it can no longer be said to have a clear definition. Rather it becomes a buzzword, serving to evoke specific emotional responses useful to those in power without conveying any ideas that could provide a basis for developing analyses and methodologies with which individuals could create a self-determined response to the situation to which the word is applied.

The word “terrorism” has had a variety of meanings over the course of its existence, the specifics of which generally depended on who was speaking. It originated in the Reign of Terror through which the newly formed republican government of France established and enforced its rule through the conscious use of indiscriminate executions. So terrorism originally referred to a *state* policy of using intentionally indiscriminate violence to enforce its power. In the late 19th century, the word also came to be used to describe certain acts of violence by revolutionary groups, but it still generally was applied to acts in which the intentional use of *indiscriminate* violence appeared to be involved.

But the state and the mass media have been consistently draining the word of meaning since the 1960's. In the mouths of politicians and media pundits, it has increasingly come to refer to the armed actions of anyone opposing the power of the ones who are speaking. On the other hand, those who carry out precisely the same sort of activity against the opposing powers are “freedom fighters”. Thus, the word ceased to have much meaning with regards to a specific type of action, and instead came to have a mainly *political* significance. Still the word, at this point, implied the use of violence or the threat of violence for political purposes. But as long as the word continued to retain any specific meaning, it could be pointed out that all states, at one time or another, make use of terrorist practices, so it was necessary to drain it still further.

Nearly everyone can agree that the acts of September 11 were acts of terrorism. They were intentional acts of violence involving indiscriminate slaughter carried out for political purposes under orders from people in contention for power. But whatever the intentions of the perpetrators of these attacks, they provided the state — and particularly that of the United States — with a useful tool, but only if it *immediately* turned the events to its own end, a process that required draining the word “terrorism” of every last vestige of meaning.

Since September 11, the word has been used profusely — what day goes by in which we don't hear it several times? The US government has begun a “war against terrorism”, and most western states have passed new, broad anti-terrorism laws. The “war against terrorism” must fight both “external and internal enemies”, “enemies” who are only described as “terrorists” or “those who give aid to terrorists”. In the USA-PATRIOT act and similar laws in other countries, “terrorism”

is such a nebulous term that it could apply to almost any act of resistance or even dissent. The criminalization of “aiding terrorists” covers the rest, potentially including even words of dissent. The war overseas is justified in equally meaningless terms. Like a good christian, Bush talks about “good” and “evil” in a way that is more metaphysical than it is moral (though, of course, morality tends to require a metaphysical basis). There are the forces of “good” — the United States and its ally states — and the “axis of evil” — Iraq, Iran, North Korea and other states that oppose American hegemony. The fact that *all* of these states use the same basic methods to maintain power is irrelevant. The fact that none of the nations in the so-called “axis of evil” has directly attacked the United States or its allies is irrelevant. “Terrorism” is, of course, “evil”, and therefore could only be committed by those who are “evil”. When the “good” commit identical acts — say the indiscriminate slaughter of Afghani villagers in the hopes of flushing out a few Al-Qaeda agents — this is not terrorism, but “the defense of freedom, democracy and the American way of life.”

In short, the word “terrorism” has been drained of any real meaning in terms of activity in the world. It now has purely political significance as a reference to those who are “enemies of our way of life.” But it retains its *emotional* force, and it is in this form — meaningless, but emotionally charged — that it is most useful to the state. In this form, it becomes a tool for gathering public support for strengthening and expanding the repressive apparatus, encouraging the populace to participate both as snitches against the “internal enemy” and as cannon-fodder against the “external enemy”. Blinded by the fear this meaningless word induces, people will easily lose track of the fact that George Bush and Osama bin Laden have a lot more in common with each other than either of them do with the dispossessed and exploited classes of the people they claim to represent.

In the long run it is probably still worthwhile to point out the original meaning of terrorism and to expose the fact that the power of the state is always based on terror. But more immediately, it is necessary to point out the fact that the word, as it is being used by politicians, police agencies and the media, is utterly meaningless, nothing more than emotional blackmail to manipulate us into accepting the most abject submission to an expanding and generalized repression, a way of deluding us into equating our interests, our security and our well-being with that of the state, which has never, in fact, provided for any of them.

In the Light of Day

What has really changed since the attacks of last September 11? What is truly new? The open decree by the American president of the “war on terrorism”. This is a new thing because it is not a war against a specific country with specific limits and clearly defined and realizable aims. Rather it is a war against a concept that must necessarily be very nebulously defined in order to prevent the real nature of war and the state from being exposed. From the start Bush and Rumsfeld have said that this is a global war, a war against external and internal enemies, a war in which every means necessary would be employed.

The bombing and occupation of Afghanistan was the beginning of the battle against external enemies. Bush told us over and over again that we were not at war with Afghanistan, but with the terrorists. But these were such a nebulous and invisible group that villages, farmers and various civilian targets were inevitably destroyed. And the military activity goes on “to establish

a democracy”, of course, and to root out every last terrorist.

But the nest of terrorists extends far and wide and Afghanistan is only the beginning. US troops have already been sent in to the Philippines and the government is gearing up for a war with Iraq. Of course, neither the Philippines nor Iraq have attacked the US *or threatened to do so*. And the American leaders will explain that it is working with the Philippine government to root out terrorists there. Iraq, on the other hand, is part of the “Axis of Evil”.

And here we see another new aspect of this war policy. President Bush, last May, openly spoke of a “pre-emptive strike” policy. According to this policy, if the US perceives another nation as a threat or as harboring a threat to the US, it can attack that nation before the threat can be realized. Not only does another nation not have to attack the US, it doesn’t even have to make an actual threat. It merely has to be perceived as a threat. This policy is the justification for the current war-mongering about Iraq and can presently also justify American attacks on Iran, North Korea, Somalia and several other nations.

In keeping with this policy the US is developing more and more cybernetic weapons which would automate war. A number of these have already been used in Afghanistan, like the Predator drone that killed several farmers near a long abandoned Al-Qaeda camp. In addition, weapons are being developed that can travel hundreds of miles in a quarter of an hour — clearly ideal for “pre-emptive strikes”.

Such weapons may well make the “Universal Military Training and Service” act — which would institute mandatory military training and service for men between 18 and 22 years of age — unnecessary since it wouldn’t be numbers, but technical skills that such a high-tech military system would need. Still there is more to this training than the need for soldiers. The patriotic propaganda of such training would have its uses in creating a social consensus that would hinder revolt.

Meanwhile, the war at home has also developed at a fast pace. If the USAPATRIOT act which creates a specific law against “criminal terrorism”, this should come as no surprise since the government has been experiment with more blatantly repressive ways of dealing with acts of revolt for years. What is frightening about this act is that as it undermines every protection against repression promised by the government, it defines terrorism in such nebulous terms that every act of resistance would potentially fit the definition — including strikes, demonstrations, lock-downs, etc. Even publishing a periodical with certain information could constitute “aid to terrorism” in this nebulous world.

But the more immediate experience of this repression is to be found in the increased surveillance everywhere. The airports are the most blatant examples, where the wait to take a plane has, at least doubled since September 11. But one is also threatened with searches at Greyhound bus stations and other places of transportation. And, various forms of surveillance and intrusion are to be found everywhere. And those who question it, find themselves regarded with suspicion, and not just by the authorities.

There are many other examples of the repressive nature of the war at home. The creation of a Homeland Security chief opens the door to more policing, and the separation between police and military activities is even further broken down when this new chief claims that it may be necessary to use the military in police roles within the US to fight this war.

To make sense of all this, it is necessary to recognize that the American state — now clearly the strongest in the world — sees itself as master of the world. In such a situation war is no longer a real struggle between two nations; it is always a police action, a step taken to bring the

recalcitrant and disobedient back into line. This is why the US is “good” regardless of what it does, and those it wages war against are “evil”, regardless of what they do — their “evil” simply that of not adequately recognizing their master.

In both its foreign and domestic policy, the American state — along with all the other western states — has taken advantage of the attacks of last September to put laws and policy into effect that justify fiercer repressive methods that have as their primary purpose that of striking terror into the hearts of dissidents, insurgents and rebels, and even more so, into the hearts of the populace at large against such people who may now, by law, be “terrorists”. But these are not really new policies. For decades, war has been mainly in the form of police actions and humanitarian missions, and the US has practiced the policy of pre-emptive strike. The rights granted by the state only have meaning as long as they serve the interests of the state. But before September 11, the state had to make an effort to hide its repressive practice, to appear as the arbitrator of freedom. So what is truly new since September 11 is that, by ridding the word terrorism of any clear meaning and instilling fear in its populace, the state can now do in the light of day what it once could only do under cover.

A New Era?

Nearly a year ago — so we are told — we entered into a new era, where nothing would be as it was. But the reasons given for this awareness do not provide us with the means to face it. We observe the change through our insecurity, through our inadequacy. We are frightened, but we really don’t know why...

It all seems to have started a year ago on September 11. Up to that time, we who live in the western world were confident, at least, in our safety — even if some of us were struggling to get by. Of course, the TV news might disturb our dinner with images of war, famine and destruction. But why ruin a good meal when one only needs to change the channel? And in the newspaper, one can choose to read only the sports and entertainment sections. And those who feel they must do something can always send a check to some humanitarian association. It may not feed the stomachs of the poor, but it will at least feed the consciences of the rich. It has not been possible, however, to ignore the savage conflicts that were covering Palestine, Rwanda, Somalia, Bosnia, Algeria, Kosovo in blood, but to regain peace, at least for ourselves, we simply had to cross them off our list of places to travel. War — with its bombings, its victims, its debris, its blockades, its cruelty — did not touch us; it was not capable of putting the calm daily repetition of our existence into doubt.

Up until last September 11 that is. Up until that time, we thought that globalization only involved the growth and expansion of the market, the penetration of multinationals into every part of the globe. It allowed us to go to the super-store with products from around the world — another wonderful convenience with the expense paid far away. But some do not accept this; they think that if those in the east are forced to take in the western style of life, then the west should also taste the style of the east. If Coca Cola invades shops, restaurants and homes of Jerusalem just as in New York, how could we prevent massacres similar to those in Jerusalem from happening in New York? Since September 11, it has been clear that it is not just markets that are everywhere on the planet, but also the terror through which they are imposed. That day, the entire Western world experienced what people have lived through daily, for many years, in the overlooked parts

of the world: they count the dead, they dig through ruins, they cry for revenge.

* * *

It's war. But this time it isn't happening far away, but rather in our backyard. From the start, president Bush declared that the attacks of September 11 were an act of war. Obviously, he knows what he's talking about. The first attack against the United States mainland since the early 19th century is carried out in such a way that the ideological justifications so dear to the Masters of War have collapsed in the dust as well. If acts of terrorism are acts of war, it is because acts of war are acts of terrorism. With expert eyes, Bush recognized that in which his government has always been in the forefront (the atomic bomb in Hiroshima, napalm in Viet Nam, impoverished uranium in the former Yugoslavia), but up to that point, only in the role slaughterer, never in the role of victim. But what is the difference, then, between the dead in New York and those in Baghdad? What is the difference between terrorism and war? The involuntary frankness of Bush's words has caused the supporters of legal formalism to cringe, the pacifist left, for example, that proclaimed the necessity of not confusing war — a conflict between two opposed powers — with a police action — i.e., the hunt for a mere criminal. We must not equate the criminal who hijacks an airplane with the soldier who drops bombs; otherwise the terroristic nature of the state would become clear to everyone. This is why the pacifist left has declared itself opposed to a war conducted by NATO, but favorable to a massive police operation conducted by the United Nations. But such a distinction is no longer possible, because now all wars are police actions. War no longer consists of a series of battles aiming for the surrender or destruction of an enemy that is found only outside of one's borders with the goal of stripping it of its resources. It is rather in the display of the tools (including the media) that are used in extending control and expanding economic and political power, *both outside and inside of one's borders*. As long as the battle is waged only against external enemies, it will always prove to be a sporadic event, but when it is against internal enemies it will not be, because this battle is constant. Unlike soldiers, police are always working. This is how modern warfare has become a state of permanent conflict where, often and willingly, the line of demarcation that distinguishes combatants is extremely thin.

The aim of war is no longer the conquest of that which is outside, but the governing of that which is everywhere. And what is terrorism, if not a method of government based on terror? [This is precisely the original meaning of the word terrorism, which originated in the Reign of Terror in France.] The terrorists in the White House know this well, these men and women who, in order to avenge themselves for the affront suffered, are prepared to bomb Iraq, Somalia, Iran — and the list keeps growing — after they have bombed Afghanistan. All are thought of as outskirts of the endless empire. The terrorists of the Arab plateau, who could have returned to strike other western lands, know all this as well. The battlefield has expanded to the limits, there are no more safety zones, and in the future, the death that falls from the skies to slaughter civilians could strike anywhere. Even in our neighborhood. In such a context, does it matter whether these terroristic offensives are called “Enduring Freedom” or “Holy War”?

* * *

What matters is that we know which side we are on: McDonald's or Jihad. The discourse that have been developing over the last eleven months harks back to the 1930's in Europe, when one couldn't escape the dismal alternative between Hitler and Stalin (needless to say that anyone

who criticized one of the two dictators was accused of “objectively” playing the other’s game). Yesterday we were asked whether it was better to die in a Nazi extermination camp or in a Stalinist gulag. Today we are asked if it is better to submit to capitalist economic dictatorship or to convert to islamic religious fanaticism.

Still capable of sending the proponents of civilization into a complete rage, we continue to think that as long as the social system in which we live is not destroyed, we will be trapped in its limited alternatives. The U.S. rulers are not the defenders of freedom that they claim to be. Before September 11, they ignored the atrocities of the Taliban regime. After all their leaders had helped to drive back the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Until we recognize the essential unity of every form of power and understand that no real choice exists between two sides of an identical logic of domination and exploitation, we will continue to flounder in the false choice between Hitler and Stalin, between Bush and bin Laden. The stock indexes or the Koran, the lady-like dress or the burka, the electric chair or stoning, the buying or selling of oil to enrich a Bush or bin Laden — these are the choices this society offers. As long as we remain trapped inside this dilemma, as long as we accept the necessity of choosing between the solutions imposed on us — rather than creating solutions *of our own* — there will be no escape for us. We will submit to the call for war, and the continual threat it implies will make it seem natural to blindly trust those in power. Could this perhaps be the reason behind the recourse to terrorism, to “convince” us that obedience is an inevitable condition for survival? If we don’t want to risk being killed by an “Arab terrorist” (or robbed by an “illegal alien”, or poisoned by a “drug-dealing gangster”), we will have to put up with having our bags searched, our activities filmed, our streets patrolled, our documents controlled, our words heard; in short, no part of our existence will be hidden. It will all be under continuous surveillance. This has already occurred however, and not just recently. But now the state can free itself of all the formal rubbish and unleash its guard dogs in full daylight. Because from now on its mastiffs no longer inspire fear, but are the defenders of our welfare, of our wealth, of our civilization.

Once one accepts the foul idea according to which making war is a means for establishing peace, how can one fight back against those who claim that the more control is extended, the greater the guarantee of freedom? There’s no way. And so the thousands of arrests carried out after September 11 don’t disturb our sleep, which will be shaken even less by the thousands of arrests that will occur elsewhere as various new “anti-terrorism” laws go into effect. But what does it matter, provided that the state, our Lord, “gives us this day our daily bread and delivers us from evil. Amen.”

* * *

We lead a life that is not our own. We did not choose where and when to be born. We did not choose the family that would raise us, and we have generally had very little say even in the matter of our appearance or our education. We are not even free to decide for ourselves about our death as one can see by the punishment that awaits those who practice euthanasia and the reprobation with which suicide is condemned. We are so accustomed to this ongoing, precise, inexorable dispossession of our selves, that we now perceive it as normal, as utterly desirable. If it is toil to live, then it is indeed the state that relieves us of this onerous task. We came into this world only to be put into a cage. But something has happened in the meantime. The story, as it appears, is not truly finished. Those who had declared themselves certain that they could no

longer create events capable of changing the course of things have been forced to see their error. Even those who had sworn on the inviolability of the American empire have recognized their delusions. Our days on this earth are not necessarily condemned to a boring serial repetition. Everything is still possible, even seeing the greatest superpower on the planet struck at the base by small people armed with box-cutters. Everything is still possible, even seeing billions of people sink to the lowest degree of servitude. In spite of it all, everything is still possible. Dying, certainly, comfortably seated in the armchair of passivity, dazed by the spectacle of human events of which one can only be an amazed spectator. But also starting to determine one's own destiny for the first time, to truly choose, to be the creator of one's own existence. In a word, to live.

— based on an article translated from *Hapax*

The Rudiments of Terror

The ruling order and its challenger face each other. The former has everything: an organization — the state — economic power, military power, control over the entire nation. The latter has little at its disposal. Only a few people, full of desperation, with a few rudimentary weapons. But these few are inspired by a terrible propulsive force, the ambition for domination, that is great enough to move them to launch their challenge. They know that they are weaker than their adversary, so they must strike and run, strike and run. And when a power — even in embryo — must strike, it knows only one tool: terrorism, the use of intentionally blind and indiscriminate violence. Like that which caused the death of a few thousand people, crushed and burned in the fiery collapse last year on September 11, as hijacked airplanes were crashed in New York, Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania.

Of course, the terrorism of the challenging power is blatant and is immediately denounced as such by the media of its rival. But who will have the boldness to denounce the terrorism of the power in office, the terrorism of the state, particularly the powerful states that maintain the global order? The images of the ruins of the towers and repetition of the death counts have traveled around the globe, rousing the horror of all, perhaps enough to make people forget that for those in power (and for those seeking it) the “common people” have always been thought of as cannon-fodder. Slaughtering them in a hijack attack or on a battlefield doesn't really make any difference.

These deaths are just like the deaths caused by aerial bombing, like those that occur year-round at workplaces, in barracks, in police stations, in hospitals, in prisons. Like those brought about by the paving over of wild places, by nuclear power plants, by the adulteration of our food, by atmospheric pollution or by the psychosomatic illnesses caused by the way of life that is imposed on us in this world.

So here it is, the violence that strikes everyone in a blind and indiscriminate fashion. Here it is the terrorism of the state.

September 11: *What the Masters Want to Teach Us*

The attacks of September 11 provided the masters of this world with a splendid opportunity for carrying out their most repressive projects with little dissent. It also provided their propaganda

machine with the opportunity of promoting the ideological agenda of those who rule us. Almost from the start, the various “experts” were on hand to analyze, to theorize, to tell us what to think. The propaganda of a united America and of a world divided simply into “good” and “evil”, the “good” again all united in the fight against “evil”. This corny mythological worldview pushed by the politicians and the media though had more to it than a simple promotion of mindless patriotism. The attacks were, in a sense, of epic proportions. It was easy for the authorities to convince us that as individuals we were helpless in the face of something of this sort, that we needed to be protected. And, of course, this protection could only come from the experts in protection — the state.

This is, in fact, the fundamental lesson that those in power have been promoting since the attacks: we are not capable of defending ourselves; the dangers of the world are beyond our control; we need to rely on the authorities, the experts to decide what to do for us.

Last month, another voice joined in this chorus. When the first anthrax-laced letters were discovered, people began to investigate possible natural remedies that they could acquire for themselves without reliance on the medical system — which many in this country cannot afford. Information about methods of strengthening the immune system, herbal antibiotics and similar natural and easily accessible methods of dealing with the potential of anthrax infection was spread through a variety of means that did not require going through an authority. But such self-reliance does not serve the interests of those in power, and so last month a government scientist, Dr. Stephen E. Straus, director of the National Center for Complimentary and Alternative Medicine, declared that people should not rely on such alternative remedies, but should rather have “an unwavering trust in the currently approved drugs and vaccines”. Straus offers no evidence that the natural methods do not work. He simply describes them as “unproven remedies”. In other words, the experts have not yet tested them in their laboratories on captive animals or on prisoners. In fact, Straus is just another voice — a government voice — telling us to put our faith in the authorities. And when fear gains the upper hand in people’s minds, they are easily swayed by such voices.

But another interesting bit of news came out a few weeks after Straus made his call for people to remain faithful to the experts in medicine. Tests on the anthrax powder that had been found in mail here showed that it was a form of anthrax developed in military laboratories here in the United States. The very authorities in whom we are to place our faith are the real source of that which threatens us. But those with an understanding of US foreign policy, those few who know the history of US involvement in Afghanistan in the 1980’s, were already aware of this. The government that calls us to unite behind it holds at least as much responsibility for these attacks as Al Qaeda. But this too is simply a minor bit of news, a banality about how states function. This entire social order, dominated by capital and the state is a string of disasters, none of which can rightly be called accidents. We live our lives on the edge of catastrophe and turn the other way, hailing those who have placed us there as our protectors, simply because a few stopgap measures have maybe put off a particular catastrophe for a short while or because our masters meet a catastrophe with bellicose rhetoric and calls for the proper apportionment of blame (which never seems to fall on them). In fact, the catastrophe is this social order with its top priorities being profit and social control, with its specialization and division of labor that guarantees that no one fully understands what is going on, with its dependence on authorities and expertise that steals away people’s capacities for self-determination, with its cumbersome technological apparatus which provides the authorities with a tool for controlling people, but which is itself

beyond control. It is not by relying on experts that we will put an end to this existence on the edge of disaster, but by taking back our lives and destroying the present social order.

Cybernetic Warfare

The current nature of war as primarily the activity of the great powers policing the lesser states, keeping them in line, makes the conventional methods of warfare useless. Sending out soldiers to do face-to-face battles with those who are often fanatically convinced of the justice of their cause is simply a waste of human resources. So to go along with the (not so) new type of war new types of weapons are necessary. And in Iraq in 1991, Yugoslavia in 1999 and Afghanistan now, the US has demonstrated some of these weapons, high-tech killing machines that require few soldiers and often none on the battlefield.

One of the weapons being used in Afghanistan is the Predator drone, a pilotless drone that carries attack weapons along with its surveillance equipment. The drone can be operated by remote control from hundreds of miles away. In Afghanistan, it was used to successfully kill several farmers who were salvaging for scrap from a destroyed and long abandoned Al Qaeda camp.

Then there are the “precision guided” bombs. Their precision was already well known from the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia, when one such bomb happened to hit an industrial suburb of Sofia, Bulgaria — 100 miles away from the Yugoslav border. In Afghanistan Around 10–15 percent of the bombs missed their targets, often in urban settings.

While it has apparently not been used yet, the Pentagon has a land mine in its arsenal called the Hornet. This stationary weapon is capable of launching a missile at a moving target that comes within range of its ground sensors — about a 100-yard radius. Of course, it makes no distinctions between targets.

In addition, there are a number of new high-tech weapons in the works. Within the next ten years, the Pentagon wants to have a squadron of a dozen pilotless fighter jets. By 2009, it wants a “hypersonic missile” that can travel 600 nautical miles in 15 minutes. It is calling for technological methods that will allow for surprise “high volume precision strikes” as well as for laser- and microwave-powered weapons.

The aim of these weapons is to enhance the capacities to launch stealthy “pre-emptive strikes” — in other words to attack those who are deemed as a threat before they have a chance to raise a complaint let alone a defense. Weapons of this sort have nothing to do with conventional warfare. Why would they? Such warfare is now relegated to those backwaters which are not currently of significance to the rulers of this world — places like Rwanda or Somalia where, until a great power intervenes “for humanitarian reasons” if not “to fight terrorism”, there really are certain more or less equal powers in horribly bloody contention.

In a sense these weapons could be seen as global level, very lethal, riot control weapons, not intended for direct conflict over territory, but for the maintenance of social peace. If there is one thing the state understands, it is that social peace can only be maintained through violence and terror. Certainly any reasonable person could see that every one of these new weapons is a machine of inhuman terror. All of them are potentially weapons of indiscriminate mass destruction of human life. But in this case the weapons are in the hands of the cops of the world, keeping the peace for the masters of the world and guaranteeing our continued obedience. And

so their use is not called terrorism, but peacekeeping. But if social peace can only be maintained through the use of terror, then clearly it is time we broke the social peace, destroyed this world's rulers and their guardians and began to create our lives as our own. Both their war and their peace are terror. Let's refuse both.

Toward the Total Criminalization of Revolt: *The USAPATRIOT Act and Its Limits*

On October 26, 2001 — just six weeks after the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon — the “Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism” (USAPATRIOT) act was signed into law. It should surprise no one that this 342-page legal tome could be brought together so quickly considering that experiments with “anti-terrorist” legislation and police activity have been going on for years on federal, state and local levels in this country. It was only necessary for the US government to bring together their harshest aspects and create a law that essentially criminalizes all resistance in a timely manner that would guarantee its passage.

The act creates the new crime of “domestic terrorism”. This label covers any act that is deemed dangerous to human life, that violates state or federal law and appears to be intended: 1) to intimidate or coerce a civilian population; 2) to influence the policy of a government through intimidation or coercion; or 3) to affect the conduct of government through mass destruction, assassination or kidnapping. It further defines terrorism as the use of a “weapon or other dangerous device... to cause substantial damage to property.” The act furthermore allows the secretary of state to designate any domestic or foreign group that has ever engaged in violence as a “terrorist organization”. Throughout the various sections of the act are details that effectively undermine the obligation for federal agents and other cops to show probable cause or to have a search warrant, thus permitting the police and the FBI to conduct secret physical searches and surveillance at will. In addition, it undermines every legal right of any immigrant if there is “reasonable ground to believe” that they were involved in terrorism or activities posing a risk to national security or the safety of the community.

An act of war

While it is certainly worthwhile to research the details of this act, what is truly interesting is its language. While the expansion of what police and federal agents are permitted to do in carrying out their repressive activity are stated with clarity, the descriptions of what constitutes terrorism or aid to terrorism are so ambiguous and broad that they encompass every form of revolt, resistance and even dissent. Wildcat strikes or unpermitted demonstration could be defined as potentially dangerous and illegal acts of coercion and intimidation. The stone or brick one picks off the street up to chuck through a bank window is a “dangerous device”. And all of the confrontations with fascists and white supremacists that certain comrades carry out certainly fit the act's definition of terrorism. So the purpose of the act is clear. It is not intended to protect the American people from attack, but rather to protect the American state from the potential revolt of its people. Thus the real significance of the “war on terrorism” declared by Bush becomes clear: *the peace of the market is social war*. The bogeyman of terrorism with a million faces allows the masters and rulers to act without the formality of “rights”. While the American exploited tremble

and rage over foreign terrorists, the ruling terrorists in Washington have acted to criminalize all revolt, to make every tool that the exploited have for fighting them illegal. The USAPATRIOT act was an act of social war against the excluded.

War is peace

The White House has declared it. The current war is distinguished from those of the past by the fact that it is unfolding throughout the world (even if the bombs are still mainly falling on Afghanistan and with some military “aid” quietly slipped to the Philippines and with threats toward a few other nations at the moment) and points to all those who attack “the American way of life” as adversaries. This war will have no end and will use every means, including murder, deception and torture. So the state of permanent war has been declared. “Criminal terrorism” furnishes a representation of evil (of the worst kind) sufficiently believable to authorize the weakening of democratic oratorical precautions. They will kill like always; they will lie like always; they will find it more useful than ever before. But — this is what is new — it will all be done in broad daylight.

That a democratic state *openly* and *decidedly* resorts to violence (against its own population and no longer just against colonized populations and easily identified “dangerous” classes) *for reasons beyond our control*, with none of the usual progressives pursuing security daring to oppose it: this is what constitutes a sufficiently new situation that forebodes further consequences. On other hand, if the margin of maneuver for an active social critique is in danger of being restricted considerably in the years to come, nonetheless it could never be reduced to nothing.

Laws do not determine existing social relationships; they only give them expression in legal form. The law is there to insure the reproduction of social relationships and to confirm them, conforming them to relationships of domination that it translates into legal form. The opportunities for any repressive social legislation, the opportunities for its application or suspension, depend on the relationship of current social forces and not on the methods of policing called upon to enforce them.

It has frequently been demonstrated that repressive legislation doesn’t just seek to strike at the social conflict in act, but to anticipate its future, threatening those who might participate in it. But in the presence of strong social tensions, in the presence of an expanding social movement inclined to fight without yielding before the black mail of fear, repressive legislation is suspended in apprehension of further enflaming the minds. The despicable USAPATRIOT act is no exception. It was not passed in order to defend the United States from a real existing revolutionary assault, but to prevent such a thing. In this way it indicates, negatively, the course to follow in order to rid ourselves of it.

— WL and Hapax

The Weakness of Our Rulers

Currently, there can be no doubt that the American state appears to be strong. It feels confident in openly decreeing an endless global war, in proclaiming a “preemptive strike” policy that permits it to attack any nation that it perceives as a threat, in enacting a law that undermines the “rights” it granted us, in criminalizing every form of resistance and revolt — in short, in declaring

itself publicly to be master of the world and of our lives. It would be foolish to claim that it is doing this out of a present weakness. No, it is confident precisely because the social struggle here is weak. Few are challenging anything deeply, and so the rulers feel strong. But the strength of the rulers always relies on one thing: our compliance. We are the arms, the legs, the torso of this society; when we refuse to obey and begin to take our lives into our own hands, the plans of the rulers fail.

We will not defeat the current war efforts through moralizing or pacifistic bleating. This current “war on terrorism” is in fact one of the most blatant expressions of that war against the exploited and excluded of this world that is social peace. It is necessary not just to refuse their war, but also their peace.

If our desire is freedom — that is the capacity and will to create our own lives — then our task is clear: to refuse to obey and to rise up and destroy this terroristic, war-mongering society and create the lives and world we desire.

Alternatives or Refusal?

The United States government is now demanding support for a war that it has been carrying out on and off for over a decade. It is making broad claims of the threat presented by a second-rate renegade colony, a former puppet that tried to cut a few strings and was transformed into the devil by the American government’s propaganda machine. This war has nothing to do with terrorism (beyond the everyday terrorism carried on by all states, and particularly the American state). Saddam Hussein has made no threats against the United States. There is no evidence that Iraq has the weapon capabilities Bush and crew claim and according to Unscm (the UN investigation committee) reports a great deal of evidence that it does not. The US government’s claims that such weapons — if they existed — would be offered to terrorists for their use is absolutely baseless. Thus, it is absurd to speak of “more just ways to challenge terrorism” or of “exploring alternatives” with regards to this current attempt by the US to garner international support for a war that is already in act. Instead, what we need to speak about and act upon is an absolute refusal of the American government’s crass exploitation of the events of September 11, 2001 to gain support for its blatant acts of aggression and terror against the *people* of Iraq, and absolute insubordination to every call for submission to the necessities of war.

We are currently living in an era when, for all practical intents and purposes, there is a single power ruling throughout the world, the power of Capital. The few enclaves that still exist against this power have little chance of survival as long as we, who live in the heart of the beast, continue to be blind to its real nature and believe that it can be reformed, that it can be made “more just” (as if justice were anything more than the edicts of judges who serve those who rule this world.) And the United States is the greatest representative of this power, militarily and economically.

The end of the duality of superpowers at the end of the 1980’s changed the nature of war, at least as carried out by the great powers. (Of course, this change was already in act decades earlier — after all, weren’t the Korean War and the War in Viet Nam “police actions”?) We no longer see the real contention of nations for power, territory and resources. The great powers like the United States and the European Union already have practical control over all of these. Instead the great powers go to war *to police recalcitrant subjects*. This is why the US is attacking Iraq (and still patrolling Afghanistan and “aiding” the Philippines) and threatening Iran, North Korea, etc.

Looked at this way, it also becomes clear that the USAPATRIOT act, the searches at airports and bus stations, the fear-inducing propaganda efforts, the increased security everywhere *are acts of war*. And not of a “war against terrorism”, which would have had to *start* with the dismantling of the CIA and a half a century of US foreign policy, but rather against the possibility of revolt by the exploited and excluded people here and world-wide as well as against all who dare to refuse control, who dare to refuse “life” as compliant sheep.

If we talk to the representatives of this war-mongering social order, we are still granting them the final say. Such participation is simply participation in our continued slavery. Instead, those of us exploited, excluded or simply disgusted by this social order need to talk with each other about how we can actively refuse the state’s war, encouraging non-compliance, disobedience and revolt, in short, total insubordination to the efforts of the masters of this world to once more send us out to shed each others blood in their interests. As long as the state exists and Capital rules the world, war will continue killing us. Only insubordination and total revolt can bring this to an end, and open the possibility of a world where no one can order anyone else to go out and kill.

An Easy War

In general, Americans are cowards. This has become quite clear since September 11, 2001. Most people are willing to put up with every humiliation in the name of security at airports, bus stations and other places considered “at risk”. They are ready to jump at every wolf-cry of “terrorism” from Bush’s pack of liars. And they are prepared to prostrate themselves before Big Daddy State so that He will keep them safe. They are also ready to support a war that they know will be easy, a bully’s war for which serves no purpose other than to keep the hysteria of the “war on terrorism” raging.

If this were likely to be another Vietnam War, this cowardice might be worthy. It might cause more people to oppose this war out of sheer chauvinistic fear for “American lives”. After all, we don’t want “our boys” getting killed.

But war has changed. Thanks to the technological developments of the past twenty years, it is becoming easier and easier for the great powers who have access to it to carry out their acts of destruction from a distance, without a care. For the most part, mistakes will only kill foreign civilians, those residing in the territory under attack. American casualties would be few, almost entirely the result of “friendly fire”. So it is easy for Americans to thoughtlessly accept further American aggression against Iraq or anywhere else the government desires it. It requires no courage whatsoever, simply continued submission to the will of our rulers.

Courage now lies precisely in the refusal of this war. But we must be clear about what this war is in order to understand what refusal means. In the same way that the current social order tries to make each new disaster brought on by the economic-technological devastation of the earth appear to be a separate incident easy to repair, the rulers of this world try to make the current American war-cry appear as a distinct event. This is not the case.

War has been the normal state of life throughout most of the world for decades. Not just in places like Rwanda, Palestine, Yugoslavia or Somalia, but in the hearts of American cities as well, where *if you are neither black nor poor nor possibly “illegal”*, then the police won’t shoot at you. Otherwise, there is no guarantee.

The real war, the one behind all the others that fuels them is the war of the rulers against all those they rule, the war to maintain their power in the face of all actual *or potential* revolt. Pacifist requests to the rulers to find “peaceful resolutions” to their conflicts can only help to maintain this ongoing war because it is the very function of the state and of all forms of rule. Thus, appealing to “our representatives” (and are we really so willing to give up our own capacity to decide, to allow someone else to “represent “ us?) can at best change one minor scene in the global theater of pain, while leaving the state of universal war intact.

The illusion that capitalism and the democratic state could offer abundance and freedom for all has proven to be the most blatant lie, and unrest is a worldwide reality. But the potential for revolution is perpetually recuperated into ethnic and religious conflicts worldwide and into gang war and racial hatred here. And all of this plays into the hands of those who rule us allowing them to advance their war against us — now through the so-called “war on terrorism” with its new laws and “security” measures — criminalizing more and more expressions of dissent, resistance and revolt.

Thus, real refusal of the current war effort must take the form of *insubordination*, not of petition. Disobedience on all fronts, the refusal to negotiate in any way with the state, the refusal in the full sense *to fight their war*. But the refusal of their war must also be *the refusal of their peace*, because the two are one. Thus, the refusal of their war must also be the active struggle to destroy the state and capital everywhere.

When Peace Is War

We are all aware that the United States is gearing up for an attack on Iraq. The formalities are still being worked out, but at this point, US military action seems almost certain. But this war will not be without resistance. There have already been numerous protests against the war, and the attack on the recruiting station in San Jose certainly seems to be a response to the call for war as well. When the actual fighting begins, more resistance can be expected. But resistance to this war cannot simply rely on methods and concepts from the past. An “anti-war” movement that is not also an attempt to completely overturn the ruling order no longer makes any sense. Therefore it is necessary for anarchists to make a serious analysis of the situation that is arising.

Anarchists have already put out a number of calls for non-compliance and insubordination toward the war effort, and these are certainly worthy endeavors. But to understand what this would mean requires careful examination of the situation. A ‘zine of “proletarian grumbling” out of London called *The Whinger* points out a few things we should consider in developing our resistance:

Even if there was a general strike in the west it would probably be too late to stop an attack. They no longer need the labour of the bulk of us in the “developed” world directly in their war effort. In the west they no longer need mass conscript armies or mass forced militarization of labour in specific industrial war production to directly sustain the war effort. Most of the weapons are now produced beforehand under capitalist “peace-time” in dispersed commercial arms production which is not labour intensive. Much of the “fighting” by US or british or European forces can be done by privileged protected elite professional technicians and officer-bureaucrats, leaving some shooting and mopping up and patrolling on the ground for regular soldiers. This sort of changes the role of regular soldiers from an attacking and war-fighting role to an occupying and heavy policing role.

There are a number of significant points that can be drawn from these observations. While a number of opponents of the war are seeking to play on the possibility of another Vietnam as a way of inspiring wider opposition, this is, in fact, very unlikely. For all practical intents and purposes, the US has been carrying on a war against Iraq since 1991, with no use of ground troops since the end of Operation Desert Storm and only the occasional bombardment, relying instead on the UN-sanctioned embargo to impoverish and kill Iraqis. Unlike the war in Vietnam, this operation has not had any visible effects on the daily lives of the American populace. The current effort to heat up this war is simply intended to get rid of a former ally who has become a liability to increase US control in the region. On this level, it has far more in common with the “humanitarian bombing” of Yugoslavia than with the Vietnam war. And we can assume that this war will be fought in a similar fashion: intensive aerial bombing with high tech weapons causing a fair amount of “collateral damage” consisting of Iraqi civilian dead and wounded, but few if any American casualties, followed by an occupation by an armed, military “peace-keeping” force. In fact, the Bush administration has been talking of setting up an interim American-run military government ruled by a US military officer, similar to that which was set up in Japan following World War II. The point is that this specific war is likely to be very short. It is the military role of “peace-keeping” that will continue.

In fact this war (like every war) is the product of capital’s *peace-time* policies on every level. Contrary to Orwell’s thinking, “war is peace” is not a totalitarian “big lie”. It is, in fact, an accurate description of the current functioning of the ruling order, though it may be more precise to say, “Peace is war”. This is what we need to keep in mind as we seek to build resistance to this war. My grumbling proletarian friend goes on to say: “...the slogan ‘sabotage the war economy’ is actually strictly speaking mistaken. The problem is that the majority of us are not directly in a war economy at the moment, most of us are still very much in a ‘peace-time’ economy and that is what we need to sabotage and socially subvert.” For the ruling order, peace-time is simply the time to calmly prepare for the wars to come. With the current military technologies and methods, most of us in the west will rarely experience any significant change in our daily routine due to a war such as the one proposed. We will continue to experience capital’s “peace”, that fine civilized peace that so bores, yet pacifies, us. Therefore, any effective resistance to this war must also be a subversive attack against the peace of the ruling order. So it is not so much in terms of any immediate effect on the current war effort as on the level of the necessity to destroy current social order in order to make wars of this sort impossible that the practice of non-compliance and insubordination becomes significant.

But “peace is war” not only because the ruling class uses peace-time to prepare for future wars, but more significantly because their “peace” is itself carried on as a war. Who are the peacekeepers in Bosnia, in Kosovo, in Afghanistan? They are *armed military personnel*. And even on the streets of the cities here in the west, peace is maintained by armed people in uniform, often with military training. The police also constitute an *arm* of the state, and those who live in poor neighborhoods often know what it is like to be occupied and under the threat of death or capture if they make the wrong move. Consider as well the obvious militarization of the police involved in crowd control during demonstrations and protests. Peacekeeping is really nothing other than war-making. Thus, it can be said that the entire world lives in a state of permanent war, the unending violence through which our rulers maintain their power.

And so no call for peace makes sense any more. It would simply be a call to maintain the order that sustains war. There can be no negotiation, no coming to terms with this civilized world.

It requires war to suppress the desperation of those it has excluded that is breaking through its doors as everything falls apart. All we can oppose to the bombs over Iraq, if we want our opposition to be more than symbolic, a mere appeasing of our consciences, is class attack. We must liberate the smoldering hatred and hurl it against those who have stolen our lives and the lives of all the exploited of the earth. Identifying the common enemy — the owners, the rulers, the technological and productive network, the totality of a civilization based on domination and exploitation — is the primary form of solidarity toward the bombed and the refugees. Attacking this enemy is the only real tool we have for transforming the wars imposed by the social order — in which we end up killing each other in our real enemy's interests — into a fight for liberation from exploitation and domination, from every form of rule.

No Time for Begging

For anyone who seriously opposes the war against Iraq, the time for begging is over. The US government has made it clear that it will make the war it has wanted for months. To continue to make “demands” of those in power is now a blatant absurdity, and it is necessary to consider the actions we can take on our own to obstruct the war effort. But in considering such matters it is necessary to have a clearer understanding of the full meaning of this situation.

Many of those that I have seen out on the streets at the anti-war demonstrations have been proclaiming their patriotism alongside their opposition to the war. The time has come to recognize that patriotism, the love of the fatherland, is the ideology by which every war between nations supports itself. Patriotism always only serves the rulers. It is the ideological weapon that they use to divide the exploited people of the world, to convince them to fight each other rather than rising up against their rulers. An opposition to this war that is going to know how and where to aim its actions will need to reject patriotism and the concept of the fatherland completely. As long as these continue to exist, there will be war.

It is also important to realize that as significant a role as oil may play in determining the US insistence on going to war, there are other factors that are equally, or possibly more, important in this decision. At least among radicals, it is generally recognized that a global marketplace has been developing over the past few decades. But it often goes unnoticed that the same processes through which this has come about have provided the state with the means for developing a global network for policing the world. This network consists of international institutions, military forces and alliances, police forces on all levels and the technologies of information, communications and surveillance systems. So the question has arisen: who is to control this system? The US and the UN both agree that the world must be policed and that when petty tyrants disturb the peace of the great tyrants, they must be put in their place. Their disagreement is over how to manage this. The UN desires a broader based multi-lateral management of global policing under the various international institutions such as the UN itself and the World Court. The US wants unilateral management for itself, with other nations and institutions supporting it. In either case, the great powers still make the decisions about existence that we are forced to live through. Global policing, regardless of who manages it, means the intrusion of policing into every aspect of our daily lives. It is the ongoing system of violence through which the rulers of this world impose social peace. If opposition to this war is to be anything more than taking sides about who is to police us, then it must also be opposition to the peace offered by the rulers of this world — in

other words, opposition to policing, social control, the state and the entire social order based on domination and exploitation.

Bush, Blair and their pack of warmongers have played heavily on people's fears to promote their agenda on Iraq. But this is nothing new. "Rule through fear" (which was among the first definitions of terrorism) has always been the basis of the state. Behind every ruling power stand the club and the gun. Even the democratic smile masks the barracks and the prison. For years now the American state has used the threat of crime to expand police powers and spread the tools of surveillance and control across the urban terrains transforming cities into open-air minimum security prisons of preventive detentions, and make us all increasingly suspicious of each other so that the potential of real dialogue is suppressed. Democratic states take a sophisticated approach to "rule through fear". They focus the fears of their subjects on an "other" — "criminals", "drug addicts", "terrorists" — convincing people to view the arms of the state, the police and the military, as their protectors. But an end to war has to be an end to "rule through fear" in all its forms. And that means putting an end to the state.

So resistance to this war must necessarily become practical resistance to the state in its totality. The functioning of the war apparatus requires obedience both by military personnel and by the population as a whole; it requires the flow of various items necessary for the war operation; it requires the smooth functioning of various institutions and apparatuses. A serious response to the war must thus include total insubordination on our part, and the development of methods for supporting individuals in the military who choose, in whatever way, to refuse to obey orders. It must include direct action on all levels against the war machine and the institutions that support it. The targets are everywhere; one needs only a bit of imagination and a few trustworthy accomplices.

Once we recognize that putting an end to war requires putting an end to all the institutions of social control and exploitation, i.e., to the state, the absurdity of demanding peace from these institutions becomes clear. In fact, we have nothing to say to them. Instead we need to talk with each other, creating the space and time for real dialogue, finding those we can act with and taking actions we ourselves decide. As the US government has been pushing its agenda at the top, in Argentina, in Bolivia, in Algeria, and numerous other places, the exploited have been finding ways to act on their own against their oppression, creating assemblies for real discussion among themselves, reappropriating what they need to create their lives and attacking the institutions that dominate them. The time for begging indeed is over. It is time to take back our lives.

Against the war, against the state: total insubordination

Endless War

The war in Iraq is now officially over. Of course, U.S. and allied troops continue to occupy the country and casualties continue, just as in Afghanistan. The fact that no weapons of mass destruction have surfaced makes the arrogance and irrationality of the US regime all the more blatant. At the start of the war even some people in the American media felt compelled to write of "Empire" when describing reactions around the world. But without an analysis of the full context of these events, this war remains simply another random atrocity among the rest.

The concept of "Empire" can certainly be a useful tool in analyzing the nature of the world we are facing today. The networks of economic and political power have spread themselves across

the globe forming a web of domination and exploitation from which nothing escapes. Even people in the most remote places find themselves being dispossessed of the capacity to create their own lives as the pollutants of industry contaminate the lands from which they have made their lives or capital itself directly intrudes with dams, mines and other environmentally devastating projects. Thus everyone becomes dependent on a social order that is not based on the needs and desires of the individuals who make it up, but on the need of the system to maintain and expand itself at any cost. Certainly the metaphor of Empire seems fitting.

But in using this metaphor, it is essential to clearly analyze the nature of this Empire. Over and over again since the war against Iraq began, I have heard people speak of the *American Empire*. Certainly, the United States seems to be ascendant in the control of the Empire right now. But this is simply the current situation in the relationships of power in the world, in the competitions and intrigues between the various parts of the ruling class. It is necessary to recognize this, because otherwise we will be easily drawn into false oppositions, becoming pawns of one or another faction of the ruling class or those who want to become so.

The Empire is in fact a global network of domination. This network has not just now come into being. On a technological and institutional level, it has been developing since the end of World War II, when advanced technological development moved largely into the hands of the military, seeking means to advance social control. But it was the swift advances in cybernetic, communications and surveillance technologies beginning in the '60's and '70's that provided an essential material basis for this network. These technologies combine with the international political and economic institutions, military forces and alliances and police forces on all levels to provide the state with the means for policing the world. By the early 1990's, the infrastructure of this network was in place and one could indeed talk of a global Empire of capital.

But the nature of both the technological and institutional means through which this Empire has developed has significant implications. While it is true that certain factions of the ruling class may be in the ascendant at various times, as the American state is now, the real operation of power in the Empire is in fact decentralized. The networks of information, communications and surveillance are able to spread control precisely by operating as a *network*, spread thinly across the social terrain. The specialization required both technologically and in the operation of bureaucracies also serves to prevent this Empire from building its Winter Palace. This is why it is a mistake to speak of the American Empire, even though the US is currently the greatest power within the Empire. It is not enough to bring down the current US regime or to weaken its power if we want to bring down the Empire, because its tentacles are everywhere. This is why those like Negri, who see European political unity as a potential opposition to Empire, are fools.

Due to the specialization necessary to the maintenance of the imperial network and the competition that is an inherent aspect of the capitalist ruling class, the power of Empire is not merely decentralized, but also fragmented. Every faction of the ruling class agrees upon the necessity of global social control, on the necessity of policing the world, in order to guarantee their wealth and power. But they cannot agree on how to divide that wealth and power, or even how to manage the process of global policing. Certainly, one of the reasons why the latest war in Iraq developed as it did was a disagreement between different factions of the ruling class over how to manage the policing of the world. The UN in general wanted a multilateral approach involving the relatively equal cooperation of a number of powerful states, whereas the US desired a unilateral approach of alliance under US control. For now, it is having its way. But this conflict between the UN and the US was nothing more than a disagreement over management techniques. The

only peace France, Germany, Russia and the UN wish to maintain is the *social peace* that stems from the fear of the exploited to revolt against their masters, and that provides the rulers with a peaceful sleep. One merely has to look at Chechnya or the Ivory Coast to see this.

The social peace of the Empire is, in fact, endless war. When the rulers of this world say they are making war in order to preserve the peace, they are not necessarily lying. Peace, for them, means precisely the maintenance of their power with as little disturbance from those they rule as possible. Yet the maintenance and expansion of their power can only happen through the dispossession and exploitation of the majority of human beings, so unrest is inevitable. Most of the exploited do not have a clear understanding of the nature of current social relationships and so through campaigns of fear and hate the rulers can redirect their rage into nationalistic, ethnic or religious conflicts. Thus, civil wars rage particularly in poorer and more desperate parts of the globe. In addition, the smooth functioning of capitalism requires that such conflicts be kept at an adequately low level. Thus, the great powers must police the world, and this policing is carried on through their armed forces. A system based on dispossession, exploitation and domination can never do without policing. Institutional violence or the threat thereof is essential to the maintenance of political and economic power. Thus, Empire means endless war. The *Pax Romana* is maintained with battalions, tanks, guns, tear gas and “smart” bombs. This is one reason why, while still in Afghanistan, killing and enforcing the will of the world’s masters, the US and its allies started a war in Iraq as well. While it may be true that this particular war would not be happening if Bush were not president, we can be certain that there would be others, as indeed there are others even now.

With the initiation of the “war on terrorism”, endless war has, in fact, become the open policy of the world’s rulers. “Terrorism” is a nebulous concept especially as those in power use the term. Their aim, of course, is not to define a precise problem and deal with it, but to create a specter to haunt the dreams of the people they rule. It is a sophisticated form of rule through fear in which the state convinces people to accept more and more generalized repression in their daily lives by presenting the image of a fearful and threatening outsider from which the state will protect them with its military, its police and its technologies of social control spread across the globe and into every sphere of daily life. But to maintain this image, the state must find terrorism everywhere. The nebulous way in which the term is used makes this easy enough. The terrorists, so we are told, are in fact everywhere — hidden in secret cells across the globe. So the policing of the world, particularly the fight against terrorism, is an endless task that justifies every use of force and every sort of repression.

In fact, war is simply one of the ongoing disasters imposed by Empire, because Empire is the global system of Capital/State. Along with war, it also brings ongoing environmental disaster, increasing precariousness on every level, social disintegration, the degradation of language, ...the list of disasters could go on endlessly as the disasters themselves do. The endless flow of disasters is now so evident that those in power can no longer even pretend that there is some business-as-usual that runs smoothly to strive for. Instead they readily admit the disasters, but present them in a piecemeal fashion as separate and unrelated events. They are presented as “natural catastrophes”, “human error” or tragic inevitabilities. And increasingly, they are presented to us in a technical language that reinforces the idea that we must rely on the authorities and their experts who have the real understanding of events. In this way those in power use our fear of the disasters caused by power to reinforce their rule.

The technological and institutional systems through which the Empire operates are far too cumbersome for anyone to truly control. Each specialist, expert or functionary knows only his or her small portion of the operation. The machine itself lumbers on like a juggernaut, outside of anyone's control. These systems were developed this way in order that the control would exist within the machinery itself. The point was to eliminate to the greatest extent possible the capacity for willful activity on the part of the individual. But this is precisely why the current social reality is one of ongoing disaster. In their lumbering, these juggernauts set off catastrophes that no one can predict, and the real role of experts is to try to limit the consequences of these catastrophes — or increasingly today to simply create explanations that may make them more acceptable to people.

This is the context of the war in Iraq. Those who have opposed this war in favor of “a peaceful solution” to this one problem taken out of context still support the endless war of the Empire. Though this war is officially over, military activity continues in Iraq, as well as in Afghanistan, Columbia and the Philippines. The supposedly “peaceful” French government is imposing its “order” on the Ivory Coast through military force. The Israeli military continues to bulldoze Palestinian villages and kill young children along with alleged “militants”. And Russia is enforcing its control in Chechnya. And within cities throughout the world, armed police enforce the order of the rulers on the exploited, harassing and even killing the most dispossessed — the homeless, the undocumented immigrants, refugees of all sorts.

So it is essential that opposition to this war become opposition to the endless procession of wars and catastrophes, opposition to the Empire, in other words, opposition to the state, capital and the totality of the technological and institutional apparatuses through which the ruling class maintains power. Such an opposition does not consist in creating a “Counter-Empire”, a mirror image of that which we oppose, but in destroying the Empire in its totality. Therefore, it will not function as a political opposition, as a force contending for power. Its methods will not be the methods of politicians, contending with each other for mass popular support. It will rather be a revolt of the barbarians.

Unlike the Roman Empire though, the current Empire has no outside. So where do the barbarians come from? In fact, the current Empire is creating its own barbarians in its midst. The process of dispossession through which the masters accumulate their wealth and power, places more and more of the exploited into highly precarious positions. Endless war and catastrophe throws millions onto the road as refugees. More and more find themselves homeless or jobless. The “dreams” of high-level consumption become meaningless to these people. What do they have left to say to the rulers of this world? And besides how does one say it, when one doesn't speak the language of the state? This civilization offers them nothing.

What distinguishes the revolt of the barbarians from the opposition of alternative politicians, of the parties, unions and organizations that claim to represent the exploited or whatever specific cause, is that the former makes no demands. It is an expression of rage that says all it has to say in the burning of banks and employment offices, the trashing of military recruitment centers, the fragging of officers. Such actions leave no room for negotiation or dialogue with power. If those who carry out such acts are often not too clear about their reasons, one thing is clear: their reasons are *not* reasons of state.

So an opposition to this war that is not a mere questioning of how the endless war is managed must also be a matter of barbaric revolt. Total insubordination is just the beginning. The attack against the institutions through which this war operates is essential. But I am not speaking here

about a military attack. The technological, organizational and structural formations necessary to make the global network of domination possible are also the source of its vulnerability. In order to spread itself across the globe, the Empire has had to decentralize its institutions, structures and technological framework and accept the fragmentation inherent to its functioning. Thus, there is no Winter Palace to attack. Instead the targets are everywhere, and the methods and tools for attacking them are available to everyone. In such a context, the methods for developing, spreading and carrying out the struggles cannot be the same as those used by politicians of whatever kind. To continually march with signs to some symbolic institution of power in order to hear the various alternative politicians sing to the choir implies that we still have something to say to those who rule us. Better to stop listening to speeches and start listening and talking to each other. Better to stop waving signs in front of the institutions of power and to start attacking them. Better to learn to let the mass break up into smaller conscious groups capable of actually bringing a city to a halt and possibly inflicting some damage on the institutions of power. The war in Iraq has officially ended. The war against the exploited will not end until the Empire of Capital and the State is razed to the ground.

Against the endless war of Empire, against the state, against the civilization of domination,

the barbaric joy of class war and individual and social insurrection

The War Continues

Despite the proclamations of victory last May, the war in Iraq continues. Not that this is any surprise. After all, the aim of the US government was not simple to move in quickly, destroy an enemy and then leave, but to invade and occupy. It was inevitable that there would be resistance, and this means ongoing warfare, ongoing death and destruction.

By this time, even the Bush administration doesn't talk of "Weapons of Mass Destruction" as a reason for the war. The deception behind those claims has become far too evident, and it is in the best interest of the ruling regime to sweep them under the rug as best it can. The rhetoric that the president has been using recently is much more reminiscent of those 19th century American politicians who saw in the United States the salvation of the world. The US military is in Iraq "to spread democracy".

What is interesting about this rhetoric though, for those with any knowledge of history and any capacity to read between the lines is that it does reveal the true aims of the US in Iraq. As should be clear to anyone who has read *WD* in the past, I have no illusions about democracy. It has never had anything to do with freedom or self-determination; rather it refers to a form of rule. More specifically, in the present era, it refers to that form of rule exercised by the United States government and the governments of the European Union (along with increasing numbers of governments around the world as the hegemony of capital is more thoroughly established worldwide). The ideological essence of democracy lies in the conception of an abstract equivalence of every person. This abstract equivalence is realized by the legal reduction of every one to the lowest common denominator (it is no accident that one of the most common phrases heard in the assertion of rights between individuals in conflict is: "You're no better than me!"). This is maintained through rights and obligations which the government is to protect and enforce.

This abstract equivalence hides very real differences, particularly differences in wealth and power. The owners of the world are merely citizens like you and I; the rulers are just our representatives. These are the swindles that blind us to the fact that our lives are not our own and never can be in the framework of democracy and the social system it upholds. For even if we were to “self-manage” the current order of things through “direct democracy”, the system itself, with its abstract equivalence and its reified community would continue to define our existence on its terms, in order to guarantee its reproduction.

Although there are democratic regimes all over the world at this point, the United States maintains a hold over the ideology of democracy. This is why, for example, duly elected heads of state in countries whose policies contradict US interests can be referred to as “dictators”, whereas countries with absolute rulers whose policies coincide with US interests can be referred to as “democracies”. Thus, when the Bush administration says that the reason for the invasion and occupation of Iraq is to establish democracy, this is not the lie some would claim. The administration is simply saying that they are in Iraq to establish and enforce US hegemony there.

In fact, US hegemony would most likely be served best by the establishment of a representative system. Iraq is made up of a variety of contending factions — various Shi’ite sects, Kurdish groups, Sunni sects and the secular currents. The establishment of a representative democratic system under US tutelage could provide a structure for these contending groups to carry on their conflicts through political as opposed to military means, providing the social peace necessary for the US to maintain its control in the region with the fewest possible hassles.

So the US claim that it is in Iraq to establish democracy is simply another way of saying that it invaded Iraq to establish and enforce its control in the region. In other words, it is an admission that this military operation is nothing other than an invasion and occupation. This is why there was never any real welcome of the troops by Iraqis (beyond a few events staged for the cameras). One does not welcome invaders, one resists them.

And so the US has wound up in a war that is not likely to end real soon. Destruction, atrocities, injuries and deaths mount on all sides, and the American soldiers in Iraq are not prepared for what they are facing. Due to the quick disintegration of the Iraqi government at the outset of the invasion, no truly organized Iraqi military force currently exists. The resistance in Iraq is, thus, basically a relatively unorganized guerrilla operation (or more likely a number of independent guerrilla operations). Some aspects of it seem to be more formally military, while other aspects are reminiscent of the Intifada in Palestine. American soldiers have never been particularly well-trained for dealing with this sort of resistance.

Taking this into consideration while also looking at the way in which the proclaimed reasons for which this war was begun — to find and destroy the supposed Weapons of Mass Destruction and to bring an end to the alleged connections between Saddam Hussein and Al-Qaeda — have proven to be swindles, one is left to wonder what morale could possibly be left among American troops. Certainly, sharing a bit of turkey with the Turkey in the white house isn’t enough to overcome the ongoing reality that these soldiers are facing in Iraq everyday, not just in terms of the dangers they face, but also in terms of the atrocities they are constrained to carry out in the name of those capitalist ideals of humanity and democracy. Certainly, mutiny and desertion seem like the most reasonable response, but in this world reason generally serves power, and the reasons that contradict power are labeled crime or madness.

The people of Iraq and the occupying soldiers consist mostly of individuals who feel powerless in the face of forces far greater than them. Like most of the powerless, the American soldiers

generally resign themselves to the circumstances they are in “only following orders”. It is hard to know how much of the Iraqi population is involved in the resistance or to what extent it is controlled by various factions contending for power. So I cannot say if the Iraqis are equally resigned. From here, it seems not.

Ultimately, the war in Iraq is an expression of the war of the rulers against those they rule. This war is always going on as a preemptive attack against potential rebellion. The rulers fight it on many levels. Certainly, convincing poor people and people with few opportunities within this society to join the military in order to “better” themselves is a tactic in this war, as is the rousing of patriotic fervor. What better way to counter a potentially dangerous enemy than to convince them that your interests are their interests? The democratic ideology makes this particularly easy. After all, aren’t we all “equal” before the law? Don’t we all have the same rights, as well as obligations to the “common good”? When the work ethic combines with the democratic myth, even the disparity between a Bill Gates and the homeless panhandler sleeping in some downtown doorway can be justified. After all, we are told, he worked hard for all that wealth. He’s just another citizen like you or I. Any of us could do it too... So the ideological framework of society works to convince the exploited that this world really can function in their favor...

And yet, the war of the rulers against the poor has never stopped taking its toll. As soldiers are sent off to Iraq, here in American cities, the war against the exploited is on the offensive as the criminalization of homelessness advances. In many cities, homeless camps are subject to sweeps, laws are being passed making sleeping in “public” areas such as parks illegal day or night, laws against sitting on sidewalks are being passed. Little by little, every aspect of the existence of the homeless that is not institutionalized is being criminalized, thus forcing homeless people into increasing dependence on institutions. In addition, the authorities promote perspectives that drive a wedge between the homeless and the rest of the exploited. One recent campaign along this line has been the production of cards which list all of the charitable and government bureaucracies that exist to manage the homeless. These cards are available to anyone in quantity. Rather than giving cash or food to panhandlers, one is to give them these cards, thus reinforcing the idea that they must be processed through the proper channels to meet their needs. After all, if they go through the proper channels, in our democratic society, certainly their rights will be upheld.

So indeed, on all fronts, the American ruling class is fighting for democracy, because democracy is perhaps the most effective swindle that any ruling class has ever come up with to keep those they rule in line. Abstract equality, the ideology of rights, the myth of the “common good” and the work ethic all work together to blind the exploited to the real conditions of their existence, to create false hopes for changing those conditions within the context of this society and to allow the masters of this world to present their interests as the interests of all. Our liberation depends on our rejection of the democratic swindle, not in favor of some other form of rule, but as an aspect of the rejection of all rule, of every form of domination and exploitation. If the most reasonable response the American soldiers in Iraq could make to their situation is mutiny and desertion, our most reasonable response here is to move toward insurrection through autonomous direct action and attack against the institutions that dominate our lives. But our reasons are not those of the rulers, and will appear to them as barbarous madness. But for their opinion, why should we give a damn?

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