

A Project of Liberation

Insurrectionary Anarchists of the Coast Salish Territories

2004

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February, 2003

“Theory must also take into account the human element; it must accord a place to courage, to boldness, even to rashness. The Art of War has to deal with living and with moral forces, the consequence of which is that it can never attain the absolute and positive... courage and self-reliance are principles quite essential to war; consequently, theory must only set up such rules as allow ample scope for all degrees and varieties of these necessary and noblest of military virtues. In daring there may still be wisdom, and prudence as well, only they are estimated by a different standard of value.”

– Clausewitz, “On War”

In all the history of the class struggle the exploited have always resisted their oppression. Often in individual and isolated ways, and sometimes in social movements leading to mass insurrections. Throughout the history of the class war innumerable theories, organizations, and movements have developed in opposition to capitalism, and insurrectionary anarchism, being one tendency among many, should be clarified as having many real and significant differences from all the others.

In the history of the clash between classes anarchists have defined themselves as a conscious minority within the movement of the exploited, a group that moves with the current of the social struggle against capitalism and the State. Insurrectionary anarchists do not act as a minority outside the movement, attempting to organize, manage and control the mass of the exploited, to subject the oppressed to the discipline of a single organization, trade union or political party, but instead act as accomplices to all exploited people on principles of solidarity and mutual aid.

Anarchists identify their enemies as the dominant class and the institutions of oppression and they do not hesitate to attack their enemies. They do not wait for orders from on high, or for permission to act against oppression, but instead analyze the reality of the social clash which they find themselves in, combine with comrades on the basis of affinity, and then immediately set out to assault all the structures of domination. Insurrectionary anarchists see the struggle in qualitative rather than quantitative terms and understand that every small, destructive action taken against capitalism is a contribution to the overall social clash. A revolution is undoubtedly the act of a mass of exploited people rising in rebellion, but it is not through recruitment and discipline under a single organization that such an outburst comes to be. It should be obvious that it is useful for anarchists to clarify their ideas and to present them to the mass of the exploited, but it is not propaganda alone that will overturn existing conditions. Anarchists should be distinguished from other revolutionaries because they act for themselves, against their own oppression, and in solidarity with all the oppressed people of the world. They do not seek to control or direct the social war, and instead intervene in the movement of the exploited through direct action and participation in mass organizations that are based on principles of self-management of the struggle and uncompromising conflict with the class enemy. Anarchists fight to awaken a spirit of revolt across all of society, to completely destroy the economy of exploitation.

Insurrectionary anarchists have ideas and methods of action that can be of great importance to the oppressed. A clear rejection of dominant class morality and law, a willingness to engage in di-

rect action, a commitment to permanent struggle, and a passion for freedom, all can contribute to a revolutionary movement to overturn the present order. The importance of the insurrectionary anarchist minority to the mass of the exploited is not in the anarchist's quality of leadership or advancement in class consciousness. It is in anarchist action, in attacks on capitalist institutions, and acts of solidarity with those suffering oppression. Any exploited person can contribute to the struggle to overthrow the exploiters. Insurrectionary anarchists merely demonstrate useful tools in the social war, and by striking the enemy in simple and direct ways provide points of reference that can be put to use by all.

Passivity, resignation and doubt can easily give way to determination and defiance. A strategy of waiting can be thrown aside in favour of a strategy of attack. Small affinity groups can immediately begin to organize direct actions against specific institutions of capitalism; schools, workplaces, businesses, and all the other prisons. Anarchists can participate in base structures, mass organizations that are not vehicles for anarchist ideology, but are instead tools with which to dismantle specific repressive structures of the capitalist State. Bosses, landlords, politicians, and all the other cops can be identified and attacked. Capital can be destroyed to make room for life.

Insurgent-S

Insurrectionary Anarchists of the Coast Salish Territories
(Vancouver, Canada)

Activist Practice and Revolutionary Struggle

It's out of fashion to be a revolutionary. A lot of people have grown up over the past few years and moved on to more mature projects. Direct action against the class of exploiters and their institutions is dismissed, ignored, rejected or denounced.

The class conflict between the rich and the poor, the exploiter and the exploited, is obvious to everyone, but the orientation of those who claim to specialize in class struggle has changed. It's now unfashionable to claim a revolutionary perspective. Specialization has deepened, and various individuals and groups increasingly define themselves as social activists, and in many cases, the radical sector of the social democratic movement. Activists keep themselves busy by organizing endless meetings, educational forums that resemble the worst type of university lectures, distribution of literature that is not informative to anyone, and pointless protest marches that could be mistaken for funeral processions.

Activist practice is the natural consequence of activist theory, and it rejects revolutionary struggle and the autonomous organization of attacks on the structures of capitalism. Activist groups tend to organize under the model of the political party. They draft a rigid political program and work to recruit a membership that will adopt it. Activist organizations, both those structured with authoritarian leadership and those that make decisions democratically, demand that the individuals who make up their membership flatten their opinions and come to a lowest common denominator consensus. Activist organizations and political parties see their primary task as building their membership and mobilizing masses of people, as this directly relates to the amount of political power an organization can gain by appearing to represent the interests of the masses. Quantity overtakes quality, while organizations struggle for legitimacy in the arena of middle-class politics and corporate media presentations. The direct material struggle of the oppressed

becomes a bargaining piece in negotiations with the class enemy.

Activists continue to place special importance on the role of the trade unions, despite the increasing tendency of the unions towards abandoning the struggle in favour of compromise, and the global shift in the capitalist economy from the manufacturing to the service sector, which is resulting in the decline of unionization.

Activists continue to spout off vague and abstract rhetoric in a language people increasingly do not understand or have no interest in listening to.

We need to mobilize the masses, they say.

We ask, what masses?

That alienates people.

What class of people?

Now is not the time.

Then when?

Activist practice affects the struggle of the exploited in many negative ways. Although individual, isolated acts of sabotage and absenteeism are common among workers, there is a growing distaste for all the traditional forms of political and social organization. Apathy, passivity and defeatist attitudes are also rampant, and there are still many naïve souls looking for a saviour in the form of a charismatic political leader, playing into a cycle of betrayal and disappointment. People expect nothing to change and this attitude contributes to the continuation of this system of exploitation.

The alternative to all this, in our view, is in the growing desire to resist domination and our ability to develop an insurrectionary social movement. Oppressed individuals must self-organize a project that is antagonistic and uncompromising towards the class enemy. Individuals can form small affinity groups that come together around a common perspective and then dissolve when they have outlived their function. Affinity groups can then build base structures, mass organizations with precise objectives and a hostile position towards all political forces. Acts of sabotage can also be points of reference and anti-capitalist insurgency can spread throughout society. With an insurrectionary orientation and practice we can potentially contribute to a revolution that will overthrow the economy of control and the class who benefits from it. Those who seek dignity and freedom should settle for nothing less.

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Insurrectionary Anarchists of the Coast Salish Territories

Vancouver, Canada

June 29, 2003

Towards An Insurgent Social Movement in Vancouver

by Insurgent-S

March 7, 2003

“It is not us that they must remember, but their struggle, because the struggle is theirs. We are simply an opportunity in that struggle. We are something extra.”

– Alfredo Bonanno

The constant question that stares all revolutionaries in the face is the question of organization, the question of strategy and the forms that struggle must take in order to contribute to the

development of a social movement against the capitalist State.

For anarchists this question has been given considerable debate and practical experimentation, and a variety of tendencies have evolved often in opposition to each other.

In the context of Vancouver, and the current social clash in the city, it would seem to me that there are some insurrectionary anarchist ideas that could be of use to revolutionaries and the exploited mass in general. Not in terms of the importance of anarchist ideas in themselves or any desire for a prominent place for anarchists at the head of the movement, but simply because the practical application of these insurrectionary ideas could lead to the widening of the social clash in general, or a rupture in the capitalist economy that might open the door to greater struggles in the future.

In Vancouver, at the present time, there could be said to be two currents broad enough to be called social movements. The first would be the loose and sporadically active movement against the Liberal government's capitalist restructuring, the cuts to social programs and the public sector. The second would be the recent movement against the impending U.S.-led war on Iraq. Both of these involve masses of people and an array of diverse social sectors mobilizing in the streets together against common enemies. And in my estimation both of these movements have reached a crucial juncture, a dire need for a progressive push forward towards greater conflict, the achievement of concrete gains, and the spreading use of insurgent direct action tactics throughout the mass.

There is an undeniable point of tension that is being reached. There is a point where the symbolic marches and rallies begin to make those involved feel more powerless and ineffectual. There is a need to move beyond spectator politics, towards popular resistance and the active involvement of those taking part in these mobilizations. Will the movement surge in the direction of violent and open class conflict or simply degenerate and disappear? And what will the revolutionaries do at the crucial moment? Will they find useful ways to intervene in the battle, or will they be left to the side by the enraged, exploited masses? Will the strategy of waiting that some hold to be the only "realistic" one actually contribute to the decline of any potential social movement? Vancouver revolutionaries are going to have to ask themselves what the next step is and how to break away from all the dead traditions of the past.

I think these are important questions. Questions that many are not willing to face up to.

There is often a certain amount of ego involved, and defensiveness, and the danger is always present that the perceived needs of an individual or an organization will come to take precedence over the movement as a whole. There is a stubborn commitment to tired and outdated methods of political organizing that have long outlived their relevance to the reality of the social struggles currently taking place. There is a point where the desire to belong to an organization outweighs the passion for resistance, for freedom. There is a dangerous trap here.

And there are a couple of illusions that I reject. One is the illusion of determinism. I do not think it is possible to predict the outcome of our struggles in advance. Certainly we should try to learn from history and attempt to avoid past mistakes, but the methods of struggle that might lead to revolution are always changing in relation to the changing structures of global capitalism, and our methods must be developed and altered through the course of our active engagement in struggle and not just abstract theoretical reflection. Our actions might lead to revolution, or they might lead to something else entirely. We have to understand the possibility of failing and accept that possibility while proceeding with the determination to overcome all the obstacles in our path. Only then can we potentially contribute to popular revolt.

We should develop strategies, but not strategies alone, and not in isolation from the real struggles taking place outside the door of our meeting places. We must also act in order to uncover the modes of action that might be useful at this precise moment, as well as those that might not be useful at all.

The other illusion I reject is the idea of the immaturity of the exploited class. This is the authoritarian idea, the concept held up as truth by the political parties, or by the professional activists. It is an idea that is very important to these types of people because it is the idea that justifies their existence and their self-designated role as social managers, but it is not an idea that exists in reality. It is the idea that the exploited are not ready for revolution. It is an idea proclaimed by people who have no real knowledge on the subject or any real way of knowing in the first place. It is a sad and desperate idea maintained by sad and desperate people who fight to maintain the decrepit institutions to which they belong. But it is not a fact.

The exploited are always resisting their exploitation. The forms this resistance takes are usually small and isolated, but there are acts of resistance nonetheless. Sabotage, theft, and absenteeism in the workplace are spreading. The workers not directly involved in these attacks on the bosses are growing more and more reluctant to turn their co-workers in, to rat them out to the bosses. They would prefer to just look the other way, and so they extend their solidarity to their co-workers by facilitating their subversive acts. You can read about these types of things in the business section of the Province newspaper. The economists consider this rise in worker discontent to be a great worrisome problem that must be solved. We should see it as only the logical outcome of growing class division, the continual exploitation, exclusion and degradation of people who are deprived of everything meaningful and necessary in life.

From the moment that the bourgeois overthrew the feudal system and took hold of the State and the economy the potential for the liberation of the exploited class existed. Class division is the contradiction that must be solved. The exploited are not immature and always in search of leaders to save them, but are quite often in search of new ways with which to resist exploitation, to resist work, to subvert the economy. Our task, as anarchists is to demonstrate simple and easily reproducible actions and tactics. Our task is to attack easily identifiable class enemies; bosses, landlords, politicians, police. Our goal is to unify the diverse strands of struggle in a movement that will assault capitalism itself.

We are tired of waiting, and we believe most everyone else is as well.

The exploited might not believe that it is possible at the present time to destroy this hateful system, or might not clearly see the road from here to there, but they do not want to remain slaves. There will always be a few who have internalized their oppression, and that is something we must deal with and overcome, but these people are not the rule and this obstacle is not insurmountable. We must believe that we can win, and we must encourage this belief in others.

We fight intermediate struggles; struggles for housing, for shorter work hours, against prisons, against police repression. We believe in struggles that embolden people, that encourage a spirit of revolt and a sense of dignity. We believe in continual conflict and the need to always push our struggles a step further. This is why we talk about insurrection.

The reality that the revolution cannot be achieved tomorrow in one action is no reason or excuse to sit back and do nothing at all.

Anarchists should understand that revolutions are neither the action of a violent minority or the product of an inevitable historical evolution. Anarchists must conceive of revolution as a project already in course. A project that is not determined by us but which we can contribute to.

Anarchists can intervene in the social war in Vancouver in useful and immediately accessible ways. Direct action at the points of production, distribution and consumption. Counter-information and propaganda. The construction of specific organizations; affinity groups and base structures. A variety of tools are at our disposal.

Some forms of organization can be clarified.

The affinity group is a small informal organization of comrades who have discussed their ideas and perspectives regarding the social clash and have come to an understanding on how they can immediately work towards attacking elements of the capitalist State. The strength of this type of organization is in its ability to make decisions quickly and consensually, to modify itself according to the needs of a particular struggle, to dissolve itself when necessary.

Then there is the base structure, an informal mass organization that is built around simple principles and a singular objective. Autonomy from all political forces, trade unions and parties. The rejection of authoritarian decision-making processes. The rejection of negotiation or compromise with the class enemy. A precise objective of attacking and destroying a particular oppressive structure of the capitalist system.

The base structure can include anarchists but should not become an ideological vehicle or be made up of anarchists alone. It must form around a singular task so that it can maximize the involvement of all exploited people with similar objectives and a similar desire to resist oppression.

Through using these simple organizational methods and by attacking the infrastructure of the capitalist economy in simple and easily reproducible ways anarchists and revolutionaries in Vancouver can bring latent class conflict to the foreground and build the social context for an insurrectionary opening in the struggle.

Ultimately the exploited must rise up and overthrow their oppressors themselves, and we will be in the midst of this battle only because we are of the exploited class, and not because we represent a specific anarchist organization that has amassed a large membership, and subsequently political power.

The games of control and management of the struggling exploited are not for us. We want to destroy domination. We want to fight for freedom.

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Anarchists, Base Organizations and Intermediate Struggles

Insurgent-S

Insurrectionary Anarchists of the Coast Salish Territories
Vancouver, Canada
November 3, 2003

“So, we need new instruments. These instruments must be capable of affecting the reality of struggles without the mediation of trade union or party leadership. They must propose clear, even though limited, objectives, ones that are specific, not universal, so in themselves are not revolutionary. We must point to specific objectives because people need to feed their children. We cannot expect everyone to sacrifice themselves in the name of universal anarchism. Limited objectives then, where our

presence as anarchists has the precise task of urging people to struggle directly in their own interests, because it is only through direct, autonomous struggle that these objectives can be reached. And once the aim has been reached the nucleus withers and disappears. The comrades then start again, under different conditions.

– Alfredo Bonanno, *Anarchists in the Face of the New Capitalist Order*, 1993

What are the possibilities for anarchist intervention in the intermediate struggles and spontaneous rebellions of the excluded class in Vancouver at the present time? Along with the individual and affinity group actions, which are quite necessary, it seems to me that there is an open space for the creation of base structures – mass organizations with informal characteristics.

Base structures are often initiated by insurrectionary anarchist affinity groups, but are not made up of anarchists alone. This type of organization has the unique purpose of attacking a specific institution of the capitalist State, based on simple principles that can be used by any person of the excluded class – direct action, self-organization, and permanent struggle.

Direct action should be clarified as the self-determined activity of autonomous individuals and groups in conflict with the objectives and organizations of the class enemy. The base structure follows this principle by functioning informally, without bureaucratic processes of membership, delegation and self-maintenance. The structure exists for the sole purpose of taking action, lasts only as long as is necessary and then disbands so that the struggle can continue in other forms. It should exist only as a space for the free experimentation of individuals, acting together on the basis of solidarity and a common objective. It should not try to synthesize different struggles or pretend to represent the entire excluded class, but should act with precision to achieve immediate results. In this way it aims to develop a particular struggle, not to develop itself. Direct action is the negation of patience and passivity. It is the realization that the will to act must come first from the individual. It is the immediate destructive attack on the forces of domination and the appropriation of free life and social space.

Self-organization is independence from any trade union or political force, the refusal of ideological attempts at management or control, and the free association of autonomous individuals and groups.

Permanent struggle is uninterrupted assault on the class enemy and their institutions – the rejection of negotiation, representation or compromise. The base structure should not fight for a “seat at the table” but should instead have an antagonistic orientation towards the exploiters.

The field of action for the base structure should not be limited to the workplace and must also take into account the class struggle in the streets, neighborhoods, schools, and on the land. It should form links of solidarity across social sectors and territories without trying to artificially jam together substantially different problems, which would cause the base structure to take on the mentality of a political party. Nonetheless, the possibility of creating a base structure exists wherever there is a point of class conflict, whether these clashes involve hunger, poverty, homelessness, exploitive and miserable working or living conditions, industrial expansion, the displacement of indigenous peoples from their territory, or any other problem.

For insurrectionary anarchists the base structure is merely one tool among many, and is meant to be surpassed as a specific organization, through the insurrectionary process of permanent struggle. Even in the event of a social revolution the struggle of insurrectionary anarchists would not end, since they would continue to act against even the smallest expressions of oppressive or controlling behavior. Destroying all illusionary ideas that it is possible to predict the outcome

of a particular struggle in advance, anarchists willfully move forward into the unknown with a revolutionary project.

The Woodward's Squat

“...by not engaging in mass organizing and delivering war to the oppressors we become anarchists in name only.”

– Kuwasi Balagoon, Anarchy Can't Fight Alone

To clarify, I will refer to a particular intermediate struggle.

The Woodward's Squat, which existed as a one-week occupation of a department building and a subsequent tent city, started off as a managed and manipulated direct action and grew into a mass conflict which no one could have predicted beforehand.

An activist city employee opened the building, in September of last year, as a one-week symbolic, non-violent, and centrally controlled media spectacle, intended to highlight the lack of social housing in Vancouver.

But this illegal action opened not just a vacant building, but also a struggle which the “King of the Squat” could not control. More and more homeless people of the Downtown Eastside flooded into the building, and with a very different attitude than their “leader”. While the city employee, a handful of activists and politicians dominated squatter meetings and drafted demands for State-managed housing, many squatters already considered the Woodward's Squat to be their home and had no intention of delegating their struggle to someone else or leaving the building willingly after one week. In the context of an illegal direct action which seized a building there were non-squatter politicians and activists pleading for the government to build social housing – government subsidized human warehouses for the poor, where the atmosphere resembles a hospital, visitors are not allowed, and residents are under constant electronic surveillance. The formerly homeless squatters, on the other hand, already had a self-managed living space to call their own. So what was the point of making demands of those in power? This was the tension that always exists between the excluded class and those who try to represent them.

Meanwhile, a small group of anarchist squatters made their own plans. Immediately disillusioned with the authoritarian structure of the politician-dominated squatter meetings, and noting that most people had not made plans for the possibility of a police eviction, the anarchists got ready. In this situation there was great potential for the building of an autonomous base organization of squatters, since the mass of formerly homeless squatters and anarchists had common objectives and enemies. It was lack of experience in these kinds of situations which prevented the anarchists from forming greater links with their comrades of the excluded class. After the eviction, during the existence of the tent city on the outside of the building and afterwards, the bonds between the two groups developed and strengthened.

Given the context of close to a hundred squatters occupying the building and the many mass demonstrations in support of the squat there was also great potential for the struggle to expand socially, and again, a base structure could have been an appropriate weapon for the task. Actions of attack could have been easily coordinated against the squatter's enemies – politicians, property-developers, business-owners, and the police – and the manipulations of the political activists should have been countered. Non-violent ideology should have been thoroughly demolished by the anarchists. The momentum of the conflict should have been acted upon.

These are all lessons for the future. Lessons which can only have been gained through direct experience in struggle.

The Struggle Today

“Disorder is certainly growing.”

– Vancouver Police Inspector Dave Jones – Vancouver Sun, November 1, 2003

Currently, the corporate media, city government, middle class, and police are mobilizing to attack the two tent cities in Vancouver. Police repression will be the last resort, as the soft cop social workers will expend all possibilities of sweeping the squatters under the rug “peacefully”. Massive welfare cutoffs are approaching in a few months. Police violence is rampant. Outside of this city corporate industrial expansion is dispossessing many indigenous peoples of their land, means of survival, and spiritual way of life

Base structures organized to participate in intermediate struggles for housing and sustenance, and against police-State repression are sorely needed. An insurgent attitude could easily spread amongst the excluded of this city. The recent ambush assaults on Vancouver Police on Granville Street and at the recent fireworks festival, and the direct action blockades of the indigenous Pilalt people of Cheam demonstrate some of the most advanced elements of the class struggle. There are likely to be more spontaneous and bloody riots in the near future. There is a need to organize attacks on all the structures and people responsible for the present conditions of misery and genocide, and we must constantly develop new, more creative and more flexible forms of organization to carry out this task.

Anarchists should dive headfirst into unpredictable and uncontrollable waters to realize their project of social self-liberation. The destructive concept of true freedom demands it.

Insurrectionary Anarchists of the Coast Salish Territories

Social Struggle, Social War

Insurrectionary Anarchists of the Coast Salish Territories

Vancouver, Canada

October 16, 2003

The struggle that insurrectionary anarchists engage in is social, rather than political or economic. Insurrectionary anarchists attack institutions of the political State and the capitalist economy as part of a project to completely demolish all forms of exploitation and control. We attempt to make a total and up-to-date critique of society, and this means that we reject limited viewpoints that privilege one form of oppression over another or one sector of the excluded class over another.

The ranks of today’s excluded are immigrants, the indigenous, the employed and unemployed, and there is no reason why any one of these sectors should be considered the advanced guard of the struggle.

The capitalist economy depends not only on production, but also distribution and consumption of commodities. So the old Marxist analysis that says only the workers in the manufacturing sector can be revolutionary does not make sense. Agricultural workers, indigenous peasants and the unemployed can attack capitalism at the point of distribution by blocking roads, and at the point of consumption through theft and looting. Sabotage is a flexible tool that can be put to use

by any excluded or exploited individual. For those employed in the capitalist marketplace there are various techniques of self-organized direct action possible at the individual, group and mass levels. Absenteeism, destruction of machinery, theft and information tampering occur regularly in all workplaces.

Politics is alien to the exploited. There is mass abstention from the electoral process. Unionization is declining, and extra-union activity on the part of union members is growing through the use of sabotage and flying squad self-organization – with varying degrees of real autonomy.

A purely economic view of the class struggle is useless. Capitalism does not just control the world of work, but also the home and the entire social territory in which the exploited live. The enemy class uses to its advantage systems of oppression such as patriarchy and racism that predate capitalism and industry, and which divide the excluded amongst themselves.

There are many social problems inherent to the class struggle that the action of anarchists can be useful in confronting. The moral value system passed down by the exploiters to the exploited. The democratic ideals of tolerance and dialogue. The religious tendency of the workers and unemployed to look for a guide to bring them vengeance. The bigotry and irrationality that cause the exploited to battle each other, leaving the class enemy unscathed. These are the subjective elements of class society that can't be ignored by those who really want to destroy this rotten system.

Refusing the role of the vanguard, the elitist group that is supposed to educate and guide the masses, anarchists above all act for themselves, in their own interests, not claiming to represent their entire class. But for the anarchist struggle to become revolutionary it must become social, expanding through solidarity in action. Our relationship with the mass must be informal and direct. We must recognize the mass as individuals, avoiding the danger of falling into generic perspectives and ideology.

To limit ourselves to spreading counter-information and declaring our convictions to the masses would not make sense, and would be just another form of elitism. We must always re-evaluate our analysis and attempt to advance through discussion and the gathering of information, but we must also act.

Our organizational forms should be fluid and adaptable, capable of destructuring when necessary, based on simple principles that can be used by anyone; self-organization, direct action and permanent struggle. We must reject the political party and activist organizational model of the power centre that is supposed to manage and control everything. We should proceed to action immediately, not waiting for orders or signals from anywhere.

We should fight in intermediate struggles alongside the excluded, for housing, food, shelter, wages, against police repression, against social control. But always trying to push these struggle further, helping them expand into the unknown of insurrection.

In the social war for freedom the participation of anarchists can be of great importance.

An Anarchist Concept of Value

Insurrectionary Anarchists of the Coast Salish Territories
Vancouver, Canada
July 1, 2003

The insurrectionary anarchist struggle puts forward certain positive values. The freedom of the individual and the equality of the oppressed class could be described as the most basic of these, along with solidarity and mutual aid, which form the connecting link between individual freedom and class equality and make revolutionary struggle possible. Anarchists also value self-organization, creativity, joy and autonomous action, but none of these positive elements can be artificially isolated from the completely negative orientation anarchists have towards the class of exploiters and their system of domination. The interrelation of elements should be obvious, as should be the positive contribution to our struggle that the various assaults on the property of the exploiters and their guards have in terms of opening up social space in which we can act more freely.

We are not scientists of revolution incapable of seeing the subjective value of struggles that do not necessarily lead to victory for our entire class. We do not accept that there is a guaranteed formula, a political program that can carry us through the struggle from beginning to end without error, without adapting to changing circumstances.

Anarchists are simply individuals who desire freedom and equality and are consequently propelled to fight alongside the exploited masses, as accomplices rather than guides.

We are in favour of immediate, destructive attacks on the structures of the capitalist State, because we see these as indispensable elements of an insurrectionary social movement. It is very easy for an individual or group to initiate actions against the many visible institutions of the class enemy. The simpler the means used the more the potential exists for the practice of sabotage to spread across a social territory, as every small act becomes a point of reference that can be put to use by anyone.

Anarchists place value in the will to rebel against oppression and the autonomous initiative of individuals who are not content to sit and wait for the revolution to come like a gift from the sky. We do not agree with those who say that sabotage is useless or detracts from our struggle. We are not priests of the Protestant work ethic who maintain that everything must be “productive”, that capitalism is part of a progressive historical evolution.

No, it is necessary to begin to destroy all the means of exploitation controlled by the enemy, and the decision to move in this direction cannot come from anyone but ourselves. We can find comrades with who we share a personal affinity in relation to revolutionary action, and we can even contribute to larger informal organizations used to coordinate the efforts of various autonomous groups, but ultimately, the will to resist must come from within each one of us.

As insurrectionary anarchists, we can't agree with those who think that it is possible to oppose capitalism with productive projects alone, that we can merely replace our enemies institutions with our own, all without attracting the attention of their police forces, the forces of political repression.

Our idea of anarchist communism contains within it many beautiful and positive values, but we want to fight for them, and not limit ourselves to simply advocating our views. In autonomous struggle opposed to the capitalist State we see not only a positive value, but also a material necessity.

Insurrectionary Anarchists of the Coast Salish Territories
Vancouver, Canada
July 1, 2003

Revolutionary Initiative

The Exploited Individual

“We must take into account not only the objective causes of oppression, but must also examine the subjective factors which play an important role in the persistence of exploitation and are hindering the process of workers’ autonomy.”

– Jean Weir, Worker’s Autonomy

The will to resist exploitation and social exclusion is an often overlooked factor within the revolutionary movement, but without this subjective element revolutionary change can not take place. Oppression can nurture apathy and resignation as easily as it can provoke hatred and anger. The exploitation of the capitalist system creates the context and justification for mass rebellion, but the determination to resist must come from within each individual. The spirit of revolt, the indispensable revolutionary initiative of individuals must be the groundwork of a project that aims at overthrowing the dominant class and destroying the infrastructure of their economy. The struggle for real individual freedom must also necessarily become a struggle for equality of conditions and access to social life for the entire exploited class.

The Insurrectionary Process

“When a revolutionary situation arises in a country, before the spirit of revolt is sufficiently awakened in the masses to express itself in violent demonstrations in the streets or by rebellions and uprisings, it is through action that minorities succeed in awakening that feeling of independence and that spirit of audacity without which no revolution can come to a head.”

– Peter Kropotkin, The Spirit of Revolt With the individual as a catalyst, an insurrectionary process can begin to take shape, first in small affinity groups, and then in base structures; mass organizations founded on principles of self-management, direct action and permanent conflict with the class enemy. The forum for individual and collective action is the class war itself, the contradiction between exploiter and exploited that can only be resolved by the violent elimination of those in power. Organization is a tool to be used in coordinating specific tasks, a tool to be fashioned, adapted and dismantled as necessary. It should not be an end in itself. Only the struggle should be permanent. Revolutionary initiative has a variety of means at its disposal, from counter-information work and expropriation to attacks on capitalist institutions. Class warfare may develop over time in the form of escalating individual, intermediate and mass insurrectionary struggles, but all efforts should aim at achieving concrete results and gains, and symbolic methods should be dismissed as useless.

The Institutions of Oppression

“Naturally one must begin with the insurrectionary act which sweeps away the material obstacles, the armed forces of government which are opposed to any social transformation.”

– Errico Malatesta, The Insurrection

Capitalism is not merely an abstract concept or system of social relationships. It depends on its institutions of repression, its courts, police stations, and prisons. These structures will not destroy

themselves. They will not crumble under the weight of an inevitable historical process. They must be physically assaulted. The subjective aspects of material resistance also come into play, as individuals realize their capacity to actively attack and destroy capitalist targets. By intervening directly in the social clash, individuals and groups gain experience that can be attained in no other way. When engaged in collective action, the bonds of solidarity are strengthened between comrades. The combative spirit gathers momentum.

The Class Enemy

“Let every dirty, lousy tramp arm himself with a revolver or knife and lay in wait on the steps of the palaces of the rich and stab or shoot the owners as they come out. Let us kill them without mercy, and let it be a war of extermination and without pity. Let us devastate the avenues where the wealthy live.”

– Lucy Parsons

Behind every institution of oppression is the class enemy. Determined to maintain their position at all costs, intoxicated by power and willing to use the most brutal forces of repression at their disposal, the exploiters wage class war relentlessly. Revolutionary organizations must act against this reality by refusing negotiation or compromise with the class enemy. The only effective strategy in revolutionary warfare is the strategy of annihilation. The application of violence to this concrete necessity of the movement itself should not cause discomfort for even a moment. The lives of the exploiters and their servants are not worth a cent.

Autonomy and Centralization

“If revolutionaries organize like those whose rule they seek to overthrow, they are defeated before the battle is engaged.”

– Andy Anderson, Hungary ‘56

Autonomy is the prerequisite of social freedom. Only the absolute autonomy of individuals and groups, the freedom to associate or disassociate with others at will, can allow the natural tendency towards solidarity and mutual aid to take root. The principle of self-determination must grow from the free individual out towards the community, and further outwards to distinct cultural groups and geographic regions. Autonomy provides the basis for meaningful interrelations between groups and territories on the basis of communism; the equality of access to the means of existence and social life. Revolution is a project that develops decentralized organizational structures on the one hand while it attacks the centralized formations of the class enemy on the other. Revolutionaries must take the initiative to constantly fight against any tendency towards centralization if they are to defend freedom. From this perspective, revolutionary initiative becomes a project based on combining the struggle for individual liberation with the social struggle to overthrow the capitalist system and the class enemy.

Insurgent-S

Vancouver, B.C., Canada

Coast Salish Territories

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