

# **Getting Free**



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*Creating an Association of  
Democratic Autonomous Neighborhoods*

By James Herod

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In June 2002, having been invited by Dave Strano at Lawrence's Solidarity Library, I also presented the book at a workshop at the National Annual Anarchist Gathering held in Lawrence, Kansas. The ideas were well received, and I got much useful feedback from some of those in attendance.

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I was able to improve the book considerably because of these many suggestions, although I did not agree with all of them. I've tried to answer some of the criticisms in this revised version.

A first edition of this book was published in fall 1998; those eighty copies were photocopied (not printed), but bound in book form. I had much appreciated help in reproducing and distributing the first edition from Betsy Gynn, Jon Bekken, Kenn Brown, and Chris Pauli. A second revised and expanded version was posted on the Internet in

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## A Note on Terminology

What follows is a discussion of the terminology I have chosen to use in outlining a notion of how we might want to live. That is, when writing this book, I faced a naming problem. What are we to call our social creations? It was something of a dilemma as to what to call the overall social order as well as the specific social bodies within it, but I made the following choices:

- *Household* is a pretty good term, although in contemporary U.S. usage it refers to a much smaller unit – namely, the nuclear family. But historically, households have been larger. My usage, for a residential complex housing up to two hundred people, is a reversion to and an expansion of the historical meaning. Co-housing, a growing contemporary movement, comes close to what I’m talking about.

- *Neighborhood assembly* is a commonplace phrase, but it works. Other possibilities were town meeting, community assembly, general assembly, core assembly, base assembly, parliament, plenum, congregation, conference, senate, or convention – none of which seemed to fit. In all earlier versions of this book, I used the term home assembly instead of neighborhood assembly. But the term home tends to be associated with a household rather than a neighborhood. So I finally decided that the confusion the phrase introduced was counterproductive and changed it. But I liked the term home assembly because it gave us an identity linked to the assembly (and meeting hall) where we participate in community decisions to govern our social lives. Everyone will be a member of an assembly somewhere. Where we participate in decision making is where our home is, or so I like to think. Thus, the neighborhood assembly is elevated over kinship or work relations (reproduction or production relations). The primacy of decision-making relations will characterize the new civilization and set it apart from all previous forms of social organization.

- *Peer circle* is a strange term, but I don’t like any of the alternatives I’ve come across. The traditional term among radicals is council, but this term has no general usage elsewhere in our culture and actually has other connotations in popular language. The other possibilities were caucus, bee, peer group, meeting (as in a Friends meeting), or peer meeting.

- *Project* is a good name for the activities we undertake together to accomplish something. We certainly can’t call them businesses,

enterprises, organizations, or institutions. I'm quite happy with the term project. It applies to everything we do together – growing food, making things, health care, child care, bands and orchestras, sports, learning, research, and so forth.

- In the original draft of this book, I had inadvertently used the term community to refer to the two thousand people constituting a neighborhood assembly. Community is a good term, but it obviously cannot be restricted to mean a single two thousand member body. So I had to switch to the term neighborhood, which sounds limited, yet is more accurate. At least it makes clear that our basic social unit is a small neighborhood face-to-face decision-making assembly. All larger associations are based on this core social entity.

- At one point, in order to make the text consistent throughout in relation to the projected gift giving and mutual aid, I had to search through the book for the words trade and exchange and change them to other, usually more cumbersome expressions, using words like distribute, circulate, transfer, and interchange. Trade and exchange are almost exclusively associated with a money economy.

- As for what to call the overall social order, none of the usual terms has clear meanings anymore – such as democracy, socialism, anarchism, or communism. Until a new name emerges, I've simply been describing my proposed social order as an association of democratic autonomous neighborhoods. I should add, though, that I mean direct democracy, not representative democracy, and by direct democracy I do not mean telepolling or referenda but face-to-face assemblies. I should also add that the association is based on a treaty negotiation among equals, not federation (since I contend that federated structures are hierarchical). Moreover, autonomous merely means self-governing and not complete self-sufficiency in the material sense (there will still be interchanging of goods back and forth, through swaps, gifts, etc.). In other words, the phrase is meaningless without further definition. It is better to focus on the concrete social relations themselves and shape them the way we want, than to waste time defining abstract concepts.

- There is also the problem of what to call the strategy itself. I'm sorry to say that I have not been able to invent a good name for it.

While we're on the question of terminology, I must warn the reader not to be turned off too quickly by the words I use. I choose words with care. It is not by accident or through carelessness that I

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say “ruling class,” for example. I do it deliberately. I believe this is the clearest way to talk about our situation. If you do not believe there is a ruling class, perhaps you have been watching too much television or have taken too many sociology courses. The same goes for other words that I use – such as murderers, thieves, invasion, oppression, exploitation, working class, wage slavery, empire, lackeys, and capitalists. These are not the concepts of a fanatic, although they might sound that way to some who are steeped in the language of the owners of the world. They are powerful and accurate terms that illuminate our situation. It has taken years to rid myself of the mystifying language of the exploiting class.

For those readers who may be new to radical writing, however, maybe a few brief definitions will be useful. *Capitalism* is a social system based on profit. Profit is made by paying workers less than the true value of the products they make (formally known as the expropriation of surplus value). Capitalism depends on having turned labor power into a commodity, which is bought and sold on the market, and on having created a social situation in which millions of people can survive only by selling their labor power. *Imperialism* is merely a name for the international dimension of capitalism. Capitalism has been an international system from the very beginning, rooted as it is in the system of nation-states. *Wage-slavery* is a name for the condition people find themselves in if they have only their labor power to sell in order to live. Such people make up the *working class*. *Class* is defined not by the amount of income, but its source – from wages or profit. Capital tends to *commodify everything* to keep the profits flowing in. *Neoliberalism* is a recent capitalist offensive to accomplish this on a global scale. I tend to use the word *anarchy* as the name of a social order and *anarchism* as the name of a social philosophy. But this is not common practice, nor do I do this consistently, and it’s no big deal. I have found that for my purposes I do not need to make a distinction between *strategy* and *tactics*, as is common with military historians. So I pretty much use these words interchangeably. I often use the terms *direct democracy*, *anarchy*, *real communism*, and *libertarian socialism* interchangeably. I think they all refer to basically the same thing. What I mean by these terms is defined throughout the text.

I hope these remarks on terminology will help readers to more easily understand my writing.



# Introduction

The main purpose of this book is to try to persuade revolutionaries to shift the sites of the anticapitalist struggle and to select new battlefields. I identify three strategic sites for fighting – neighborhoods, workplaces, and households – that I believe will not only enable us to defeat capitalists but also to build a new society in the process.

The advantage of this shift is that it offers an offensive strategy, not merely a defensive one. That is, it is not merely about reacting to things we don't like and want to stop, nor is it about resisting what they are doing to us. Rather it is about defending what we are doing to them through our new social creations. This means that we would begin to take the initiative to build the life we want, and then fight to defend this life and our social creations from attacks by the ruling class. I think people will be much more willing to struggle for something like this than to fight to stop outrages of the ruling class elsewhere, which often seem remote from their everyday lives. But we should be quite clear that this will involve us in terrible battles. We will never be able to establish free associations on any of these sites without directly confronting ruling-class power.

In listing all the strategies that have failed, it isn't my intention to denigrate the revolutionary efforts of past generations. Resisting and attempting to defeat capitalism has been a historical project of enormous scope; revolutionaries have poured their lives into strategies they considered best at the time. I'm simply trying to take stock: to reflect on where we've been and what we've tried, and on where we ought to be going now, as well as what we ought to be trying to do. I do not claim that the strategy I outline here is the be-all and end-all. It's a proposal, an assessment, a reflection on what I think it will take for us to win. But I'm only one person. Fashioning a new anticapitalist strategy for our times is obviously a task for millions.

Nor is it my intention (in listing what I claim are failed strategies) to say that people should stop resisting altogether. It is to argue that these forms of resistance, although they have accomplished a lot, haven't gotten us very far toward our ultimate goal of destroying capitalism. They haven't enabled us to overthrow the system, defeat the ruling class, or build a free society, and I don't think they ever will.

Some of these failed strategies, like the leninist vanguard party, social democracy, dropping out, and guerrilla warfare, should be

abandoned completely. Others, such as demonstrations and single-issue campaigns, should be subordinated to the main task of building free associations in neighborhoods, workplaces, and households. It's not so much that strategies like strikes, civil disobedience, or insurrections are wrong in themselves. It's that they are not enough, and by themselves cannot defeat capitalism. To win we must add another whole dimension.

The sad truth, though, is that the three strategic sites we could be fighting on, and that might lead us to victory, are largely being ignored. The workplace struggles going on are largely reformist, as are most neighborhood organizing initiatives, while there is little organizing at all being done around households. So the bulk of our energies are not going into these three strategic sites at all but into other arenas. I would feel much better about all the demonstrations, marches, civil disobedience, and single-issue campaigns if significant struggles were also being waged in workplaces, neighborhoods, and households. But in the absence of these fights, where does all the rest get us? Not to victory, that's clear enough.

The recent spectacular resurgence of radical movements the world over, first symbolized by the Battle of Seattle in November 1999, and continuing on through Quebec City and Genoa, highlights the issues I've raised in a most urgent way. As heartening as these developments have been, and as wonderful as they are to see, it's all too possible that they will go nowhere, eventually fizzling out and disappearing, just like the revolts of the 1960s did, unless they can be linked to struggles to seize control of our lives on the local level.

Somehow, it has come to be accepted that this is what radicals do – demonstrate – when they want to protest or stop something, and that mass demonstrations take priority over everything else. I will be arguing that we have it upside down. If we had reorganized ourselves into neighborhood, workplace, and household assemblies, and were struggling to seize power there, then we would have a base from which to stop ruling-class offensives like neoliberalism. If we then chose to demonstrate in the streets, there would be some teeth to it, rather than it being just an isolated ephemeral event, which can be pretty much ignored by our rulers. We would not be just protesting but *countering*. We have to organize ourselves in such a way that we have the power to counter them, not just protest against them, to refuse them, to neutralize them. This cannot be done by affinity groups, nongovernmental

organizations (NGOs), or isolated individuals converging periodically at world summits to protest against the ruling class, but only by free associations rooted in normal everyday life.

And if we were organized like this, it might not even be necessary to go to mass demonstrations at all. We could simply announce what we were going to do if the ruling classes didn't cease their oppressive practices. But opposition movements gravitate again and again to these kinds of actions. "Taking to the Streets," we call it. Yet we can't build a new social world in the streets. As long as we're only in the streets, whereas our opponents function through enduring organizations like governments, corporations, and police, we will always be on the receiving end of the tear gas, pepper spray, and rubber bullets, and almost everywhere in the world but North America or Europe, real bullets, napalm, poisons, and bombs. This predilection for protests and demonstrations prevailed throughout the 1960s, as the movements traveled to Washington, DC, time and again, taking to the streets. We are still like children, only able to "raise a ruckus." We are not yet adults who can assemble, reason together, take stock of our options, devise a strategy, and then strike, to both defeat our enemies and build the world we want.

We are faced with a window of opportunity. Anticapitalist forces have been at a strategic impasse for decades, with widespread confusion over both the shape of the new world we want and how to dismantle the existing one. But the complete collapse and discrediting of the Bolshevik model in Russia and all over the third world, and the equal bankruptcy of social democracy in Europe, opens up the possibility of redefining radical politics, of rethinking the goal of the revolution and its strategy. For the first time in over a century, anarchist perspectives are back on the agenda in a serious way. Antistatist approaches are gaining ground, even among some communists and marxists. I think of my book as a contribution to this worldwide effort to redefine radical politics and break out of the impasse that has stymied the revolution ever since the Bolsheviks came to power in 1917, the socialist democrats were defeated in Germany in 1919, and the Spanish Revolution went down to defeat in 1939.

My book helps renew radical politics in several ways. By outlining a three-pronged attack on the system, by focusing not merely on the workplace (seizing the means of production) but also on neighborhoods and households, it anticipates a recapturing of decision making

– that is, its relocation out of state bureaucracies, parliaments, and corporate boards, and into our assemblies. It also emphasizes capturing the means of *reproduction* (and not only production) through household associations. Its guiding principle is *free association*. It focuses squarely on the necessity of building an opposition movement and culture, and creating new social relations for ourselves. It also integrates the goal and the strategy for achieving the goal, suggesting concrete steps that ordinary people can take to defeat capitalism and build a new world.

I have taken some ideas for granted, in addition to an anticapitalist outlook, which the reader needs to be aware of in order to understand why I have written as I have. My sketch of a new social world and a strategy for achieving it are based on a firm commitment to direct democracy, not representative democracy or federation. I am aware that almost everyone now automatically dismisses direct democracy as being no longer possible in a “complex industrial society.” I have always disagreed with this view.

The reader will also not be able to understand my remarks unless they are aware that I think of capitalism as a worldwide system, which is approximately five hundred years old. Capitalists started establishing their way of living in Europe between 1450 and 1650 roughly, and then over the next several centuries, carried their practices to every corner of the globe, destroying and displacing other traditions, usually through warfare. World history for the last five hundred years is thus mainly the story of this assault that capitalists have thrown against the world’s peoples, beginning with the peasants of Europe, in order to seize their lands and force them into wage slavery (wealth-making laborers), tenancy (rent-paying residents), and citizenship (taxpaying subjects). It is also the story of the worldwide resistance to this invasion. A good part of the tale, of course, is taken up merely with the fights among capitalists themselves.

You should also be aware that from this perspective, countries that came to be called communist were just capitalist states doing what capitalists always do: enslave and exploit their populations. There was always a radical tradition that perceived the Soviet experiment and the colonial revolutions that aped it in these terms (council communists, Western marxists, anarchists, and anarcho-syndicalists). Now that the Soviet Union is gone, more people are realizing that communist countries were just capitalism in a different form and had little to do with



the struggle *against* capitalism.

A further assumption I make is that it is impossible to defeat our ruling class by force of arms. The level of firepower currently possessed by all major governments and most minor ones is simply overwhelming. It is bought with the expropriated wealth of billions of people. For any opposition movement to think that it can acquire, maintain, and deploy a similarly vast and sophisticated armament is ludicrous. I have nothing against armed struggle in principle (although of course I don't like it); I just don't think it can work now. It would take an empire as enormous and rich as capitalism itself to fight capitalists on their own terms. This is something the working classes of the world will never have, nor should we even want it.

This does not mean, though, that we should not think strategically in order to win and defeat our oppressors. It means that we have to learn how to destroy them without firing a single shot. It means that we have to look to and invent if necessary other weapons, other tactics. But we must be careful not to fall into the nonviolence/violence trap. Is tearing down a fence a violent act or is it resistance to the violence of those who erected the fence in the first place? Is throwing a tear gas canister back at the police who fired it an act of violence or is it resistance to an act of violence? Nonviolence is a key ideological weapon of a violent ruling class. This class uses it to pacify us; it uses its mass media to preach nonviolence incessantly. Such rhetoric is an effective weapon because we all (but they don't) want to live in a peaceful world. We would do well to chart a careful course through this swamp.

In this book I have focused on the three strategic associations that are needed to defeat capitalists. I have not attempted to discuss the numerous and varied cultural associations that will undoubtedly be created by free peoples, covering every conceivable interest.

As will become evident, I'm writing from the perspective of someone who lives in the United States. This is the only culture that I'm familiar with in any depth, although I have traveled abroad, lived two years in the Middle East, and studied other cultures. My remarks are therefore most relevant to others living in this country, to a lesser extent to persons living in other core capitalist countries, and to a still lesser extent to persons living in the rest of the world, although I hope everyone may find some value in it.

This book has been written for those who already want to destroy

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capitalism; it is not intended to persuade anyone why it should be destroyed. That is a task of a different kind. What is self-evident to me, as it is to most radicals, is unfortunately not so self-evident to others, not even to the working class itself. Nevertheless, I have included a short initial section on how we do *not* want to live in hopes of attracting a wider range of readers – readers who may be quite unhappy with their lives, but who are far from attributing their misery to capitalists. I've also included a list of recommended readings for those who want to explore emancipatory social thought further.

Several of my essays from the past decade are directly relevant to this book and can serve as supplementary material for the issues discussed here. They are posted on my web site under 'Selected Papers: 1998 to Present,' at: <<http://www.jamesherod.info>>. I would like to call your attention to the following papers: (a) "Seeing the Inadequacies of ACF's Strategy Statement" (February 1999); (b) "Breaking Out of the Cage and Destroying Our Jailers" (June 1999); (c) "The Weakness of a Politics of Protest" (June 2000); (d) "Notes on Building a Movement for Direct Democracy" (June 2004); and (e) "Anarchist Revolutionary Strategy" (April 2006).

# 1

## **An Awareness of How We Do Not Want to Live**

There are places where you can come over a bridge and see a whole big city spread out before you. The Mystic River Bridge coming into Boston is such a place, as is the Brooklyn Bridge into Manhattan or the Golden Gate Bridge into San Francisco. Driving over one of these bridges you can see the dozens of skyscrapers, hundreds of office buildings and factories, thousands of stores and shops, tens of thousands of people bustling along, traffic everywhere, and ships in the harbor. And you think to yourself, How could we ever presume to change all this? It is so vast. Countless activities. Millions of people going to work everyday. Goods being shipped. Phones ringing.

And yet this whole enormous edifice is built on one tiny single social relation: wage slavery (the extraction of wealth by force from the direct producers by the accumulators of capital). The government bureaucracies, police, lawyers, schools, and courts are all there to enforce this social relation. But hardly anyone knows this anymore. This fact has been carefully hidden in dozens of ways. The knowledge that this wealth *is* extracted by force has long been lost, even though brute force is used all over the world on a daily basis to defend this relation, and even though millions of us face unemployment (and hence destitution) not so infrequently. The knowledge that we are *slaves* being bought by the hour rather than the lifetime has also been lost. We have been wage slaves for so long that we have forgotten there is any other way to live. We have forgotten that once we had land and tools and could live independently, providing for ourselves, without being forced to sell our labor power for wages.

So this is the first and most important awareness we can come to: we should not be living as slaves but as free people. Seen in this light, capitalism does not seem so invincible but actually rather vulnerable. If we could only sever this single relation, we could destroy capitalism and free ourselves to create a new social world. This is undoubtedly why capitalists go to such lengths to camouflage, mystify, and deny

the wage slave relation. It is their Achilles' heel.

A second awareness is more easily achieved. If we take a stroll around one of these cities, noticing the kinds of buildings that exist, we will come up with something like this list: banks, factories, department stores, warehouses, office buildings, shops, churches, houses, apartment buildings, museums, schools, an occasional union hall, sports arenas, theaters, restaurants, convention centers, garages, airports, train stations, bus depots, nightclubs, hospitals, nursing homes, gyms, malls, hotels, courthouses, police stations, and post offices. *What we will rarely see is a meeting hall.* If we happen to live in a capital city, we will be able to find a single chamber where the politicians meet. Worshipers congregate in churches, of course. Unionists hold meetings sometimes in their union halls, businesspeople convene in downtown centers, spectators aggregate in theaters and arenas to watch games, movies, plays, ballets, and concerts, and students gather for lectures, sometimes in large auditoriums. But there are usually no meeting halls, as such, for citizens, where we can assemble to make decisions and govern our own lives. So how can it be said that we live in a democracy, if we don't even assemble or have any facilities for doing so? Not only should we not live as slaves, but we should also not live in an undemocratic society. Rather, we should live in a real democracy, where we can govern our own communities.

Beyond these two basic awarenesses, there is the recognition of the linkages between our many miseries and the wage slave system. This knowledge is more difficult to acquire, mainly because capitalists, and their public relations people, take such pains to blame the sufferings of the world on anything and everything other than their own practices. If there is starvation in Bangladesh, it's because there are too many people and not because agricultural self-sufficiency has been destroyed by capitalist world markets. If the oceans are dying from oil tanker flushes, this is a shame, but it's really no one's fault; it's just the price we must pay for progress and civilization. If millions are living in abject poverty in the shantytowns of third world cities, there is nothing unusual about this; it's just part of the worldwide "process of urbanization" – they never mention that governments and corporations have seized the peasants' lands, forcing them to leave their homes. If cities are filling up with the homeless, it's because these people are lazy and won't look for work, and not because there aren't enough jobs for everyone and rents are sky-high. The list of

such subterfuges is endless.

The truth is that most of the suffering in the world now is directly attributable to capitalists. If it were not for capitalists, most of the illness in the world could be eliminated, as well as most of the hunger, ignorance, homelessness, environmental destruction, congestion, warfare, crime, insecurity, waste, boredom, loneliness, and so forth. Even much of the suffering caused by hurricanes, floods, droughts, and earthquakes can be laid at the feet of capitalists because capitalists prevent us from preparing for and responding to these disasters as a community, in an intelligent way. And recently, capitalists are to blame for the increased severity of some of these events due to global warming, which capitalists have caused. Unless you're already convinced, I know you're not going to believe these bald claims. But others have documented the linkages between these various evils and the profit system, if you wish to study their works.

I have my own personal hate list. I hate advertisements, seriously. Nothing could be sweeter to me than living in an advertisement-free world. I hate congested cities, being stuck in traffic jams, not being able to park, being ticketed unfairly, having to suffer the rudeness of Boston drivers. I hate car alarms, a perfect example of a totally unnecessary aggravation but for the insanity of capitalism. (To see the connection between the scourge of car alarms and capitalism will be a test of your newfound awareness of the linkages.) I hate insurance companies, the biggest racketeers in the United States (not counting the Savings and Loans crooks, of course). I hate the Internal Revenue Service, the Department of Motor Vehicles, and the Metropolitan Transit Authority. I hate telemarketing. I hate call waiting. I hate weather forecasters; they are alarmists, and not one of them seems to like rain (if their on-air attitudes are anything to go by). I hate cops; and they are everywhere now, even at the movies, or in workplaces, department stores, parks, schools, and libraries. I hate bosses. I never had one who was a decent human being (at least not at work); they were always twisted in some way, mean, self-centered, or arrogant, or else incompetent, bluffing through it while pretending not to, with no one daring to say otherwise. I hate the terrible insecurity of not having a reliable income. I hate this precarious existence. I hate looking for a job, big time. This is when you realize what a bind they've got you in. No way to live without a job; so hustle, make the rounds, update the résumé, get the interviews, all for free (i.e., job hunting is unpaid

labor that benefits corporations). Your money is running out or already gone, and there's no one to help. You're desperate to find someone to buy your poor self by the hour. You desperately seek slavery in order to go on living. This is what I hate. And then, once a buyer is found, the boredom, drudgery, and fatigue starts all over again, and you see your life slipping away, all used up by *businessmen*, and all *for nothing*. I hate living alone, with my crippled emotions and aborted love life. I hate television with a passion, and have ever since the first set appeared in my parents' home in 1951. I hate seeing the earth, such a beautiful place, go down the tubes, just so some greedy fools can make a profit. I hate not being around small children, they being the loveliest creatures to grace our lives (most of them). I hate social scientists; nothing has done more to make the world unintelligible than their decades of jargon and gibberish. I hate standing in line at banks (and I hate banks). It's bad enough that I'm paying them to use my money to make themselves a profit; it's the standing in line to do it that rankles. I hate automobiles, in too many ways to even count. I hate nondairy creamer. I hate seat belts, the thousandth way they have found to blame the victim. I hate Smokey the Bear. I hate lawns. I haven't even begun to list all the things I hate about our present disorder.

I suppose, to be fair, I should now list all the things I love, in order to balance the picture, but it wouldn't be in character.

## 2

# A Notion of How We Might Want to Live

We can turn now to a notion of how we might want to live. Let's assume, for the moment, that we could start from scratch to build a totally new social world, building up our neighborhoods just the way we wanted. What would they look like? What would the core social forms be? (Please remember, as mentioned earlier, that I'm leaving aside, since they are not as essential, numerous other associations that will undoubtedly be created to cover every conceivable interest.)

I have imagined a neighborhood with the following features (see "A Note on Terminology" at the beginning of this book):

### Households

Households are units of roughly two hundred people cohabiting in a building complex that provides for a variety of living arrangements for single individuals, couples, families, and extended families. The complex has facilities for meetings, communal (as well as some private) cooking, laundry, basic education, building maintenance, various workshops, basic health care, a birthing room, emergency medical care, and certain recreational activities. Households are managed democratically and cooperatively by a direct assembly of members (the household assembly).

### Projects

Projects include all cooperative activities (more than one person) in agriculture and husbandry, manufacturing, higher education, research, advanced medicine, communications, transportation, arts, sports, and so forth, plus cooperative activities undertaken within the household itself (cooking, teaching, child care, health care, maintenance, etc.). The buildings are designed and constructed for these various activities. Internally, projects are managed democratically and cooperatively by a direct assembly of members (the project assembly). Some projects, perhaps most, are controlled, in the larger sense, di-

rectly by the neighborhood, through the neighborhood assembly. Other projects are controlled by agreements worked out among several or many neighborhood assemblies.

### **Peer Circles**

Peer circles are units of roughly thirty to fifty people. All persons in the neighborhood belong to just one peer circle, located at their primary project. For some this is in the household, but for most it is located at a project outside the household or even outside the neighborhood. All projects are broken down into such circles. These circles meet within the project to discuss issues and, where necessary, coalesce into projectwide general assemblies. Votes are taken within meetings, but they are tallied across meetings, within each project. Peer circle meetings are necessary because genuine face-to-face discussion and deliberation are seriously constricted in groups larger than fifty people.

Because households contain many persons whose primary project is not within the household, but who are nevertheless living there and will want to be engaged in the self-governing of the household, I will refer to the household assembly as a distinct entity, different from project (workplace) assemblies, even though the household includes peer circles for such projects as cooking, teaching, child care, and health care.

### **Neighborhood Assembly**

The neighborhood assembly is the core social creation. It is an assembly of the entire neighborhood, roughly two thousand people, meeting in a large hall designed to facilitate directly democratic discussion and decision making. In practice, of course, the size of neighborhood assemblies will vary considerably. Yet its upper limit is determined by the number of people who can meet in one large hall and still engage in democratic, face-to-face, unmediated decision making.

### **An Association of Neighborhood Assemblies**

Neighborhood assemblies join together, by means of a pact or a treaty agreement, to form a larger association. An overall agreement defines the association in general, and there are also specific agreements for particular projects.

The neighborhood assembly is the neighborhood governing itself.



The neighborhood makes its own rules, allocates its own resources and energies, and negotiates its own treaties with other neighborhoods. The neighborhood controls the land on which it sits, and all projects and households within it.

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Please note what this arrangement of social relations does *not* have: hierarchy, representation, wage slavery, profit, commodities, money, classes, private ownership of the means of production, taxes, nation-states, patriarchy, alienation, exploitation, elite professional control of any activity, or formal divisions by race, gender, age, ethnicity, looks, beliefs, intelligence, or sexual preference. This neighborhood, so organized, is the basic unit of a new social order.

Those familiar with radical traditions will recognize in this sketch a melding of the anarcho-communist focus on community, the anarcho-syndicalist emphasis on workers' control, and the feminist stress on abolishing the distinction between the public and private spheres of social life. It is my belief that each of these cannot be achieved without the other. The achievement of workers' control alone would leave no way for the community as a whole to allocate its resources (e.g., to decide whether to phase out a project or start up a new one), whereas the achievement of community control alone, without simultaneously controlling the means of production, is meaningless, empty. And the failure to democratize and socialize households, including them (and hence reproduction) as an explicit and integral part of the social arrangements, would leave a gender-based division of labor intact, thus perpetuating the public/private dichotomy.

New towns have occasionally been built from scratch in recent decades, primarily by "developers" as commercial enterprises. Also, many completely new utopian communities were established throughout the nineteenth century in the United States and elsewhere. Given the resources, it will surely be possible to build new communities in the future, at least on a limited scale. This will certainly be the exception rather than the rule, though, especially at the beginning of this revolution. For the most part, building from the ground up will be out of the question for the first fifty to seventy-five years.

The actual task we face, then, is to transform *existing* structures (buildings and factories) and social relations (property, family, work, and play relations) into the desired ones. We need to try to imagine

how our model neighborhood would look after having been *converted* from a typical urban neighborhood. Let's see first if we can convert the existing physical plant into something more useful for democratic, cooperative living, keeping in mind that this is the easy part; the hard part is transforming social relations. I will deal with this more below in discussing how to get there.

Factories and shops would be the easiest of all to convert. These can be used pretty much as they are (after they have been seized, of course). Space will have to be cleared somewhere in them for peer circle meetings and projectwide assemblies.

More difficult is how to convert a street full of individual residences into households. This can probably be improvised as follows: build passageways and tunnels between the buildings; set aside certain rooms for workshops, child care, and health care; block off certain streets to enclose the unit; expand one or two kitchens into a communal unit; rearrange bedrooms; and clear an apartment for a meeting hall.

It will also be difficult to find a meeting space for the neighborhood assembly. There are options, however. There may be a union hall, church, roller skate rink, or high school gym in the neighborhood. But also, warehouses, supermarkets, and department stores have large open floors that could be cleared and made into meeting halls. Most of these spaces, though, could not hold two thousand people. It may be necessary to begin with smaller neighborhood assemblies – say, five households of two hundred each – for a neighborhood assembly of one thousand members, instead of ten households for a neighborhood assembly of two thousand members.

Later on, after the flow of wealth out of the neighborhood to the ruling class has been stopped, and after the stolen wealth of the ruling class has been reappropriated, neighborhoods will undoubtedly want and have the resources to build specially designed neighborhood assembly halls as well as new household complexes. But at first, we will have to make do with what already exists. The wealth of centuries is embedded in the existing architectural plant – a plant that reflects capitalist values, priorities, and social relations. It will take a long time to tear down and rebuild this physical world in a way that expresses the needs of a free people.

But when we do rebuild, the mark of our new civilization will be its assembly halls. Just as earlier worlds have been characterized by

the temples and theaters of ancient Greece, the castles and cathedrals of medieval Europe, and the banks and skyscrapers of modern capitalism, so the new social world of a cooperatively self-governing people will be known by its meeting halls. They will undoubtedly come in all shapes and sizes. Besides the large general assembly chambers for neighborhoods (neighborhood assemblies), there will need to be small caucus rooms in every project and household for peer circle meetings as well as projectwide and householdwide assembly rooms. A deliberating people will design, build, and equip excellent and beautiful spaces for deliberation.

To complete this sketch, we would need to imagine at least two more arrangements, one for a typical small town and another for a typical peasant village – two rapidly disappearing social entities (given the continuing violent enclosures forced through by our corporate rulers). Peasant villages the world over, although under heavy attack, nevertheless still possess a basis for community, with many communal traditions yet intact. These traditions are not always and everywhere relevant to creating a free and anarchistic society, but some of them are. Karl Marx, after all, believed that Russia could skip capitalism and move directly to communism by building on the peasant commune. Small towns still exist too, in every country. Even in a highly urbanized country like the United States, there are still 20,000 towns with a population below 10,000 – 15,000 of which are below 2,500. There is no reason why these small towns couldn't switch to direct democracy right now if they wanted to.

It will be easier I think to transform small towns and peasant villages into our desired neighborhoods than suburbs or dense urban areas. But maybe not. Megalopolises and suburbia will surely wither away, decade by decade, into the new civilization, as the countryside is repopulated with livable, cooperative, autonomous communities of free people. (Needless to say, the vast shantytowns of the neocolonized world will be the first to go.)

A neighborhood is a small place, relatively speaking. Although there may be many villages or small towns left in the world with populations as low as 2,000, they are rapidly disappearing. Most settled areas are much more densely populated. Consider a town of 90,000, for example, which is a small town by today's standards. An average neighborhood assembly size of 2,000 members means we will have 45 neighborhood assemblies in the town. A city of 600,000 will

have 300 neighborhood assemblies. A city of 1,800,000 will have 900, and a city of 9,000,000 will have 4,500.

This shows us immediately the tremendous power of this strategy. For the people in a small town of 60,000 to reconstitute themselves into 30 deliberating bodies to take charge of their lives, resources, and neighborhoods is an unbelievably powerful revolutionary act. Just the mere act of assembling is revolutionary, without even considering all that these assemblies can do. Capitalists depend a lot on keeping us all isolated. Our assembling starts to destroy that isolation. It is an act that will be next to impossible to stop; it is an act that has the power to destroy capitalism and the potential to build a new civilization.

This is the way to think of the revolution. It is a people reassembling themselves (reordering, reconstituting, and reorganizing themselves) into free associations at home, at work, and in the neighborhood. Capitalists will fight this. They may outlaw the meetings, bust them up by force, arrest those attending, or even murder those in attendance. But if we are determined, they will not be able to block us from reconstituting ourselves into the kind of social world we want.

# 3

## Basic Agreements of the Association

The basic social unit is the neighborhood assembly, as described above. For many purposes, however, these neighborhood assemblies will want to cooperate with other neighborhood assemblies. They will coalesce to accomplish certain objectives. In other words, they will sometimes form larger associations. They will do this by treaty negotiations, negotiating agreements to govern all supraneighborhood projects. Sometimes these agreements will involve just a few neighborhood assemblies, and sometimes many. That is, agreements will encompass larger or smaller numbers of neighborhood assemblies depending on the nature of the project. A telephone system will require a regional or even interregional pact. A local park may involve only three or four neighborhoods. The highway system will require regional agreements. A large manufacturing facility may involve fifteen or twenty neighborhood assemblies, and likewise for hospitals, large research facilities, orchestras, and so forth. A considerable amount of the activity in the world at present is governed by such treaties and not by legislation (for example, the worldwide postal service among nations). Also, contracts between corporations are more in the nature of treaties (mutually agreed on terms and conditions) rather than laws (although they are enforced by a nation's laws). So we should not be frightened by this. The number of interneighborhood agreements that the neighborhood assemblies will have to work out to regulate our common endeavors will be well within the range of complexity manageable by human intelligence. It probably won't exceed a couple hundred agreements (not counting trade agreements, which may run into the thousands).

Beyond agreements governing particular projects, there will need to be a general agreement about the nature of the association. Becoming a signatory to this agreement or pact is what it means to join an association of democratic autonomous neighborhoods. There will need to be agreements about membership in neighborhoods, the basic struc-

tures of the neighborhood itself (households, projects, peer circles, and neighborhood assemblies), voting procedures within the assemblies, territory and resources, leaving the association, not joining the association in the first place, aggression and defense, and so forth. (See the appendix for a draft general agreement for such an association.)

Negotiating these treaties will involve a lot of work at first, but less so later on. Nevertheless, it will be an ongoing process. Procedures and facilities for negotiating will need to be established. These treaty negotiating procedures will probably not differ all that much from the way treaties are negotiated among states: delegates from each neighborhood will be sent to regional treaty drafting conferences, with the final ratification resting with the neighborhood assemblies. The main difference lies in the number of negotiating parties: less than two hundred nations versus tens of thousands of neighborhoods.

Although this may seem cumbersome, there is no alternative if we want to govern our own lives. The alternative is to relinquish control into the hands of regional or interregional elites, thus voiding our determination to be autonomous, free peoples. Besides, it probably sounds a lot worse than it will prove to be in reality.

# 4

## Obstacles

Once we have in mind a clear notion of how we might want to live, we can begin to see ways to bring this new world into being and what obstacles have to be overcome in order to do so.

Perhaps the greatest obstacle we face is the enormous capacity capitalists have acquired to shape and control what people think, and how they see the world and the events taking place in it. Radio, television, and movies are the greatest weapons ever to fall into the hands of any ruling class. Add to this all the other instruments of mass communication – books, newspapers, magazines, newsletters, advertising, videos, and computers; then add years and years of schooling, ruling-class control of all the major institutions, as well as the propaganda at work, the homogenization of culture, and the destruction of families, neighborhoods, and communities. Given all this it is hard to see how an autonomous, oppositional consciousness could ever emerge, much less survive the system's attacks if it did emerge.

Nevertheless, capitalist control of consciousness and culture is not total. Opposition movements continue to be born even now. There are cracks in the empire through which the irrepressible creative subjectivity of human beings can find outlets. This is our main hope. The rapid creation of the worldwide Indymedia in just a few years (dating from November 1999) is a spectacular manifestation of this hope. I'm sure there are many other ways that we can break the hold of ruling class thought, prove that we have not been totally brainwashed by the doublespeak of its media, and assert our own values and perceptions.

Another big obstacle we face is the labor market itself. We have to go to where the jobs are. This means that many of us are moving all the time. Many of our current neighbors will be gone in a couple of years (or we will be gone ourselves). Even if we managed to set up neighborhood assemblies, their members would be constantly turning over. Still, in every neighborhood, there are also many who manage to stay put, and who could provide the needed continuity and stability.

Having to follow the jobs also results in a huge disjunction be-

tween where people live and where they work. Throughout the world the vast majority of people who live in urban or suburban areas do not work in the neighborhoods where they reside. They commute to jobs somewhere else. Even if this job is only half a mile away, it most likely takes them out of the neighborhood assembly district (depending on population density, of course). That is, even if a neighborhood succeeded in establishing a neighborhood assembly, and even if workers in a neighborhood seized the factories and offices there, we would still be dealing with two sets of people. And many suburban neighborhoods do not even have factories and offices; thus suburbia itself is an obstacle, and will have to be dismantled or rebuilt. So how could a neighborhood-based assembly become a decision-making unit governing the projects in that area? It would take decades, even if capitalism were destroyed, for people to get relocated into projects nearer home. This must of necessity be a gradual process. In order to avoid total chaos and disintegration, most people must go on working at the jobs they have and know. Otherwise we would all die. There would be no food, transportation, medical care, electricity, heat, or clothing. So it is quite clear that at least initially, there cannot be an integrated neighborhood decision-making unit comprised of a gathering of peer circles from projects and households into a neighborhood assembly.

But this is not the whole story. There are still compelling reasons for sticking with the strategy. For one thing, even in a thoroughly reconstructed social world, there will be many interneighborhood projects governed by pacts struck by several neighborhood assemblies rather than controlled solely by a single neighborhood assembly. So some people will always be working away from the neighborhoods where they live. That is, some people will attend their neighborhood assemblies as individuals who are members of peer circles from outside their neighborhood. Second, it is only by reconstituting ourselves into neighborhood, workplace, and household associations, despite the obstacles, that we can destroy capitalism and thus slowly start to undo the absurd work/home spatial patterns thrown up by this system.

Another obstacle to creating the envisioned association of autonomous neighborhoods sketched above is the worldwide division of labor. Every little enterprise (office, workshop, clinic, classroom) gets supplies and equipment from all over. Lightbulbs come from far away. Paper, pens, electricity, computers, furniture, medicines, and machines often come from distant places. In the short run, no enter-



prise could continue to function if these networks of trade were disrupted. But at present this trade is corporate controlled. In recent decades, given transnational corporations and the further globalization of capital, the worldwide division of labor (and trade networks) has taken another expansive leap. It has suited capital's purposes to decentralize production, scattering plants all over the world, all made possible by the new communication and information technologies. It doesn't have to be this way, of course, nor is this necessarily the best way to organize production. But this existing division of labor, induced and shaped by the imperatives of capital, certainly does constitute an obstacle to establishing democratic autonomous communities of free people. It will take time to restructure the circulation of goods to reflect the principle of freedom rather than slavery.

In the meantime, the existing trade networks will have to be maintained and worked with. But *who* will maintain them? And how? Obviously, you can't overthrow the corporate world yet somehow maintain its division of labor. Which leads us to an important insight: residential patterns and divisions of labor *cannot be overthrown*; they have to be *replaced*. (This is true also for capitalist property relations and capitalist institutions of decision making.) I have no doubt that neighborhood assemblies and self-managed projects will be able to eventually build up extensive networks of interchange to replace the existing corporate-controlled ones.

Speaking of capitalist property relations, they have traditionally been seen as the greatest single obstacle to achieving communism. The fact that the capitalists "own" the land and the factories, and that this "ownership" is inscribed in the law, upheld by the courts, and enforced by the police, is what has led anticapitalist forces to focus primarily on the state in their efforts to abolish these property relations. This strategy proved ineffective through nearly a century of trials. In any case, any attempt to establish autonomous neighborhoods, with cooperatively run households and projects, would run smack up against capitalist property relations, and they would have to be overcome.

The military might of the capitalist ruling class is of course an obvious obstacle to the establishment of democratic autonomous neighborhoods. Their ability and willingness to simply murder us, if they choose to, to protect their profits is daunting indeed. Nevertheless, although this firepower is overwhelming, it is not invincible. We can

defeat it. I hope I am beginning to show how in this book.

We must never forget that we are at war, however, and that we have been for five hundred years. We are involved in class warfare. This defines our situation historically and sets limits to what we can do. It would be nice to think of peace, for example, but this is out of the question. It is excluded as an option by historical conditions. Peace can be achieved only by destroying capitalism.

The casualties from this war, on our side, long ago reached astronomical sums. It is estimated that thirty million people perished during the first century of the capitalist invasion of the Americas, including millions of Africans who were worked to death as slaves. Thousands of peasants died in the great revolts in France and Germany in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. During the enclosures movement in England and the first wave of industrialization, hundreds of thousands of people died needlessly. African slaves died by the millions (an estimated fifteen million) during the Atlantic crossing. Hundreds of poor people were hanged in London in the early nineteenth century to enforce the new property laws. During the Paris uprising of 1871, thirty thousand communards were slaughtered. Twenty million were lost in Joseph Stalin's gulag, and millions more perished during the 1930s when the Soviet state expropriated the land and forced the collectivization of agriculture – an event historically comparable to the enclosures in England (and thus the Bolsheviks destroyed one of the greatest peasant revolutions of all time). Thousands of militants were murdered by the German police during the near revolution in Germany and Austria in 1919. Thousands of workers and peasants were killed during the Spanish Civil War. Adolf Hitler killed ten million people in concentration camps (including six million Jews in the gas chambers). An estimated two hundred thousand labor leaders, activists, and citizens have been murdered in Guatemala since the coup engineered by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in 1954. Thousands were lost in the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. Half a million communists were massacred in Indonesia in 1975. Millions of Vietnamese were killed by French and U.S. capitalists during decades of colonialism and war. And how many were killed during British capital's subjugation of India, and during capitalist Europe's colonization of Asia and Africa?

A major weapon of capitalists has always been to simply murder those who are threatening their rule. Thousands were killed by the contras and death squads in Nicaragua and El Salvador. Thousands

were murdered in Chile by Augusto Pinochet during his counterrevolution, after the assassination of Salvador Allende. Speaking of assassinations, there is a long list: Patrice Lumumba, Rosa Luxemburg, Antonio Gramsci (died in prison), Ricardo Flores Magon (died in prison), Che Guevara, Gustav Landauer, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr., Fred Hampton, George Jackson, the Haymarket anarchists, Amilcar Cabral, Steve Biko, Karl Liebnicht, Nat Turner, and thousands more. Thousands are being murdered every year now in Colombia. Thousands die every year in the workplace in the United States alone. Eighty thousand die needlessly in hospitals annually in the United States due to malpractice and negligence. Fifty thousand die each year in automobile accidents in the United States, deaths directly due to intentional capitalist decisions to scuttle mass transit in favor of an economy based on oil, roads, and cars (and unsafe cars to boot). Thousands have died in mines since capitalism began. Millions of people are dying right now, every year, from famines directly attributable to capitalists and from diseases easily prevented but for capitalists. Nearly all poverty-related deaths are because of capitalists. We cannot begin to estimate the stunted, wasted, and shortened lives caused by capitalists, not to mention the millions who have died fighting their stupid little world wars and equally stupid colonial wars. (This enumeration is *very* far from complete.)

Capitalists (generically speaking) are not merely thieves; they are murderers. Their theft and murder is on a scale never seen before in history – a scale so vast it boggles the mind. Capitalists make Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Genghis Khan, and Attila the Hun look like boy scouts. This is a terrible enemy we face.

I can just hear the cries of protest now that we cannot blame all this on capitalists – from Hitler’s holocaust to Stalin’s gulag, from racial murders to famines. I can and I do, and if this were a different book, I could present arguments and evidence to back up this claim.

# 5

## Strategies That Have Failed

### Social Democracy

We can't destroy capitalism by running for office, by gaining control of the state apparatus through elections. It hasn't been done and it won't be done, even though numerous governments have been in socialist hands in Europe, sometimes for decades. It won't be done because governments don't have the last say, they don't control society. Capitalists do. The government doesn't control capitalists; capitalists control the government. Modern government (i.e., the nation-state system) is an invention of capitalists. It is their tool, and they know how to use it and keep it from being turned against them. Although building worker-controlled political parties, then using those parties to win elections and get control of governments, and then using those governments to establish socialism seemed like a plausible enough strategy when it was initiated in the mid-nineteenth century, it's way past time for us to recognize and admit that it simply hasn't worked. Capitalism goes rolling on no matter who controls the government.

### Leninism

We can't destroy capitalism by taking over the government in a so-called revolution (i.e., capturing the state apparatus by force of arms). Beginning with the Russian Revolution, this has been the most widely used strategy (by national liberation movements) during the past century in countries on the periphery of capitalism. Dozens of "revolutionary parties" have come to power all over the world, but nowhere have they succeeded in destroying capitalism. In all cases so far, they have simply gone on doing what capitalists always do: accumulate more capital. They inevitably become in spite of their intentions just another government in a system of nation-states, inextricably embedded in capitalism, with no possibility of escape. Generations of revolutionaries devoted their lives to this strategy. It seemed like the best thing to do at the time, and maybe it was. But now, after nearly a century of trials, it's painfully clear that the strategy has failed, and

more and more revolutionaries are coming to this conclusion. The few remaining die-hard leninists, who are still struggling to build a vanguard party to seize state power, are definitely and thankfully a dying breed.

## **Guerrilla Warfare**

We cannot destroy capitalism with guerrilla warfare. This strategy has been mostly deployed as part of national liberation movements in colonial countries in order to capture the governments there. It is a form of leninism. As noted above, leninism in general didn't work. And now, guerrilla warfare as a particular tactic within leninism doesn't work. Capitalists have learned how to defeat it. The strategy was based on the assumed unwillingness of the capitalists to murder the civilian population in order to kill the guerrillas too. Capitalists have shown no such reluctance. They are willing to murder on a massive scale, and uproot and displace whole populations, in order to defeat guerrilla movements. And they win. (The current wars in Colombia and Iraq will perhaps serve as the final test of this strategy.)

Some wild-eyed romantic revolutionaries have thought to adopt the strategy for use in the core countries, with disastrous results. Capitalists have been delighted to have a new enemy – namely, “terrorists” and “anarchists” – now that “communists” are gone. But of course they will malign any opposition movement, so this is not the reason guerrilla warfare will not work here. It won't work because it is part of leninism (seizing state power), and leninism didn't work. It will not work because of the overwhelming firepower amassed by every advanced capitalist government. It will not work because it doesn't contain within itself the seeds of the new civilization. I would think twice before joining the underground.

(For further thoughts on guerrilla warfare, see the Postscript.)

## **Syndicalism**

We cannot destroy capitalism by seizing and occupying the factories and the farms, at least not in the way this has been tried so far. Nevertheless, of all the strategies that have failed, syndicalism (federations of peasant, worker, and soldier councils) is the only one that had a ghost of a chance, and the only one that even came close to creating a new world. It came close in the great Spanish Revolution in the 1930s. Unfortunately, that magnificent revolution was defeated. In

fact, all syndicalist revolutions have failed so far.

I believe there are serious flaws inherent in the strategy itself. For one thing, the syndicalist strategy ignores households, as if households weren't part of the means of production. Thus, it excludes millions of homemakers from active participation in the revolution. Homemakers can only serve in a supporting role. It also excludes old people, young people, sick people, prisoners, students, welfare recipients, and millions of unemployed workers. To think that a revolution can be made only by those people who hold jobs is the sheerest folly. Perhaps immediately after syndicalists seize the factories and make a revolution, this exclusion could be overcome by having everyone join a council at home or in school, but this is no help beforehand, during the revolution itself. The whole image is badly skewed.

Moreover, syndicalists have never specified clearly enough how all the various councils are going to function together to make decisions and set policy, defend themselves, and launch a new civilization. In the near revolution in Germany in 1918, the worker and soldier councils were for a few months the only organized power. They could have won. But they were confused about what to do. They couldn't see how to get from their separate councils to the establishment of overall power and the defeat of capitalism.

In the massive general strike in Poland in 1980, factory, office, mining, and farm councils were set up all over the country. But these councils didn't know how to coalesce into an alternative social arrangement capable of replacing the existing power structure. They even mistakenly refrained from attacking ruling-class power with the intent of destroying it. Instead, the councils merely wanted to coexist in some kind of uneasy dual structure (perhaps because they were afraid of a Soviet invasion; but a strategy that has not taken external armies into account is badly flawed).

Workplace associations would have to be permanent assemblies, with years of experience under their belts, before they could have a chance of success. They cannot be new forms suddenly thrown up in the depths of a crisis or the middle of a general strike, with a strong government still waiting in the wings, supported by its fully operational military forces. It is no wonder that syndicalist-style revolts have gone down to defeat.

Finally, syndicalists have not worked out the relations between the councils and the community at large, and to assume that workers in a

factory have the final say over the allocation of those resources (or whether the factory should even exist) rather than the community at large, simply won't do. Nor have syndicalists worked out intercommunity relations. Syndicalism, in short, is a half-baked strategy that has not been capable of destroying capitalism, although it has been headed in the right direction.

## **General Strikes**

General strikes cannot destroy capitalism. There is an upper limit of about six weeks as to how long they can even last. Beyond that society starts to disintegrate. But since the general strikers have not even thought about reconstituting society through alternative social arrangements, let alone created them, they are compelled to go back to their jobs just to survive, to keep from starving. All a government has to do is wait them out, perhaps making a few concessions to placate the masses. This is what Charles de Gaulle did in France in 1968.

A general strike couldn't even last six weeks if it were really general – that is, if *everyone* stopped working. Under those conditions there would be no water, electricity, heat, or food. The garbage would pile up. We couldn't go anywhere because the gas stations would be closed. We couldn't get medical treatment. Thus we would only be hurting ourselves. And what could our objectives possibly be? By stopping work, we obviously wouldn't be aiming at occupying and seizing our workplaces. If that were our aim we would continue working, but kick the bosses out. So our main aim would have to be to topple a government and replace it with another. This might be a legitimate goal if we needed to get rid of a particularly oppressive regime, but as for getting rid of capitalism, it gets us nowhere.

## **Strikes**

Strikes against a particular corporation cannot destroy capitalism. They are not even thought to do so. The purpose of strikes is to change the rate of exploitation in favor of workers. Strikes have only rarely been linked to demands for workers' control (let alone the abolition of wage slavery); nor could capitalist property relations be overcome in a single corporation. The strike does not contain within itself any vision for reconstituting social relations across society, nor any plans to do so.

In recent years, strikes have even lost most of the effectiveness

they once had for gaining short-term benefits for the working class. More often than not strikers are defeated: their union leaders sell them out; the owners bring in scabs, or simply fire everyone and hire a whole new crew; the owners move their plants elsewhere; and/or the government declares the strike illegal and calls out the state militia. Strike breaking is a flourishing industry on consultant row. Decades of antiunion propaganda by corporate-controlled media has destroyed a prolabor working-class culture, which in turn helps management break strikes. Nowadays, for strikers to get anywhere at all, entire communities have to be mobilized, with linkages to national campaigns. Even so, strikers are still aiming only at higher wages, health benefits, and the like; they are not anticapitalist. With rare exception, they are not even fighting for a shorter workweek.

I do not believe that this situation is temporary or can be reversed. So however important strikes are, or once were, in the unending fight over the extraction of wealth from the direct producers, they cannot destroy capitalism as a system.

## **Unions**

Unions cannot destroy capitalism. Although unions were created by workers, mainly to help protect themselves from the ravages of wage slavery, they have long since lost any emancipatory potential. They were easily co-opted by the ruling class and used against workers as a disciplinary tool to prevent strikes, to prevent job actions, to drain power from the shop floor, to stabilize the workforce and reduce absenteeism, to pacify workers, to water down demands, and so forth. Almost from their beginnings in the middle of the nineteenth century (and with rare exception) unions have been “business unions,” working in cahoots with capitalists to manage “labor relations.” There is an inherent flaw in this strategy. It is based on constructing a bureaucratic institution *outside* the workplace instead of a free association of workers *inside* the workplace. In any case, the heyday of unions is long since past and any hope of bringing them back is delusive.

In recent years there has been a movement to rebuild unions, even in the United States, which is notoriously lacking in labor consciousness, and where union membership is down to 8 percent in nongovernment workplaces. In other countries, though, especially poor ones, there are some strong union movements, arising in response to the industries that have moved there or to the appearance of sweatshops.



With rare exception, these unions are not anticapitalist. Naturally, it's important to fight for better working conditions, higher wages, shorter hours, and health benefits. Such struggles do often highlight the evils of the wage slave system as well as improve the lives of workers. Who could not be excited by the rapid emergence in the late 1990s of the student anti-sweatshop movement on college campuses across the country? But something more is needed if we want to get rid of capitalism. Even if current labor activists succeed and rebuild unions to what they once were, can we expect these newly refashioned unions to accomplish more than previous ones did, at the height of the unionization drives of a strong labor movement – a movement that was embedded in communist, socialist, and anarchist working-class cultures that have now been obliterated? Hardly.

### **Insurrections**

Insurrections cannot destroy capitalism. I don't even think the ruling class is frightened of them anymore. You can rampage through the streets all you want, burn down your neighborhoods, and loot all the local stores to your heart's content. They know this will not go anywhere. They know that blind rage will burn itself out. When it's all over, these insurrectionists will be showing up for work like always or standing again in the dole line. Nothing has changed. Nothing has been organized. No new associations have been created. What do capitalists care if they lose a whole city? They can afford it. All they have to do is cordon off the area of conflagration, wait for the fires to burn down, go in and arrest thousands of people at random, and then leave, letting the "rioters" cope with their ruined neighborhoods as best they can. Maybe we should think of something a little more damaging to capitalists than burning down our own neighborhoods.

### **Civil Disobedience**

Acts of civil disobedience cannot destroy capitalism. They can sometimes make strong moral statements. But moral statements are pointless against immoral persons. They fall on deaf ears. Therefore, the act of deliberately breaking a law and getting arrested is of limited value in actually breaking the power of the rulers. Acts of civil disobedience can be used as weapons in the battle for the hearts and minds of ordinary people, I guess (assuming that ordinary people ever hear about them). But they are basically the actions of powerless per-

sons. Powerless individuals must use whatever tactics they can, of course. But that is the point. Why remain powerless, when by adopting a different strategy (building strategic associations) we could become powerful, and not be reduced to impotent acts like civil disobedience against laws we had no say in making and that we regard as unjust?

Moreover, civil disobedience is a tactic used primarily by the more well-off and securely situated activists who can count on friends and family to raise bail, and who can be pretty sure of not getting a long prison term. This is not true for those strongly motivated religious persons who sometimes embrace long prison sentences as part of bearing witness to a higher morality. But you almost never see poor people or minorities deliberately getting themselves arrested because they know that once in prison, they are not likely to get out.

Civil disobedience has the additional disadvantage that the movement has to spend a lot of precious time and money getting people out of jail. Enough people get arrested anyway, against their will. We don't need the added burden having to struggle to free persons who voluntarily put themselves in the hands of our jailers.

### **Single-Issue Campaigns**

We cannot destroy capitalism with single-issue campaigns, yet the great bulk of radicals' energy is spent on these campaigns. There are dozens of them: campaigns to defend abortion rights, maintain rent control, halt whaling, prohibit toxic dumping, stop the war on drugs, stop police brutality, stop union busting, abolish the death penalty, stop the logging of redwoods, outlaw the baby seal kill, ban genetically modified foods, stop the World Bank and the World Trade Organization, stop global warming, and on and on. What we are doing is spending our lives trying to fix a system that generates evils faster than we can ever eradicate them.

Although some of these campaigns use direct action (e.g., spikes in the trees to stop the chain saws or Greenpeace boats in front of the whaling ships to block the harpoons), for the most part the campaigns are aimed at passing legislation in Congress to correct the problem. Unfortunately, reforms that are won in one decade, after endless agitation, can be easily wiped off the books the following decade, after the protesters have gone home or a new administration comes to power.

These struggles all have value and are needed. Could anyone think that the campaigns against global warming, to free Leonard Peltier, or to aid the East Timorese ought to be abandoned? Single-issue campaigns keep us aware of what's wrong and sometimes even win gains. But in and of themselves, they cannot destroy capitalism, and thus cannot really fix things. It is utopian to believe that we can reform capitalism. Most of these evils can only be eradicated for good if we destroy capitalism itself and create a new civilization. We cannot afford to aim for anything less. Our very survival is at stake. There is one single-issue campaign I can wholeheartedly endorse: the total and permanent eradication of capitalism.

Many millions of us, though, are rootless and quite alienated from a particular place or local community. We are part of the vast mass of atomized individuals brought into being by the market for commodified labor. Our political activities tend to reflect this. We tend to act as free-floating protesters. But we could start to change this. We could begin to root ourselves in our local communities. This will be more possible for some than for others, of course. There can be no hard-and-fast rule. Yet many of us could start establishing free associations at work, at home, and in the neighborhood. In this way, our fights to stop what we don't like through single-issue campaigns could be combined with what we do want. Plus, we would have a lot more power to stop what we don't like. Our single-issue campaigns might prove to be more successful.

What is missing is free association, free assemblies, on the local level. If we added these into the mix, we would start getting somewhere. We could attack the ruling class on all fronts. There are millions of us, plenty of us to do everything, but everything must include fights on the local level, especially at the three strategic sites mentioned earlier.

## **Demonstrations**

We cannot destroy capitalism by staging demonstrations. This most popular of all radical strategies is also one of the most questionable. As a rule, demonstrations barely even embarrass capitalists, let alone frighten or damage them. Demonstrations are just a form of petition usually. They petition the ruling class regarding some grievance, essentially begging it to change its policies. They are not designed to take any power or wealth away from capitalists. Demonstrations only

last a few hours or days and then, with rare exception, everything goes back to the way it was. If demonstrations do win an occasional concession, it is usually minor and short-lived. They do not build an alternative social world. Rather, they mostly just alert the ruling class that it needs to retool or invent new measures to counter an emerging source of opposition.

But even if demonstrations rise above the petition level, and become instead a way of presenting our demands and making our opposition known, we still have not acquired the power to see that our demands are met. Our opposition has no teeth. In order to give some bite to our protests we would have to reorganize ourselves, reorient ourselves, by rooting ourselves, assembling ourselves, on the local level. Then when we went off on demonstrations to protest ruling-class initiatives and projects there would be some strength behind the protests, rather than just shouted slogans, unfurled banners, hoisted placards, street scuffles, and clever puppets. We would be in a position to take action if our demands were not met. Then when we chanted, "Whose Streets? Our Streets!" our words might represent more than just a pipe dream.

Demonstrations are not even good propaganda tools because the ruling class, given its control of the media, can put any spin it wants to on the event, and this interpretation is invariably damaging to the opposition movement, assuming the event is even reported since the latest approach to these events is simply to ignore them. This is quite effective.

And what are the gains? An issue can sometimes be brought to the attention of the public, even if only a small minority of the public. Also, more people can be drawn into an opposition movement. For those participating, a demonstration can be an inspiring experience. (In many cases, though, this high is offset by a sense of dispiritedness on returning home.) Demonstrations can thus contribute to building an opposition movement. But are these small gains worth it? Large national demonstrations drain energy and resources away from local struggles. And even local demonstrations are costly, requiring time, energy, and money, which are always in short supply among radicals. Are demonstrations worth all the work and the expense they take to organize? No matter what, they remain just a form of protest. They show what we're against. By their very nature, demonstrations are of limited value for articulating what we are for. We are against the

World Trade Organization, but what are we for?

Rather than taking to the streets and marching off all the time, protesting this or that (while the police take our pictures), we would be better off staying home and building up our workplace, neighborhood, and household associations until they are powerful enough to strike at the heart of capitalism. We cannot build a new social world in the streets.

## **New Social Movements**

The so-called new social movements, based on gender, racial, sexual, or ethnic identities, cannot destroy capitalism. In general, they haven't even tried. Except for a tiny fringe of radicals in each of them, they have been attempting to get into the system, not overthrow it. This is true for women, blacks, homosexuals, and ethnic (including "native") groups, as well as many other identities – old people, people with disabilities, mothers on welfare, and so forth. Nothing has derailed the anticapitalist struggle during the past quarter century so thoroughly as have these movements. Sometimes it seems that identity politics is all that remains of the left. Identity politics has simply swamped class politics.

The mainstream versions of these movements (the ones fighting to get into the system rather than overthrow it) have given capitalists a chance to do a little fine-tuning by eliminating tensions here and there, and by including token representatives of the excluded groups. Many of the demands of these movements can be easily accommodated. Capitalists can live with boards of directors exhibiting ethnic, gender, and racial diversity as long as all the board members are procapitalist. Capitalists can easily accept a rainbow cabinet as long as the cabinet is pushing the corporate agenda. So mainstream identity politics has not threatened capitalism at all.

The radical wings of the new social movements, however, are rather more subversive. These militants realized that it was necessary to attack the whole social order in order to uproot racism and sexism – problems that could not be overcome under capitalism since they are an integral part of it. There is no denying the evils of racism, sexism, and nationalism, which are major structural supports to ruling-class control. These militants have done whatever they could to highlight, analyze, and ameliorate these evils. Unfortunately, for the most part, their voices have been lost in all the clamor for admittance to the sys-

tem by the majorities in their own movements.

There have been gains, of course. The women's movement has forever changed the world's consciousness about gender. Unpaid housework has been recognized as a key ingredient in the wage slave system. Reproduction as well as production has been included in our analysis of the system. Identity politics in general has underscored just how many people are excluded while also exposing gaps in previous revolutionary strategies. Moreover, the demand for real racial and gender equality is itself inherently revolutionary in that it cannot be met by capitalists, given that racial and gender discrimination are two of the key structural mechanisms for keeping wages low and thus making profits possible.

## **Boycotts**

Boycotts cannot destroy capitalism. They have always been an extremely ineffective way to attack the system, and are almost impossible to organize. They almost invariably fail in their objectives. In the rare cases where they have succeeded, the gains are minor. A corporation is forced to amend its labor policies here and there, drop a product, or divest somewhere. That's about it.

In recent years, boycotting has become a way of life for thousands in the environmental movement. They publish thick books on which products are okay to buy and which must be boycotted, covering literally everything from toilet paper to deodorant, food to toys. All these activists have succeeded in doing is to create a whole new capitalist industry of politically correct products. They have bought into the myth that the "economy" will give us anything we want if we just demand it, and that it is our demands that have been wrong rather than the system itself.

It's true that it is better to eat food that hasn't been polluted with insecticides, to wear clothes not made with child labor, or to use makeup not tested on rabbits. But capitalism cannot be destroyed by making such choices. If we are going to boycott something, we might try boycotting wage slavery.

## **Dropping Out**

We cannot destroy capitalism by dropping out, either as an individual, a small group, or a community. It's been tried over and over, and it fails every time. There is no escaping capitalism; there is no-

where left to go. The only escape from capitalism is to destroy it. Then we could be free (if we try). In fact, capitalists love it when we drop out. They don't need us. They have plenty of suckers already. What do they care if we live under bridges, beg for meals, and die young? I haven't seen the ruling class rushing to help the homeless.

Even more illusory than the idea that an individual can drop out is the notion that a whole community can withdraw from the system and build its own little new world somewhere else. This was tried repeatedly by utopian communities throughout the nineteenth century. The strategy was revived in the 1960s as thousands of new left radicals retired to remote rural communes to groove on togetherness (and dope). The strategy is once again surfacing in the new age movement as dozens of communities are being established all over the country. These movements all suffer from the mistaken idea that they don't have to attack capitalism and destroy it but can simply withdraw from it, to live their own lives separately and independently. It is a vast illusion. Capitalists rule the world. Until they are defeated, there will be no freedom for anyone.

## **Luddism**

As wonderful as luddism was, as one of the fiercest attacks ever made against capitalism, wrecking machinery cannot in and of itself destroy capitalism, and for the same reason that insurrections and strikes cannot: the action is not designed to replace capitalism with new decision-making arrangements. It does not even strike at the heart of capitalism – wage slavery – but only at the physical plant, the material means of production. Although large-scale sabotage, if it were part of a movement to destroy capitalism and replace it with something else, could weaken the corporate world and put a strain on the accumulation of capital, it is far better to get ourselves in a position where we can seize the machinery rather than smash it. (Not that we even want much of the existing machinery; it will have to be redesigned. But seizing it is a way of getting control over the means of production.)

Moreover, luddites were already enslaved to capitalists in their cottage industries before they struck. They were angry because new machinery was eliminating their customary job (which was an old way of making a living, relatively speaking, and thus had some strong traditions attached to it). In current terms, it would be like linotype op-

erators destroying computers because their jobs were being eliminated by the new equipment. Destroying the new machinery misses the point. It is not the machinery that is the problem but the wage slave system itself. If it weren't for wage slavery we could welcome labor-saving devices, provided they weren't destructive in other ways, for freeing us from unnecessary toil.

We can draw inspiration from luddism, as a fine example of workers aggressively resisting the further degradation of their lives, but we should not imitate it, at least not as a general strategy.

## **Publishing**

We cannot destroy capitalism by publishing, although I doubt if anyone believes that we can. I mention it here only because publishing constitutes for so many of us *our practice*. This is what we are doing. We justify this by saying that radical books, magazines, and newspapers are weapons in the fight against bourgeois cultural hegemony – which is true. But we are permitted to publish only because the ruling class isn't worried one jot by our “underground press.” Their weapons – television, radio, movies, and schools – are infinitely more powerful. It's conceivable that capitalism could be destroyed without any publishing at all. The strategy of reassembling ourselves into workplace, neighborhood, and household associations could catch on and spread by word of mouth from community to community. Destroying capitalism is more a matter of rearranging ourselves socially (reconstituting our social relations) than of propagating a particular set of ideas. So instead of starting our own zines, why don't we call a meeting with co-workers or neighbors *to form an association?*

## **Education**

We cannot destroy capitalism through education. Not many radicals recommend this strategy anymore, although you still hear it occasionally. New left radicals established free schools and even a free university or two, and there was a fairly strong and long lasting modern school movement among anarchists. But these are long gone. The notion, however, that education is the path to change and the way out of the mess we're in is quite common in the culture at large. This is like the tail wagging the dog. We don't even control the schools or what is taught there. Schools and education are artifacts, and minor ones at that, of the ruling class, and are a reflection of its power over



society. It is that power that must be broken. This cannot be done through schools. Even the very notion of education as an activity separated from life needs to be overcome. Learning among free peoples will be strikingly different. When we have achieved our autonomy, by directly engaging and defeating our oppressors, that will be the time to worry about how to conduct our learning.

# 6

## The Strategy Described Abstractly

It is time to try to describe, at first abstractly and later concretely, a strategy for destroying capitalism. At its most basic, this strategy calls for pulling time, energy, and resources out of capitalist civilization and putting them into building a new civilization. The image, then, is one of emptying out capitalist structures, hollowing them out, by draining wealth, power, and meaning from them until there is nothing left but shells.

This is definitely an aggressive strategy. It requires great militancy and constitutes an attack on the existing order. The strategy clearly recognizes that capitalism is the enemy and must be destroyed, but it is not a frontal attack aimed at overthrowing the system; it is an inside attack aimed at gutting it, while simultaneously replacing it with something better, something we want.

Thus, capitalist structures (corporations, governments, banks, schools, etc.) are not *seized* so much as simply *abandoned*. Capitalist relations are not *fought* so much as they are simply *rejected*. We *stop participating* in activities that support (finance, condone) the capitalist world and *start participating* in activities that build a new world while simultaneously undermining the old. We create a new pattern of social relations alongside capitalist ones, and then continually build and strengthen our new pattern while doing everything we can to weaken capitalist relations. In this way our new democratic, nonhierarchical, noncommodified relations can eventually overwhelm the capitalist relations and force them out of existence.

This is how it has to be done. This is a plausible, realistic strategy. To think that we could create a whole new world of decent social arrangements overnight, in the midst of a crisis, during a so-called revolution or the collapse of capitalism, is foolhardy. Our new social world must grow within the old, and in opposition to it, until it is strong enough to dismantle and abolish capitalist relations. Such a revolution will never happen automatically, blindly, determinably,

because of the inexorable materialist laws of history. It will happen, and only happen, because we want it to, and because we know what we're doing and how we want to live, what obstacles have to be overcome before we can live that way, and how to distinguish between our social patterns and theirs.

But we must not think that the capitalist world can simply be ignored, in a live-and-let-live attitude, while we try to build new lives elsewhere. (As mentioned earlier, there *is* no elsewhere.) There is at least one thing, wage slavery, that we can't simply stop participating in (but even here there are ways we can chip away at it). Capitalism must be *explicitly refused* and replaced by something else. This constitutes *war*, but it is not a war in the traditional sense of armies and tanks; it is a war fought on a daily basis, on the level of everyday life, by millions of people. It is a war nevertheless because the accumulators of capital will use coercion, brutality, and murder, as they have always done in the past, to try to block any rejection of the system. They have always had to force compliance; they will not hesitate to continue to do so. Still, there are many concrete ways that individuals, groups, and neighborhoods can gut capitalism, which I will enumerate shortly.

We must always keep in mind how we became slaves; then we can see more clearly how we can cease being slaves. We were forced into wage slavery because the ruling class slowly, systematically, and brutally destroyed our ability to live autonomously. By driving us off the land, changing the property laws, dismantling community rights, destroying our tools, imposing taxes, gutting our local markets, and so forth, we were forced onto the labor market in order to survive, our only remaining option being to sell our ability to work for a wage.

It's quite clear, then, how we can overthrow slavery: we must reverse this process. We must begin to reacquire the ability to live without working for a wage or buying the products made by wage slaves (that is, we must free ourselves from the labor market and the way of living based on it), and embed ourselves instead in cooperative labor and cooperatively produced goods.

Another clarification is needed. This strategy does not call for *re-forming* capitalism, for changing capitalism into something else. It calls for totally *replacing* capitalism with a new civilization. This is an important distinction because capitalism has proved impervious to reforms as a system. We can sometimes, in some places, win certain

concessions from it (usually only temporary ones) and some (usually short-lived) improvements in our lives as its victims, but we cannot reform it piecemeal.

Hence, our strategy of gutting and eventually destroying capitalism requires at a minimum a totalizing image, an awareness that we are attacking an entire way of life and replacing it with another, and not merely reforming one way of life into something else. Many people may not be accustomed to thinking about entire systems and social orders, but everyone knows what a lifestyle is, or a way of life, and that is the way we should approach it.

The thing is this: in order for capitalism to be destroyed, millions and millions of people must be dissatisfied with their way of life. They must *want something else* and see certain existing things as obstacles to getting what they want. It is not useful to think of this as a new ideology. It is not merely a belief system that is needed, like a religion, or like marxism or anarchism. Rather it is a new prevailing vision, a dominant desire, an overriding need. What must exist is a pressing desire to live a certain way and not to live another way. If this pressing desire were a desire to live free, to be autonomous, to live in democratically controlled communities, to participate in the self-regulating activities of a mature people, then capitalism could be destroyed. Otherwise, we are doomed to perpetual slavery and possibly even to extinction.

The content of this vision is actually not new at all. The long-term goal of communists, anarchists, and socialists has always been to restore community. Even the great peasant revolts of early capitalism sought to free people from external authorities and restore autonomy to villages. Marx defined communism once as a free association of producers, and at another time as a situation in which the free development of each is a condition for the free development of all. Anarchists have always called for worker and peasant self-managed cooperatives. The long-term goals have always been clear: to abolish wage slavery, eradicate a social order organized solely around the accumulation of capital for its own sake, and establish in its place a society of free people who democratically and cooperatively self-determine the shape of their social world.

These principles, however, must be embodied in concrete social arrangements. In this sketch, they are embodied in the following configuration of social forms, as noted earlier: autonomous, self-

*The Strategy Described Abstractly*

governing, democratic neighborhoods (through the practice of the neighborhood assembly); self-managed projects; cooperatively operated households; and an association, by means of treaties, of neighborhoods one with another.

But how can this be achieved? We must turn now to the task of fleshing out this strategy, but this time in concrete rather than abstract terms.

# 7

## Ways to Begin Gutting Capitalism

### **Form a Neighborhood Association**

Get together with some neighbors and form a neighborhood association. Hold regular meetings. These meetings will form the basis later on for neighborhood assemblies. This, together with employee associations and household associations (see below) are the three most important things anyone can do. It may seem pointless at first, since these associations will have neither power nor money. But they will begin to attract energy, and will become focal points for siphoning off power and wealth from capitalism as well as putting them back into the communities from which they were originally stolen. (See also “What Can Neighborhood Associations Do?” in chapter 10.)

### **Form an Employees’ Association**

Get together with some co-workers at your place of employment and form an employees’ association. Bypass unions. You will have to meet on your own time. Hold regular meetings. These meetings will later form the basis for the peer circles of self-managed projects (and part of the basis for escaping wage slavery). There may be several such groups in one shop. It is only through face-to-face associations like these that an autonomous opposition culture can once again be generated. Even if you start with only half-a-dozen people, word will get around that there is a meeting where the problems of the workplace are being discussed. This will become the focal point of a consciousness that is opposed to corporate culture. Without this counter-consciousness, there is no possibility of effective opposition. (See also “What Can Employee Associations Do?” in chapter 10.)

### **Form a Cooperative Housing Association**

This can be done right now. Several families can pool their resources and buy a building to form an extended household. Groups of

people, single and married, already rent houses together and live cooperatively. Where buying is clearly out of the question, *form a tenants' association* in your building. Try to begin sharing resources and living cooperatively. These cooperative housing associations will form the basis later on for households, as in my initial sketch. (See also "What Can Household Associations Do?" in chapter 10.)

### **Build a Meeting Hall**

Pool resources with your neighbors and build a place to meet. This is an important step to take toward launching a new civilization. Most neighborhoods, no matter how poor, somehow find money to build churches. If they wanted to, they could also build meeting halls. Obviously, they must first perceive a need for them. They must want to associate, want to begin to exercise control over their lives in cooperation with their neighbors. They must see the meetings as the linchpin of a new way of life.

### **Organize Worker-Owned Businesses**

Worker-owned businesses, in and of themselves, cannot destroy capitalism. As long as they are operating in a capitalist market, they will face bankruptcy unless they pay attention to the bottom line. Actually, they merely replace the traditional capitalist owner with a shop full of capitalist owners. Thus, worker-owners are merely joining the petty bourgeoisie – which is what the new left did in the early 1970s. We created a multitude of what we called "alternative institutions" (we were actually just going into business for ourselves). There were food co-ops, bookstores, day care centers, clinics, publishing houses, auto repair shops, community newspapers, psychedelic shops (with clothing, leather goods, and music), and so forth. But the capitalists were not hurt by this at all. On the contrary, they benefited greatly. They simply took over all our new creations and mass marketed them, making billions in the process.

Nevertheless, there are at least two important differences between regular businesses and worker-owned ones. The latter can abolish internal hierarchies and self-manage the shop in a democratic way, and they have greater flexibility about using any extra wealth created. Instead of paying dividends to stockholders, they can use their income to support opposition movements, or they can simply raise their own salaries, shorten their work hours, or lower their prices. Actually, in

real life most worker-owners end up working longer hours for less pay than they would in a traditional enterprise. They also tend to start out democratic but end up managerial, due largely I think to the pressures and temptations of the surrounding capitalist market, and not I hope to inherent flaws in human nature.

If there were dozens of worker-owned businesses in a community, providing needed services and making useful products, in addition to supporting anticapitalist struggles, they could accumulate a wealth of experience and become the initial core for the self-managed projects of democratic autonomous neighborhoods. They could become the basis for socially conscious cooperative labor, democratically agreed on labor, as opposed to labor that is bought and sold.

Worker-owned businesses are a growing movement in the United States (at present, there are around fifteen hundred majority-owned businesses nationwide). Some of them in the same trade are forming networks for mutual support and to share information. They can become revolutionary, however, only by becoming part of a movement to destroy capitalism and build something else – as sketched in this book, for example.

### **Try to Convert Local Business Families to the Democratic Autonomous Way of Life**

That is, try to convince them to give up private ownership and switch to worker-managed projects controlled by the neighborhood assembly. This may not be as hard as one might imagine. The petty bourgeoisie (i.e., small-business families) is one of the most desperate and miserable classes under capitalism. These people work unbelievably long hours, and few of them are getting rich. They go bankrupt by the thousands, losing everything they have – all their money and all their long years of labor. Those who do survive may still be on the verge of going under. They are constantly being gobbled up by chain stores, and I doubt that the buyouts are all that wonderful. These people are on the fringe of the corporate world. They have been part of a shrinking class for over a hundred years. Maybe some of them are ready to throw in the towel. They have sought not only to get rich but “to be their own boss.” That is, they have strived to escape wage slavery by going into business for themselves. But there is another way to escape wage slavery and be your own boss: participate in a worker-managed project. If we could convince even 10 percent of them to



convert their properties to cooperatively owned and operated projects, this would provide a starting financial base for neighborhood autonomy. If we could convince 20, 30, or 40 percent, we would have a substantial material base for transforming our neighborhoods.

### **Change Jobs and Move to Worker-Managed Projects as Opportunities Emerge**

We should shift our employment from the giant corporate world to worker-managed, neighborhood-controlled projects. The wealth that we produce in the former is siphoned off into the coffers of global capitalism; the wealth we produce in the latter can be retained in the neighborhood. There is a big danger here, though – namely, that we will end up doing poverty-level work. So we must never let up on our overall attack on capitalism, as described herein. We must not be content to live in the backwaters, barely subsisting in our impoverished neighborhoods, however autonomous they may be, while capitalism goes rolling on.

### **Set up Local Currencies**

Most people don't even know that we don't have to use ruling-class money (government or bank money) or that we can issue our own. Local currencies, of which there are many types, help to free us from the world market, strengthen local markets, and thus build self-sufficiency and autonomy. They enable us to stop circulating the money of our oppressors and therefore partially escape the system of control based on that money. Local currencies also provide a way to stop wealth from being drained out of the community. Although local currencies are possible now (and many experiments are currently underway), they will probably be outlawed if the practice spreads.

### **Organize a Community Land Trust**

These are not-for-profit corporations that acquire and hold land in the public interest. They are an existing legal form in the United States, and autonomists should be using them more than we are. They are a way of fighting the real estate industry and resisting the continuing concentration of land ownership. Like community development corporations, they can easily become regressive, but if used properly they could become the basis for neighborhood control of all the lands on which the neighborhood lives and works. Getting control of the

land is always the first step capitalists take when beginning an attack on the autonomy of any people. In the core capitalist countries, the land is long gone. But in many parts of the world, the enclosure (expropriation of the land by the masters) is just now happening, and on a massive scale. Peasants and native peoples everywhere are being forced to register their holdings, which have traditionally been communally defined, thus turning the land into a commodity that can be bought and sold under state and market rules. Another way of emptying the land is to make peasant farming unviable by flooding the country with cheap subsidized farm products from the rich countries. Sometimes peasants are simply driven off the land by force. Contemporary Colombia is a prime example, where the combination of death squads and toxic spraying have made millions landless, to become dwellers in the vast urban slums.

Community land trusts do not overcome the problem of land being treated like a commodity, of course, since the land still has a title registered with the state. They are thus only a stopgap measure, but one that might be used now to start the process of reappropriating the land.

### **Will Your House to a Community-Controlled Trust Fund**

If you own a house consider giving it to a community-controlled trust fund when you die, or perhaps even sooner. Do the same for any other financial assets you may possess. These trust funds can be bound legally to pursue certain objectives which you can specify. Thus your property can be taken off the market and used to help build a grassroots infrastructure to support liberation struggles. Imagine what a stronger position we would be in today if anticapitalist people had been doing this for the past century or so.

### **Start Switching to Solar/Wind Energy**

This will be easiest for people living in small towns and villages. There are already solar and wind units that can supply all the electrical needs of a small community. It will be hardest for people living in dense urban or suburban neighborhoods. Solar and wind power has gotten cheaper and cheaper. It is about ready to take off, so to speak, but under corporate control – with vast solar and wind installations feeding electricity into the corporate-controlled grids. What communities and even private households must do is use the new technology to

get free from the grid, thereby achieving a measure of self-sufficiency and autonomy. There may come a time when this will make the difference between survival or death. For now, though, it is an essential step toward taking power, in both senses, back from capitalists and returning it to democratic communities, where it belongs.

### **Start Growing Some of Our Own Food**

This will make sense only in the context of struggles to reempower local communities and destroy capitalism. The objective is to regain a degree of self-sufficiency and autonomy in order to be able to abandon, and hence gut and destroy, the profit system. Otherwise we play right into their hands. Capitalists no longer need vast millions of people. They couldn't care less if we scurry around in our little vegetable gardens, garage workshops, and utility rooms trying to scrape together the bare necessities of life. As long as they control the major technologies, the governments, and markets sufficient for the continued accumulation of capital, they can control the world. They would be happy to see millions of us simply die off. In fact, they are talking about this already, all the time, and looking forward to it.

So the tactic of "starting to grow some of our own food" stems not from any romantic illusion about nature or working with our hands but from our dire need to establish independence in order to survive. Today's urban populations are unimaginably vulnerable to the disruption of food supplies. And don't think for one minute that governments and corporations won't block food shipments, if they have to, to protect themselves and the system they are devoted to. In fact, structurally induced famines have already reached epidemic levels in the contemporary world. So growing some of our own food applies not just to first world neighborhoods but also and especially to the poorer countries that have been forced into importing basic food stuffs while their own lands are given over to cash crops for export (e.g., coffee, sugar, bananas, or beef).

We don't need farms to start growing food. We can do it in our backyards or on rooftop gardens. We can build solar-powered greenhouses, and try aquaculture and hydroponics. There are many ways to start breaking free from agribusiness.

### **Set up a Neighborhood Storehouse to Facilitate Mutual Aid**

At first, this will simply be a depository where persons can put in things they don't need and take out things they do need. This could include food, for example, as people in the neighborhood start growing more and more of their own food. A person or family who has grown more food than they need will put it in the storehouse, where it can be taken out by persons and families who need food. This will be a way of facilitating mutual aid and sharing. It could also include clothing, especially children's clothing. As children outgrow clothes, their clothes could be put in (or returned to) the storehouse to then be made available to other children who need them. The same with toys and many other items, like books, dishes, furniture, appliances, extra plants, scrap lumber, and tools. As the neighborhood gets more and more free from the market, more and more of the necessities of life (and even nonnecessities) will be channeled through the storehouse. Eventually, all production – industrial, agricultural, and so on – will be funneled into the storehouse. After the needs of the neighborhood have been met, excess production will be exchanged with other neighborhoods. There might be interneighborhood or even regional storehouses for some items. It will be by means of arrangements like this that we will eventually be able to abolish money. Setting up such a storehouse is something that could be done right now, in every neighborhood. In some communities, there already exists a similar organization in the form of thrift stores of various kinds (such as the Salvation Army or Goodwill). In these stores, although their goods have usually been donated, the items are nevertheless sold for money. But in a voluntarily organized and run storehouse, the money could be eliminated.

### **Support Orthomolecular Medicine and the Preventive Health Care Movement**

Medicine as currently practiced is a ruling institution that seeks to control us just like schools, corporations, and the government itself does. This institution also wants to sell us drugs, cut us up (for a high fee), and keep us coming back again and again. We must start breaking free from it by reducing its influence over our lives, by gutting it of power. The best way to do this is not to get sick. We must take charge of our own health and learn how to take care of ourselves. A step in this direction is to become advocates for and adherents of or-

thomolecular medicine – a new philosophy of health and sickness founded in the 1970s by Linus Pauling and his colleagues, but that was actually mostly a crystallization of long-standing alternative health practices, although with a new twist and a firmer scientific foundation.

We should go to doctors and hospitals only as a last resort, and when we do go we must question everything they do. Never let them treat us like pieces of meat. Never let them do a single thing to us without forcing them to explain it and then wait until we decide whether we want the treatment.

Some of us should also try to begin establishing neighborhood health clinics. This will be difficult because medicine is tightly controlled by the state, together with the drug companies, insurance companies, and doctors themselves in their professional organizations. Nevertheless, some progress can surely be made toward neighborhood-controlled clinics even if it is only education at first to spread the preventive health care movement. These clinics will later become the means whereby we take back control of health care in our democratic autonomous neighborhoods.

Naturally, people who presently work in hospitals should be forming employee associations with an eye to eventually taking over the hospitals. But the seizure of hospitals will probably take place at about the time that it becomes feasible to seize factories, farms, offices, and stores. In the meantime, we should be getting free from mainstream medicine by practicing preventive health care and establishing independent neighborhood clinics.

### **Do Not Work Hard at Our Jobs**

Generally speaking, this cannot be anything as obvious as an explicit slowdown (deliberate slowdowns of course have their place). Rather, when we start a new job we should work at a level far below our true ability. Never let them know we can do more. Do just the bare minimum not to get fired. This may still be quite a high level of output in a competitive labor market where there are millions of gung ho employees trying to impress the bosses and get ahead (i.e., get promoted) or perhaps just keep their jobs. But as more and more workers adopt this attitude, it will be harder and harder for the bosses to tell what the real capacities are. The centuries-old struggle between capitalists and workers turns precisely on the capitalists' need to extract more value from the direct producers than the capitalists pay out

in wages and benefits. This battle has been – and is being – fought over the length of the working day, wages, speedups, breaks, vacation time, intensity of work, sick leave, lunch periods, overtime, age of retirement, health and pension benefits, and so on. Anything that requires capitalists to pay more while getting less weakens their world and strengthens ours.

But “not working hard at our jobs” goes somewhat beyond these other kinds of struggles. No business could last a year if it weren’t for the enthusiasm, energy, and dedication that workers bring to their jobs. This happens everywhere, at every construction site, in every factory, and in every office. There are always those few who keep the business going or even keep it operating smoothly. Capitalism would collapse without this creative energy, without this problem solving, without this free intelligence applied to new situations. Just look at what happens when a few workers do attempt to “work to rule” – things start to unravel fast. Capitalists still continue to preach that workers should just do what they’re told and not think about it (“Just Do It”). At the same time, they usually blame workers when things go wrong for not having seen the problem and then taken the initiative to fix it.

The principle of not working hard at our jobs means that we will assume no responsibility for the success of the business, bring no enthusiasm to our work, fix nothing when things go wrong, solve no production problems for them, volunteer no information, make no inventions, improve no procedures – in short we’ll do as little as possible. This is a way of stopping capitalists from extracting wealth from our labors. It also throws a monkey wrench into the capital accumulation process, without which the system collapses.

There have always been people who sloughed off at work. This often creates tensions because other workers usually have to do the work that the slackers are not doing. But what if all of us, or most of us, sloughed off? The strategy of not working hard at our jobs suggests precisely this: that we all become malingerers. This does go against the grain, however, at least for a lot of us. It is natural to want to do well, to develop skills, to be proud of our work. Yet we have to realize that our exploiters rely on these good motivations of ours and use them against us. Our natural instincts to excel at our tasks are being used to destroy us, our communities, and in fact the earth itself.

Finally, the extent to which any individual can slough off will

vary depending on that person's situation and personality. People who live in extensive networks of family, friends, and co-workers can risk getting fired more easily; extremely isolated people can't. Also, some people are more afraid than others, more subject to peer pressure and pressure from the bosses. Only fearless and secure people can snub their noses at bosses and peers alike. If we could get our neighborhood, workplace, and household associations going, then more of us could be brave enough to become first-rate slackers at work. It would help immensely – in fact, it is vitally important to the strategy – if we could use the energy thus saved for other skills and tasks not exploitable by capitalists for activities that would build our world while undermining theirs.

The tactical principle of not working hard at our jobs strikes capitalism at its core. It could become a central component of an opposition culture, and is something that could be started today by every employed person. Just don't do it. Don't care. Don't try.

Naturally, there are safety precautions that must be observed. Crane operators, pilots, bus drivers, and surgeons (as well as dozens more workers in critical jobs) must be skillful enough to ensure that nobody gets hurt. Within these limits, though, there is still plenty of room for sloughing off. Most jobs are not critical at all.

Also, sloughing off at work must be accompanied by the determined effort to build something of excellence elsewhere. Otherwise, sloughing off becomes a way of life and amounts to nothing more than sinking into slothfulness and apathy.

## **Organize Locally to Stop Ruling-Class Offensives in the Community**

There are numerous examples of this already. Towns have mobilized to stop Wal-Mart from moving in and destroying all the local small businesses. Communities have mobilized to force the clean up of toxic waste dumps. Neighborhoods have organized to stop expressways from being built right through the middle of their homes. Some suburban sprawl (damn little though) has been blocked; proposed dams have been stopped; forests, wetlands, and seashores have been saved, and so forth. This is where capitalists have to be stopped – locally, in our communities. Why? Because this is where our strength is.

Even if a hundred thousand militants converged periodically on

cities and capitals around the world to protest at the summit meetings of the world's ruling classes, this is nothing compared to the tens or hundreds of millions worldwide who could become engaged in struggles at the local level. Most people *cannot go* to regional, national, or continental demonstrations. They have to work and cannot leave their jobs, or they have family responsibilities. Plus travel is expensive and beyond the means of many people. Hence, protests at summit meetings are limited mostly to more affluent students and other movement celebrities who can afford to operate on a national or global level. Quite a few less-well-off persons do manage nevertheless to go to these events by taking vacation time, using up savings, and the like, but they are not the majority. Moreover, in order to be able to really defeat capitalists on the global level, we would have to get control of national governments, and that is simply not in the picture. So however useful national and global protests are for highlighting issues, articulating demands, and putting pressure on our rulers, it is at the local level that the real battles must be fought.

### **Start Applying Criminal Laws to Capitalists and Government Officials**

This has started to happen. It's quite surprising that it hasn't happened long before now. Not long ago, a couple of corporate executives were convicted of murder because they knowingly allowed an employee to be poisoned to death at the workplace. This was the first case of its kind in the United States. Pinochet has been arrested and may be placed on trial in Chile. Henry Kissinger may well be brought to trial as a war criminal. These are all excellent developments. If we could only bring the criminal laws to bear on capitalists themselves and their functionaries in government, this by itself would almost be enough to destroy capitalism because capitalism cannot exist (that is, capitalists, as a world class, cannot make profits) without violence, brutality, oppression, theft, lies, and murder. It requires all that to keep the system going, speaking in global terms. If we could hold them to the same laws that all the rest of us must obey, their scam would be exposed and the system would collapse.

### **Democratize All Voluntary Associations**

By democratize, I mean direct democracy, whereby an association is operated cooperatively through face-to-face assemblies. Unfortu-



nately, the practice of direct democracy has almost disappeared from our culture. The first thing we do instead when we get together to establish an association is to elect officers and hand over authority to them, thus disbanding our meetings and forfeiting our power of self-government. That is, we establish a hierarchy, even though this is seen as democratic (whereby we choose leaders periodically through elections). But this practice could be abandoned, and we could return to the practice of direct democracy. No one is stopping us from doing this right now, in all the many and various associations we establish, whether they be chess clubs, parent-teacher associations, professional organizations, orchestras, food co-ops, or what have you. This could be done in all organizations that we establish that are not registered with the state. So-called not-for-profit corporations, which *are* registered with the state (that is, incorporated by the state), are usually required by law to have a board of directors and officers. Nevertheless, in many cases it is possible to do the paperwork to meet the official requirements (which demand the establishment of hierarchy – that is, an authoritarian structure for the enterprise), but to run the project internally, unofficially, with direct democracy. At present, it is an unfortunate fact that not-for-profit corporations and NGOs are almost invariably authoritarian. But this is something that we might be able to change, long before it becomes feasible to seize and thus democratize corporations per se. The experience we could gain now with direct democracy in our voluntary associations, nonprofits, and NGOs would help us later in our workplace, neighborhood, and household assemblies.

### **Reject Mainstream Divisions of Social Knowledge**

About a hundred years ago, largely in response to a powerful labor movement and a vigorous anticapitalist culture, conservatives in Europe began parceling out social knowledge into fields or disciplines, which rapidly became institutionalized as departments in universities and then as occupations in the labor market. The main ones were economics, political science, and sociology, but history was also partitioned off more completely as a specialized and more limited discipline, as was philosophy. Psychology had already been separated out earlier, and anthropology was added in. There is not the slightest justification for any of this. There is no such thing as an economy, for example. But such a claim sounds idiotic to contemporary minds.

What conservatives have succeeded in doing is thoroughly trouncing another way of looking at human life that uses a different set of categories entirely – namely, the radical critique of capitalist civilization. These false divisions are now one of the greatest barriers to understanding the world we live in.

### **Don't Watch Television or Listen to the Radio**

I'm referring to corporate media, of course. For most people, it's probably best not to even own televisions or radios. Every hour given up to corporate programming is one hour less available for face-to-face association with friends and neighbors, one hour less available for building independent lives, creating an autonomous culture, and assembling the social arrangements that will replace capitalism. Mainstream television and radio are unspeakable evils, with their endless hours of advertising, biased newscasts, destruction of conversation, silence about everything important, trivialization of knowledge, distortion of history, and endorsement of greed, vulgarity, and brutality. Television creates a false, mediated world, a cultural world that has been filtered through the prism of capitalist values. We come to act and talk as if the only things we have in common are what we have all seen in the movies or on television or heard on the radio. This comes to be the mediated linkage that binds us together. We no longer have direct cultural connections emerging out of our own face-to-face interaction, but only these roundabout, secondhand, artificial, distorted ones.

I have known only a few persons who could watch television without being damaged. These are individuals who are already deeply steeped in an alternative culture. They don't so much watch television as they *study* it, like they would a species of insect never encountered before. They *examine* television with a critical eye, bringing to the task already-developed autonomous knowledge and values with which to judge it. They see it as data to be analyzed in order to discover what the ruling class is doing and what spin it is putting on current events. They read between the lines to decipher what's happening in the world. While this is an important thing to do, it is not for everyone.

This presents a problem. We all need to be aware of what's happening in the world. We can read the newspapers, but mainstream papers must be approached with the same "reading between the lines"

critical eye needed for television and radio. At present the best resource is the independent media, which can be consulted regularly to keep better informed, with less corporate-biased news and analysis. Hopefully, a growing opposition culture will continue to invent ways to bypass corporate/government media.

A report was made about what happened in a remote village in northern India when the first transistor radio arrived. Within a short time, villagers no longer danced around their fires singing songs. Instead, they sat and listened to the canned music from New Delhi.

### **Support Independent Media**

What began in the 1960s as underground newspapers, and continued to flourish in the 1970s and the 1980s as the alternative press, has come into its own in the 1990s as independent media. This is a much better name. Why should our publications be considered alternative rather than mainstream, instead of the reverse? It is corporate media after all that is not authentic, being nothing but a propaganda machine, and is therefore out of line, dishonest, marginal, based on special interests (profit), inimical to human life, subterranean, and immoral. So why should this be considered mainstream? Well of course it *is* mainstream for capitalism, and that is why the term *mainstream* is a dirty word for us. Still.

Our independent media now consists of hundreds of newspapers, magazines, newsletters, journals, and zines as well as independent radio and television. The most spectacular development in this area in just the past few years since the Battle of Seattle in November 1999 has been the rapid creation, on a world scale, of Indymedia Centers using the Internet. These centers collect written, audio, and visual reports about current events and make them available to anyone with access to the Internet. This is a critically important strategic initiative. The new generation of activists seems to be quite media savvy, far surpassing the media skills of earlier generations of militants. They seem to be focusing more on how central the media is, and therefore on how crucial it is to fight in this arena.

### **Don't Buy into the Culture Industry or Commodified Entertainment**

In the heavily commodified cultures of the core capitalist nations we can hardly move without making a commodity transaction. We

certainly cannot live. We can't even die. There are options, nevertheless, in the hours when we are not forced into wage slavery (the key commodity transaction).

I believe that in our nonworking hours, we must *consciously avoid* commodified activities. A commodified activity is one that is organized as a business to yield a profit to the entrepreneurs. Quite obviously this cannot be an absolute rule, otherwise we couldn't do anything – we couldn't go out to dinner, we couldn't go dancing or travel, we couldn't listen to music or read a book. But what we can do is start shifting the emphasis, begin shifting the ratio of commodified to noncommodified activities, and be more selective about which commodified activities we do (some are worse than others).

Most of us are heavily dependent on commercial entertainment, whether it be movies, television, CDs, rock and roll clubs, home videos, or spectator sports. Every hour of our nonwage-laboring time we spend on commodified entertainment strengthens capitalism and reduces the time we have available for creating an autonomous culture. The very worst commodified entertainment is that which reduces us to spectators, to passivity; movies, television, and commercial sports are the bad ones. (There is a highbrow version of spectator entertainment – plays, concerts, and ballets.)

Even active entertainment requires equipment – boats, bikes, golf clubs, tennis rackets, binoculars, fishing gear – and as such ties us to the leisure industry. These uses of leisure are far better than spectator entertainment. But has someone who spends every available free hour playing golf been captured by the culture industry? I think so. Has someone who spends every available dollar maintaining a motorboat been captured by the culture industry? I think so. Add into this all the people who spend themselves broke every week playing the horses, buying the latest CDs, reading the latest romance novels, eating out, taking tours, visiting amusement parks, going to ball games, bars, bowling alleys, skating rinks, pool halls, nightclubs, rock concerts, movies, and stock car races, and you see a population enslaved to the leisure industry, to commodified entertainment and activities. All these activities destroy community and isolate us from each other.

The crazy thing is that this is all voluntary. No one is forcing us to do any of this. Capitalists have captured our laboring hours *by force* and turned us into slaves. But they have captured our so-called leisure hours *by seduction*, turning us into spectators and consumers. It's go-

ing to be hard to break free from the culture industry. The trouble is that most of this stuff is fun. We have to realize, though, that it is destroying us. We can and we must break free from it.

This is certainly one way we can all begin today to gut capitalism. We can learn to play instruments again and make our own music. We can learn to sing together again, an ability that we have lost (yet people who have forgotten how to sing can never make a revolution; so here's a thought: we can destroy capitalism by starting to sing again). We can get together with neighbors and play sports. We can hike together and cycle, go on picnics, attend free lectures, form discussion groups and argue, play games in our own homes, go camping (but without a van load of equipment), read (good books instead of trash), organize community dances with live local musical talent, stage plays, sit and talk, visit friends and relatives, sleep, sit around and do nothing. The capitalist culture industry would collapse tomorrow without our endless purchases.

### **Recover Our Own Language**

We no longer speak our own freely created language. We speak the language of our rulers and their hacks. It's no wonder, considering the bombardment from schools and mass media that we have been under. Also, we don't really talk much with each other anymore, which of course is the only way a language can be created. Instead we *listen*, to them. We walk around with earphones on our heads. We listen to teachers, sometimes for twenty years. We listen to the news, talk shows, weather forecasters, and the stock market report, even though few of us own stocks (and those who do, don't own many). We listen to bosses, ministers, doctors, psychiatrists, and the president. Some people can't even sleep unless the radio or television is on. There are radios on the beach and in every car, workplace, and kitchen. Millions of people wake up every morning to clock radios. In every subway and train station, we listen to loudspeakers telling us not to step over the yellow line, not to smoke or litter, to report vandals, and to have a nice day, with nary a grimace of protest from a single passenger. We are constantly listening to language not of our own making.

We even allow them to start piping their language right into our children's brains before they can even talk. It is a language filled with euphemisms, doublespeak, psychobabble, and befuddlement. It is an

ugly language. Compared with only a hundred years ago, our language now is impoverished, polluted, and degraded, with greatly weakened expressive powers. We cannot think straight using this language. Although it sounds strange to say so, words are concrete things, and we can pay attention to them. We don't have to say "industrial society" instead of "capitalism," to cite only one example. Whole books are now being written on doublespeak by oppositionists. We should study these works. We should also study the words, whenever we can find them, of the first victims of capitalism in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. They had a clearer perception of what they were being hit with. Even in the nineteenth century, opposition language was still rich and powerful. Study the speeches of William Morris or Voltairine de Cleyre, for example, if you want to see how pitiful our language has become compared to theirs.

### **Recover the Capacity for Self-Defense**

Never before in history has a people been rendered so utterly defenseless before its oppressors as have the working classes of the capitalist world – classes that now include the overwhelming majority of people. We own no land and cannot grow the food we need. We own no tools and cannot make the necessities of life, not even clothing and shelter. We own no weapons and cannot defend ourselves against attack. Our communities and families have been broken up. We cannot control what our children are taught. We can no longer make our own music. Our language is no longer our own. Each week we hand over our money to the ruling class for safekeeping. We are completely at the mercy of our rulers (and yet we think we are free!).

Even our character has been changed and weakened. Long gone from us is the fierce independence and resistance shown by peasants and native peoples the world over (including those in Europe) when they were first assaulted by capitalists. We are now a tamed class of people, so tamed that we are no longer even aware that we have been tamed. We are a subdued, cowed, pacified, controlled, contained, managed, and manipulated class.

We are not *completely* tamed, however, and this is our strength and only hope (or despair, if all they need is to *mostly* tame us). The fact that they have so far failed, even with all their governments, schools, firepower, and mass media, to completely tame us, tells us

that they can *never* completely tame us (short of genetically altering us, which I'm sure they're already working on around the clock). It tells us that we can win, that we are stronger.

Quite obviously, recovering the capacity for self-defense is not a simple matter of stockpiling Uzis. In fact, it's not a simple matter at all. It's practically the same as recovering the capacity to live autonomously. Nevertheless, there are many things we can do in the meantime. For example, we can establish cop watches. Whenever an incident happens involving the police, we should gather round and observe. This in itself will act as a brake on police brutality and provide eyewitness accounts to anything that happens. Unfortunately, things at present are going in exactly the opposite direction. Many neighborhoods are setting up crime watches under the direct supervision of their local police departments. In effect, they are turning themselves into cops, to spy on their neighbors, in the name of fighting crime. If this trend continues, before long it will be like it was in Russia, with family members ratting on other family members to the state's secret police. People will not see the crimes perpetrated by the government, the corporations, and the police themselves but only the street thugs that are threatening their neighborhoods.

Feminists were on the right track when they started taking karate classes in the late 1960s. They said they were tired of feeling vulnerable and helpless. So they started learning methods of self-defense. We should revive this interest in self-defense but broaden it. It must be raised to the community level and not remain just an individual practice. And since we can never acquire tanks, helicopters, patrol cars, tear gas, and all that other weaponry (nor should we even want to), we have to invent social weapons with which to resist them and defend ourselves. I admit that this is a formidable and daunting task. Anyone who has survived in a ghetto for long realizes what it's like to live in an occupied territory. Half-a-dozen patrol cars can be at any incident within minutes, with more on the way, while helicopters hover overhead. How can we possibly overcome such firepower?

To be quite honest about it, I don't quite see how breakaway, autonomous neighborhoods could be defended against the military might of the bourgeoisie. But then, neither is it possible to see how a breakaway nation could be defended. We have just seen, in the recent attack on Yugoslavia, what they can do to a whole nation that they want to break up. They bombed it back to a preindustrial level, wiping

out in seventy-eight days of bombing raids the productive toils and accomplishments of a whole people for half a century. So the difficulty we have in imagining a defense of our neighborhoods cannot be solved by reverting to a statist strategy or building armed forces to engage the ruling class militarily on its own terms – Yugoslavia after all was well armed – because we're just as bad off on that level.

The answer to the dilemma lies, I suspect, precisely in our smallness, in our ubiquitousness, in direct action, and in the tactics of determined noncooperation and resistance to violent oppression. After all, we're not starting from scratch. There is much to be learned from the long tradition of nonviolent resistance to physical force. We must also study tactics and strategies of war, however, because that's what we're involved in.

I do believe that we can win. But we must never forget that they are willing to murder entire populations to protect their ability to accumulate capital, and have done so again and again.

### **Engage the Fight against Religion**

As recently as the 1960s, it was possible to think that the battle against religion had been won. The tremendous advances of Enlightenment values from the eighteenth century on seemed solidly in place. So how does it happen that forty years later we find ourselves living in a world of resurgent religious fundamentalism – Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and Hindu?

A big part of the explanation, I submit, is that the U.S. government and its various puppet regimes, sometimes together with its imperialist allies, has been busy murdering progressive people the world over for a long time now. To be more exact, the U.S. government has been murdering people who reject capitalism and imperialism, the majority of whom are secular people. That's at the bottom of it. Most recently, it destroyed a progressive and secular state in Yugoslavia and replaced it with right-wing ministates based on religion and ethnicity. Before that, the U.S. government destroyed a progressive and secular state in Afghanistan because it was allied with the Soviet Union and replaced it with a state based on Muslim fundamentalism (in the biggest CIA covert operation in U.S. history). It wiped out the progressive community in Iraq, using its ally Saddam Hussein, by murdering thousands of communists, syndicalists, socialists, anarchists, liberals, and secular humanists. It destroyed the democratic



regime of Mossadegh in Iran and replaced it with a royal dictator, the Shah, who proceeded to exterminate Iran's progressive, liberal, secular community (many of whom were communists and socialists). So the only social force left that was powerful enough to overthrow the Shah twenty-five years later was Islamic fundamentalism. Socialists and progressives in Israel have been oppressed and marginalized for decades by right-wing governments backed by the United States. Is it any wonder, then, that Jewish fundamentalism has gained the upper hand? In India, the United States has consistently allied itself with right-wing, procapitalist governments that vigorously suppress any movement aiming to deepen and extend democracy, whether by liberals, socialists, or communists, until only Hindu fascists are left controlling the government. The list goes on.

The same thing has been happening inside the United States. Can there be any doubt that the government's destruction of the new left in the late 1960s and early 1970s paved the way for the resurgence of Christian fundamentalism? If the 1960s' revolution had been successful, or even partially so, this phenomenon most likely would never have happened. Even leaving aside the new left, would the country now be in the grip of Christian fundamentalists if the fascist thugs in the ruling class hadn't murdered so many progressive leaders like Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr., and John and Robert Kennedy? This is no new thing. They killed the leadership of the anarchist movement in Chicago in the 1880s; and more generally, they destroyed an autonomous working-class culture, which was imbued with communism, socialism, anarchism, secularism, and atheism. They destroyed the country's huge socialist, syndicalist, and anarchist movement in the 1920s by killing, jailing, or deporting its leaders, and otherwise sabotaging its operations. They terminated the Black Panthers, murdering twenty-seven of them, jailing many more, and burning down their offices across the country.

But do you ever see them murdering right-wing Christians? Of course not, at least not very often. Capitalists generally love religious fanatics. They encourage, foster, and fund them, along with all the other mystics, sectarians, and dopes they can get their arms around. We no longer need to look back in history to see that organized religion has always been the mistress of the state. The current mating between Christian fundamentalists and right-wing extremists in the Republican Party is all the proof we need. But it's a strange affair be-

cause money and the power to make it is the only god that republican extremists ever worship.

So for the past thirty years, the Christian right has been waging a ferocious cultural war against liberals and secular humanists (communists, socialists, anarchists, and atheists are now so marginalized they're hardly even on the scope). Far right Christians grew dissatisfied with simply enjoying their religious freedom. They decided to go political and capture the state in order to impose their beliefs on the nation. We have to embrace this fight once again.

### **Start Negotiating Global Agreements**

Critics of a decentered world claim that many of our problems are worldwide in scope and therefore require world institutions to deal with them. It's true that we face many global crises that can only be solved on the global level, but it is not true that we need a world government to solve them. Local communities could start negotiating global agreements on their own initiative, bypassing governments. If existing treaties, negotiated by governments, are worth supporting, local communities could simply endorse these (and there are many such treaties, dealing with the oceans, land mines, torture, and so forth). Or they could revise these where necessary to improve them and make them compatible with anarchy. Or they could start writing their own treaties. Naturally, this assumes that we have local communities that are trying to take back control of their lives. The recent phenomenon in the United States wherein over two hundred city councils have passed resolutions against the USA Patriot Act and in defense of the Bill of Rights indicates the direction we should be moving in. The experiences gained in the sister cities movement or the international networks of NGOs might be relevant here.

The idea that we need national governments (or even worse, a world government) to reach global agreements to deal with our problems is ridiculous. National governments, more often than not, are the causes of these crises.

### **Abolish War**

Abolish war? I've got to be kidding, right? This is a fantasy if there ever was one. The thing is, modern war has become horrible almost beyond human comprehension. Two atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki killed 210,000 people. One hydrogen bomb

dropped on any major world city would kill millions of people instantly. So far this has never happened, but hundreds of nuclear missiles are still on hair-trigger alert in both the United States and Russia. It is a miracle they've never been fired (and there have been some close calls). The government officials who keep these missiles aimed and ready to fire at a moment's notice, with grossly inadequate safeguards against false alarms, are truly criminally insane. They should be arrested immediately and locked up.

The bombardment of Baghdad in spring 2003 was done from far up (supersonic bombers at fifteen thousand feet) or far away (cruise missiles launched from ships hundreds of miles away). None of the bombardiers or missile launchers were killed from enemy fire when making their attacks. It's not really war; it's slaughter. And now the Pentagon has radioactive uranium munitions. Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, and Iraq are polluted with them, and they will go on killing (cancer) and maiming (deformed babies) until the end of time. There are cluster bombs that continue to kill, mostly children, for decades after a "war" is over. There are millions of land mines scattered over dozens of countries, which kill and kill and kill. There are fifty millimeter bullets, one round of which will tear a body to shreds or blow a child's head off. There are firebombs, concussion bombs, and smart bombs.

The first modern war, the American Civil War, the first war to mobilize the entire society on both sides for the war effort, produced 562,130 casualties, and this was a war fought with primitive rifles and cannons. The First World War, the war of the machine gun, killed an estimated ten million people. The Second World War, the war of airplanes, tanks, submarines, and artillery, killed roughly forty million. The Korean War killed four million. Two million were killed in Vietnam, and six hundred thousand more in the secret bombing of Cambodia. Two hundred and fifty thousand, one-third of the population, were killed in East Timor. Isn't it time to put a stop to this madness?

There has always been a vocal minority who opposed war. But for the most part war protesters have misdiagnosed the problem, seeing war merely as a moral issue. It is a moral issue, of course, but it is not only that, for modern war has a structural basis – namely, the state itself, with its national government and its participation in the nation-state system (and in the mechanics of capital accumulation embedded in it). Every government arms itself, as much as it can afford,

and claims a monopoly of violence within its territory.

“War is the health of the state,” said Randolph Bourne. “War is a racket,” said Smedley Butler. Both were right. The state (and its war machine) is needed by capitalists. War is a necessary and inevitable feature of profit taking. War is needed not only to maintain empire and control domestic unrest but as a source of profit. All this is always done in the name of the “national interest,” but most people realize now that this phrase is just a euphemism for the interests of the national and international ruling class, not the interests of the general populations of nations.

Capitalism would probably collapse without the military-industrial complex. The U.S. economy is now heavily dependent on the arms industry, as are the economies of several other industrialized nations. These countries spend billions from general tax revenues making weapons that they sell (or more often, give away) to tin-pot dictators the world over. The Pentagon itself is the most enormous war machine in the history of the world and is tightly integrated with the arms industry. The more wars there are, the more money the arms dealers make. Every time a cruise missile is fired, a weapons maker gets to build another one, at a million dollars a shot. Every time some country’s infrastructure is destroyed, transnational corporations get to go in and rebuild it, making billions. Of course, they never put it back like it was.

Abolish war? How? Dismantle the state and the profit system, which is what this book is all about. This is the only way. As far as I know there has never been a mass movement, especially an international mass movement, to abolish war. But we could build one. Perhaps the demonstration against the impending U.S. invasion of Iraq by ten million people in thirty countries on five continents on February 15, 2003, signaled the beginning of such a movement. It will have to be a grassroots initiative. Obviously, governments are not going to dismantle themselves or their war machines. But local communities could start to take a stand, declaring their opposition to war, all war. They could begin negotiating a global treaty to abolish war. They could encourage everyone to refuse to fight. What if millions of people the world over simply refused to go to war and resisted the draft, going to prison instead if they had to? Unlikely? Well, are we just going to sit back and wait for the missiles to start raining down on us, to be obliterated in a flash by a nuclear blast, or to watch our sons and

daughters, husbands and wives, murdered and maimed in imperialist wars?

A campaign to abolish war would be a direct threat to the profit mongers, and is therefore a good tactic to use in getting out of capitalism and into a world full of democratic autonomous communities, a world without states or war.

### **Get Control over Union Pension Funds**

At present, billions of dollars that workers have saved are controlled by corporate bankers who use the money to bust unions, red-line poor communities, and finance more corporate enterprises, among other things. If you are in a union or know someone who is, begin to agitate to get these funds removed and redeposited in worker- and community-friendly cooperative banks, or at least removed from corporate control in some other way.

### **Don't Cooperate with the Police**

Except perhaps in urban ghettos, the police in the advanced capitalist states work in a friendly social environment. This is a shame. It reflects some bad attitudes on our part and a lack of political awareness. Far too many people still think the police are here to protect us from crime, whereas in fact, by rendering us defenseless, *police are a major cause of crime*. Police may half-heartedly spend a tiny portion of their time on the problems of ordinary people (but when was the last time the police ever caught someone who robbed *you* or recovered the stolen goods?). The great bulk of their work, however, goes to defend corporate property, suppress unapproved movements and gatherings, put down protests, constantly watch us (surveillance), ride herd on us (e.g., the ubiquitous patrol car), and disarm us (you even need a permit to carry mace). Police are the frontline mercenary troops of capitalists.

So here's what we do, at the very least. Never ask a cop for directions. In fact, don't even talk to cops unless you absolutely have to. Never invite a cop into our homes to advise us about security measures (they have such a program). Do not cooperate with any police programs designed to organize us and our neighbors to help fight crime. If we hear of police going into the public schools to give talks to grade-schoolers about safety, pull our kids out of school that day. Whenever we see cops making an arrest, gather around to observe;

our very presence is a deterrent. Organize cop watches. Never answer any questions beyond those legally required; instead, exercise our right to remain silent (so we will have to know our rights). This may get us in trouble. Nothing infuriates cops more than refusals to answer their questions. But it is an essential act of resistance, and if practiced widely, would rapidly lead to a clear awareness that cops are not here for us.

### **Don't Join the Military or Become a Cop**

Most lackeys for the ruling class (e.g., managers, judges, politicians, and lawyers) are taken from the richer middle-income strata (and a few from the ruling class itself) or else are working-class people who have been carefully screened (i.e., filtered through the schooling system). In the case of cops and soldiers, however, working-class people are inducted directly into the ranks of storm troopers and used to defend the capitalist order. The trouble is that for destitute persons, the military looks like a pretty good deal, and police jobs are highly paid and hence highly prized. Nevertheless, the opposition movement should try, as far as possible, to throw a ban on these jobs. There is no chance that we could ever prevent capitalists from recruiting enough troopers. But what we could do is put such an onus on these jobs, through ridicule, disparagement, and ostracism, that anyone who signs up will know quite clearly that they are doing something wrong, betraying their communities, and crossing over into enemy ranks.

### **Do Not Become a Boss**

The deeply entrenched ambition to be promoted up through the ranks of the corporate world is destructive of community, equality, and freedom. It has served capitalism well, but less so in recent years with the decimation of middle-income, middle-management levels of employment. Promotion has never been an out for more than a few people anyway (relatively speaking, but still a large number in absolute terms). The cost is high, however. In exchange for having a somewhat more comfortable life in the material sense (whether it is a better quality of life is doubtful) these people sell their souls to the capitalists, develop vested interests in defending the system, adopt the viewpoints of the rulers, enforce corporate rules, and in truth become police for the accumulators of capital. For workers not to even aspire

to be promoted, and to refuse promotion into the ranks of managers when offered, would weaken a strategic link in the system and seriously undermine an enterprise's ability to operate profitably. As more and more workers adopt this attitude, this would become a set of values opposed to those of the bosses. There would certainly be costs such as a loss of income. But in most cases would these costs be unbearable, especially if the time and energy could be redirected into autonomous associations that further undermine the wage slave system?

### **Reject Robert's Rules of Order**

Robert's Rules of Order, written by a retired army general in 1876, have become deeply embedded in popular culture in the United States, to the extent that they are often automatically taken as the bible for how groups should behave in meetings. They are like an external law, imposed on us from above. People forget that they can write any rules they want to for their meetings, or have no rules at all. Robert's Rules give far too much power to the chair. They encourage parliamentary maneuvering. They are stifling and rigid, and can quite easily be used by skillful manipulators to defeat the collective will. We need to invent more flexible, democratic, and less centralized procedures for organizing our collective assemblies – procedures that allow for much more chaos, spontaneity, interruptions, talking out of turn, quick trial votes, arguments, and different procedural options for discussing issues. It's definitely time to rule Robert out of order.

### **Do Not Deposit Your Money in Corporate Banks**

Instead, seek out a cooperative bank. If there is not one handy, start one. It is perfectly legal at present. (Nonprofit banking cooperatives will most probably be stopped through legislation if the trend becomes pronounced.) Corporate banks use our deposits to strengthen the corporate world and weaken the autonomous community world. It is dumb for us to voluntarily hand over our weekly earnings for banks to use against us (and then pay them to do it).

### **Try Not to Fall into Debt**

Personal debt, though sometimes a life-or-death matter, and thus necessary, is one way capitalists have invented to yoke us to their world. It is extremely effective. Capitalists at present depend heavily

on this mountain of debt. It would clearly hurt them if people began to opt out of it. Being in debt keeps our noses to the grindstone, makes us more afraid of losing our jobs, reduces our flexibility, and makes us blue. It is a big mistake to voluntarily give our rulers this leverage over our lives.

## **Break Free from Schooling**

At the very least, do not attach any significance to grades. Just do the minimum work needed to get barely passing grades in order to get through the compulsory years mandated by the state. Grades in the school system are similar to wages in the factory system in that they induce competition among ourselves rather than solidarity, and trick us into striving for the approval of the authorities. It is an attitude that serves capitalists well in the workplace later.

Further, we should leave school as soon as possible. Compulsory education ends in most states at the age of sixteen. That's when we should leave school. For more than a century and a half, the working class has bought into the idea that education is a way to improve our lives, or if not our own, then the lives of our children. This worked for some in the core countries for a while. But even in its heyday, it was always overrated because upward mobility faces severe structural limitations (i.e., there are only so many jobs at the top). Schooling in the U.S. has little liberatory value. Instead, it is a key institution for pacifying and indoctrinating the working class. It teaches obedience, punctuality, and passivity. It is a disciplinary tool that destroys autonomy, curiosity, spontaneity, initiative, and creativity. It perpetuates ruling-class values and points of view. It puts blinders on the population, and enforces hierarchy and ranking. It is foolish to voluntarily enter this system.

Going to college, therefore, might not be the smartest thing to do. No one is forcing you to, so don't assume that you have to. The years might be used to better advantage elsewhere. It makes no sense to voluntarily give the masters another two, four, or eight years to work you over. Don't be seduced by the idea that you are bettering yourself by getting a degree, or that you are achieving something and being successful. Success has nothing to do with getting certified by a school (which in turn has been certified by the state). That may be the establishment's definition of success, but it is not ours.

I saw a friend once burst into tears of joy when she was finally



awarded the doctorate degree. This is how deeply capitalist values have penetrated into our personalities. It's true that this was also a personal triumph against considerable odds. Nevertheless, it shows that we have bought into the belief that we are better, more accomplished people if we receive the stamp of approval from the educational system. The idea of earning degrees is thoroughly reactionary. To seek credentials, to seek to be certified by the system, is shameful.

This certifying system has been linked to the occupational structure. Schools are training camps and screening (weeding out) centers for the corporate world. If you can tolerate twelve, sixteen, or even twenty years of school, perhaps you won't do too badly the rest of your life as a professor, an executive, a banker, a lawyer, or a priest. Even for ordinary working-class jobs in offices, schools are screening centers. If you can't take the discipline of schools, you won't be able to take the office regimen either. If you can't stand being graded, reprimanded, organized, punished, or insulted in school, you won't like these things in the workplace either.

If we absolutely have to get credentials to survive in the labor market, we should nonetheless *never take pride* in having "earned a degree." Degrees should be regarded just like taxes, the draft, jury duty, or drug testing: onerous rules enforced by the government, and hence something to be avoided wherever possible or minimized where not.

It is perhaps a little late for this advice. Capitalists themselves are abandoning schools and so-called public education because they no longer need as many educated workers. They will be perfectly happy to leave millions or even billions of people wallowing in ignorance. People are weaker that way. So our rejection of schools must be accompanied by an iron determination to become a knowledgeable, skilled, highly educated people.

But we can't do this by going to school. We must do it on our own, with friends, neighbors, and comrades. Leaving school does not mean we give up learning; it means we must actively assume responsibility for educating ourselves. We must engage in intensive self-education: seek out knowledgeable people in the opposition movements and get them to prepare readings lists, hold seminars, or give lectures; form study groups; read and study constantly; read the alternative press; watch videos and listen to tapes made by radicals. These things can be done with the time and energy saved from school.

Obviously, this can be carried only so far. If you want to become a marine biologist or a brain surgeon, you probably have to go to school. But even here, many ways can be found to partially disengage from the schooling system. There are often ways to establish competency independent of school certification through tests or actual job experience. For some skills, like carpentry, you can go to a trade school (which requires less time) or become an apprentice.

The point is to stop seeing school as a place where we can learn. The great bulk of materials we are required to study there are detrimental to our health and well-being. Even purely technical subjects are riddled with ruling-class values and prejudices. By rejecting schools we free ourselves from this illusion, free ourselves to begin to acquire the kind of knowledge we need to destroy capitalism, save ourselves, the planet, and truly establish “freedom and justice for all.”

One caveat. Obviously, breaking free from schooling cannot be a hard and fast rule for everyone. We have to be intelligent about this and use good judgment, on a case by case basis. For some people, in some circumstances, in some countries, going to school may be the smart thing to do.

## **Support the Unschooling Movement**

Unschooling is a growing international movement, especially among anarchists and antiauthoritarians. It is an attempt to break free from schools, and begin in the here and now to work toward the long-standing radical objective of reintegrating learning and life. There is an excellent article about it in Wikipedia, with a good list of references and resources. It is also sometimes called “natural learning, child-led learning, discovery learning, delight-led learning, or child-directed learning” (from Wikipedia). The Free School movement is a related tendency, as is “deschooling.” This form of learning uses facilitators not teachers; it is interest-driven; the whole world is taken as the classroom; there is no age segregation; and there are no grades or competition. The unschooling movement is not limited to rich countries; it is emerging in poor countries as well.

Unschooling must be distinguished from homeschooling, which is at present a predominantly Christian fundamentalist movement (although there is a small left wing current). Homeschooling is still schooling, and is often part of a reactionary and authoritarian movement. Unlike unschooling, where the objective is to enhance learning

and freedom, homeschooling as practiced by Christian fundamentalists seeks to restrict learning and freedom. It seeks to prevent children from learning about the world and what other people believe, and shield them from the perceived evils of liberalism and secular humanism. It is a system for indoctrinating dogma. What these homeschoolers are really denying their children is access to and participation in the long struggle humans have waged from the dawn of history for knowledge and freedom. The Christian homeschooling movement has its own bookstores now as well as its own textbooks and videos. These Christians have even written weird, fantasized histories of Western civilization. Their offense goes far beyond merely insisting on creationism and a literal interpretation of the bible; they have launched a full-fledged attack on science and the enlightenment.

I feel so sorry for these children, especially in an already locked down society like the United States. They are forced to spend their entire childhoods cooped up with their parents in a house somewhere, or perhaps with their grandparents or a neighbor now and then. To me, it seems too much like being in prison for the first eighteen years of your life. Most children the world over are still free to run around and play outside. But not in the United States, which has got to be the most terrified nation on earth. Homeschoolers never escape the supervision of their parents. They can't even change one set of adults for another by going to school. They don't have moments of free time and space while walking to and from school, riding the bus, or hanging out in the school yard with friends away from their teachers. Many have church activities, but these are still within a closed social environment. More rarely, homeschoolers may get to join in nonschool and nonreligious community activities. This is good since it is about their only relief from an otherwise-suffocating existence.

Basically, homeschoolers spend their entire young lives under the never-blinking eyes of parental authority. And this is exactly the way Christian fundamentalists want it. They don't believe in freedom for children, but discipline instead. Their commitments are to dogma not knowledge, theocracy not democracy, patriarchy not equality, faith not inquiry, obedience not rebellion, and dependency not autonomy. Is it any wonder that so many of these children grow up with horribly repressed, mutilated, and truncated psyches? Little peoples' liberation is perhaps the most neglected part of the revolutionary struggle for freedom.

Unschooling is legal in many states. It falls into the same category as homeschooling. Parents have to meet certain criteria, so the state still has a hand in it. Nevertheless, unschooling is a way of getting largely free from state-controlled education. Unschooling is obviously hard for a single family to do, and works better for several families joining together, and better yet for a neighborhood or whole community. It is a way of taking charge of our own education. Learning is better done and more fun outside schools.

You may be asking why we should give up all the resources of “public schools” – libraries, gyms, pools, classrooms, computers, art supplies, workshops, playing fields – only to scrounge around with practically nothing in our homes and neighborhoods. Here’s why. Public schools are not public at all and never have been. They are system schools, ruling-class schools. Capitalists have controlled the school system from day one. Even on the local level, school boards are almost invariably conservative and are made up of the wealthier members of a community who support the status quo. Even corporations and the military are now being allowed to invade schools to advertise and recruit. Getting public control of the existing school system is like getting control of factories, offices, hospitals, or the government itself – no strategy yet tried has ever succeeded.

But persons who work in schools and colleges should definitely be creating employee associations with an eye to taking over these institutions. If we could seize them, it would obviously be better to do so than to start from scratch elsewhere. But seizing schools, colleges, and universities will, I believe, prove to be a task of the same order of magnitude as seizing corporations, and will probably happen at about the same time. I doubt if schools can be democratized in isolation from everything else, any more than hospitals can. And even if we seize them, we are still faced with the fact that the institution of school per se is a bad idea.

In the meantime, it is better to give up the resources in order to be free to teach our own values, acquire the knowledge we need, reshape knowledge (even technical knowledge) to our own purposes, and generate an autonomous culture.

Two caveats are in order here. First, a complication has recently emerged. Christian fundamentalists, allied with the extreme right wing of the Republican Party, are trying to destroy public schools. Religious schools are a step backward even from so-called public schools.

So this campaign has to be fought – yet another contradiction in the life of an anarchist. Second, unschooling may sound like a wild idea to children in both the impoverished nations of the South and the ghettos of the North; these children are struggling to get into school, not out of it. For example, Palestinian children (and their families) make great sacrifices in order to attend school. They are trying to escape ignorance, and going to school is about the only opportunity they see to do so. So this recommendation about unschooling may not be as applicable in those situations as it is, I believe, in the United States.

### **Don't Let the Church or the State Certify Your Marriage**

The church and the state, both illegitimate authorities, have no right to have any say whatsoever in your marriage. This is a matter for you and your partner(s) alone to decide. In this relation, as in all others, the guiding principle is free association. We must be free to arrange our personal relations however we please. As a formal institution, marriage will most likely, hopefully, wither away and die under anarchy, and be replaced by numerous and diverse social forms. For the present, though, the least we can do is to reject officially sanctioned marriage. Unfortunately, in most nations there are financial and other benefits attached to the formal institution of marriage. A small project was nevertheless launched several years ago in the United States by Marshall Miller and Dorian Solot called the alternatives-to-marriage project, which seeks to assist unmarried couples in securing their rights; their book on the topic is *Unmarried to Each Other: The Essential Guide to Living Together as an Unmarried Couple*.

### **Begin to Break Away from the Nuclear Family**

The nuclear family as it now exists in the suburban United States is more often than not highly damaging to everyone in it – the man, the woman, and the children, especially the children. Other than orphanages and perhaps some foster homes, or having no home at all, it's hard to imagine a worse social environment for children to grow up in. It fosters dominance and passivity, stunts growth, produces neuroses, and causes much unhappiness. Just about everyone is miserable living this way. The nuclear family, comprised only of parents and their offspring, has existed only for the past two or three centuries. For most of human history, children belonged to extended families, grew up in tribes, villages, small towns, or lively neighborhoods,

and had many and varied associations with other adults and children. In suburbanized late capitalism, however, they grow up in a house with two adults and their siblings, pretty much sealed off even from nearby neighbors. When combined with deeply entrenched attitudes of parental proprietorship of children, it is next to impossible for children to grow up free. The nuclear family is an extreme, pathological form, an aberration. We can begin to break away from this right now by establishing extended cooperative households.

### **Don't Recycle**

Don't spend your life trying to clean up the mess capitalism is making of the earth. Spend your life destroying capitalism. Recycling was a bum trip from the beginning. We're supposed to spend hours and hours of our free time sorting the garbage, taking papers one place, cans another, and bottles to another still, all the while that factories are producing millions of tons of new trash every day – more than we can ever possibly clean up. Why not stop them from making trash?

By now, recycling has also become big business. It could never be profitable, of course, if the recycling entrepreneurs had to pay workers to go out and collect the trash. So cleverly, they recruited armies of naive environmentalists to collect the trash for them, free of charge, and bring it voluntarily on their own time to the factory gates. The entrepreneurs then turn this raw material into profit (with a little help from wage slaves).

Recycling will undoubtedly be a normal and integral part of everyday life among free peoples. But not now, not while it's being used to derail us from our true task of replacing a profit-oriented death economy with the life-sustaining activities of free peoples. So jump off the recycling merry-go-round.

### **Don't Wear a Suit**

It has been customary for a long time for working-class families to dress up for special occasions in their "Sunday Best." Dressing up has meant dressing like the ruling class – suits and ties for men, and fancy dresses for women (now there are suits for women too). If you look at pictures of workers from a hundred years ago, for example, the hundreds of men gathered in Union Square in New York City to hear Emma Goldman speak were all wearing suits. There are many such

pictures. But over the past century, especially with the decline in church attendance, workers have been abandoning suits. We should finish the job and explicitly reject suits. Suits are the uniforms of businesspeople, politicians, and bureaucrats the world over. There is no point in our aping them.

It's possible this tactic could become outmoded, though. It seems there is a trend in some corporations to require workers to come to work in suits, while the executives drift in later in casual wear. This is reminiscent of the 1960s, when we grew beards as a sign of protest, only to discover a short while later that executives were growing beards too; beards thus lost their symbolic value.

Yet I'm not too worried about the ruling class changing its dress code anytime soon. Can you imagine a State of the Union address where they aren't all in suits? So don't wear a suit (unless you invent a subversive way to do so).

### **Do Not Play the Lottery**

Every dollar we spend on the lottery is like a gift to the ruling class. It's like saying, "Here, take my money and use it to enslave me." The lottery is a thoroughly evil institution. The fact that millions of us spend money we can't afford on lottery tickets proves all too vividly that they have turned our brains to mush. We are just being fleeced. Even worse than the enormous financial rip-off is the enormous psychological one – this illusory slim hope that we will win and be able to escape our misery. The lottery is just another little weapon they have invented to prevent us from taking real, direct, effective action to stop our exploitation, meet our needs, and create satisfying lives and communities for ourselves.

### **Reject and Campaign Vigorously against Representative Government**

The traditional anarchist admonition "Don't Vote!" falls a bit short. It is not an explicit attack on representative government per se but only a call not to participate in it. It implicitly leaves the electoral system intact and merely assumes a passive stance with regard to it by withdrawing participation. This won't do.

The practice of electing leaders to national parliaments is one of the main mechanisms through which the ruling class has maintained its control over the rest of us for the past couple hundred years. In the

United States, the rollback and defeat of the radical democratic currents of the revolution of 1776 was formalized with the adoption of the federal constitution in 1789. That constitution was explicitly designed to perpetuate ruling-class control. Similar things happened elsewhere, as the parliamentary system spread throughout the core capitalist countries of the developed world and even to some third world countries. This system has rarely been seriously threatened (never in the United States), and where it has been, as in Germany and Austria in 1919, and Spain in 1936, it survived and reconstituted itself without too much trouble. Parliaments were overthrown in Russia and other communist countries in favor of single-party authoritarian regimes, but this had nothing to do with the establishment of real democracy (or real communism, for that matter).

During the welfare state phase of capitalism, because of massive pressure from below, ruling-class-controlled parliaments were forced to do a few good things for average people. That phase has now ended. The internal dynamics of capitalism will no longer permit it (i.e., the rate of profit is not sufficiently healthy for the ruling class to be able to indulge this expense). Of course, there was never any possibility that national parliaments that were temporarily dominated by liberals, progressives, or even socialists could actually dismantle and destroy capitalism itself, because those institutions are an integral part of capitalism. The parliament belongs to capitalists, not to the people, and they know how to use and defend it.

We have to face up to this. Any time or energy put into winning elections will always fall short of achieving our true objectives. We cannot afford this waste. Time is short. We have to stop fighting for what we can get and start fighting for what we want. We have to reserve our energies for those strategies that *will* destroy capitalism and create a new world. Revolutionaries who argue that we have to do both, that we should be electing socialists or at least progressive liberals to office even as we are building alternative institutions and attacking the system in other ways, just aren't being realistic. You can spend decades of your life trying to build a new labor or progressive party, but what have you got even if you succeed? Not what you really wanted!

Too many revolutionaries, for too long, have poured their lives into electoral politics. We might recall that universal suffrage wasn't given to us; we had to fight for it. It was won largely through work-



ing-class, feminist, and civil rights agitation. As it happened, though, elections were turned long ago into a controlling mechanism by the ruling class to be used against us. There were revolutionaries, of course, from the mid-nineteenth century on – namely, anarchists – who warned against trying to use elections, parliaments, and the state to win our freedom. They said it was a bad strategy, a dead end, and that it wouldn't work. Now, 150 years later, it is all too painfully clear that they were right. We should make a clean break with electoral politics and start taking *direct action* to destroy the system that is killing us by the millions.

Instead, what we do with almost every election is to trot out the usual objections to voting, such as: it perpetuates the illusion that we are living in a democracy or at least a quasi-democracy, it legitimizes the system, running for office is an option only for the very rich, and so on. You may recall the anarchist quip that if voting could change anything it would be illegal. There is a bumper sticker that reads, "Don't vote! It only encourages them." It's true that to refuse to even cast a vote, mostly for the lesser of two evils (the "evil of two lessers"), is an *act of resistance*. It is a conscious rejection of capitalism, a refusal to be bought off with crumbs, and as such is a step toward building an opposition movement. But we need much more than this.

What we need is a massive campaign to discredit representative government itself, and this can only be done by promoting direct democracy as an alternative. But we are nowhere near to being able to make the case for direct democracy effectively. We don't even have solid theoretical works explaining and defending it. We don't have a clear picture of how it would work across communities, on a regional level. We haven't yet collected and studied the historical cases where direct democracy has been tried. It will be next to impossible to discredit representative government if we can't put a plausible, workable, alternative decision-making procedure in its place. So we must close these gaps. Now is especially the time to try.

Let's consider a few cases of what might have been. Take, for instance, the great Polish revolt of 1980-1981, where hundreds of councils were established throughout the country, in the factories, on the farms, in the mines, in the universities, and even in the bureaucracies. But instead of welding these councils into a network, a national association, to take decision making away from the rulers, the rebels got derailed into electoral politics, into the campaign to elect Lech

Walesa. Big surprise! Walesa the politician turned out to be a very different guy than Walesa the union leader.

In the revolutionary movement in Chile in the early 1970s, massive takeovers of factories occurred throughout the country. But instead of building on these factory occupations, the movement got sidetracked into electing a socialist president, Salvador Allende, who was promptly killed in a classic CIA-backed military coup. Once a movement has placed all its chips on an elected leader (or on any leader), it is easily beheaded.

In the spectacular revolt in Argentina beginning in December 2001, neighborhood assemblies were established throughout Buenos Aires and some other parts of the country too. Numerous factories were seized. People were fed up and said that “they all must go” (the politicians). But what happened? Before long they found themselves voting for Nestor Kirchner for president. Their neighborhood assemblies withered; most of the factories were repossessed by capitalists; and they were back to square one. National elections succeed in derailling radical social movements again and again.

In the equally spectacular revolt in Algeria beginning in April 2001, revolutionaries attacked everything connected with the government, including election offices and polling places. They burned the ballot boxes. They boycotted elections and physically prevented others from voting. The government managed to turn this last action against them, saying that they were preventing others from exercising *their right to vote*. So we see how the ideology of elections works against revolutionaries who are fighting for real democracy. The Algerian rejection of electoral politics has been stronger and lasted longer than most, but as of spring 2004 there was only a handful of holdouts. Elections will soon be back to normal there. The Algerians had established an impressive network of local assemblies and had even federated these into regional assemblies (in Kabylia, where the revolt was centered). If they had generalized this system to the whole country and also extended it to workplaces, the outcome of their revolt might have been different.

Think of all the effort that went into electing Lula da Silva as the president of Brazil; he was a “radical” who promptly turned coat and started playing ball with neoliberal capitalists.

In the insurrection in Bolivia in May-June 2005, the tactics used went way beyond simple demonstrations and included occupations of

the gas fields, roadblocks to cut off supplies to La Paz, strikes, the occupation of the airport at Sucre, an independent radio network, and so forth. Most important, Bolivians also used neighborhood assemblies. They had already acquired experience using local assemblies in their water war in Cochabamba in 2000. In this recent 2005 revolt, the citizens of El Alto – a city of 800,000 inhabitants – organized themselves into 600 neighborhood assemblies to discuss strategy and direct the uprising. They said that the bourgeois parliament had to be closed down. They demanded a constituent assembly to write a new constitution which would establish a completely new political system, one which favored the interests of working and indigenous people. Instead, they got new national elections scheduled for December 2005. So far, a constituent assembly is nowhere in sight. Although this revolt is not completely played out yet, it seems likely that it too will get derailed into electoral politics.

In Haiti, a massive grassroots radical movement flourished throughout the nation, in the cities as well as the countryside. But instead of building local power, through village, farm, neighborhood, and factory assemblies, radicals put their energy into an electoral political movement to make Jean-Bertrand Aristide president of a typical parliamentary system. Nothing could have suited the imperialists more. All they had to do in this case was send in a plane with a handful of soldiers, kidnap Aristide, and fly him out of the country, exiling him to Africa. He was so easily deposed. The imperialists were so sure of themselves that they didn't even have to kill him. Then they set about slaughtering the members of the Lavalas political movement, pretty much destroying it for now. The movement wouldn't have been so easily defeated if it had been based on direct democracy at the local level, with no leaders.

These are just a few of the more recent cases where electoral politics has helped undo radical social movements.

Radicals have always scoffed at the claim by the U.S. government that it is devoted to promoting democracy abroad. The United States is perfectly willing to work with the most brutal dictators, provided that they are in the U.S. camp. As for democracies, the United States supports only those that are procapitalist and endorse the corporate neoliberal agenda. Otherwise, the U.S. government seeks to overthrow any parliamentary democracy if it opposes these policies. It tried to overthrow Hugo Chavez in Venezuela (even though he has handily

won seven elections), but failed, in a rare defeat (at least so far; efforts are ongoing). It succeeded in overthrowing Aristide, although he was a legitimately elected leader, because he wasn't playing ball, just as it overthrew Allende thirty years ago, another legitimately elected leader in Latin America's oldest parliamentary democracy. In 1953, the U.S. government overthrew the democratically elected Mohammed Mossadegh in Iran in order to install Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlevi.

The United States is also quite skilled at subverting elections, rather than simply deposing already-elected leaders it doesn't like. There are numerous examples, like the U.S. intervention in the Greek elections immediately after World War II to prevent the communists from coming to power – an election the communists otherwise would have won easily. It has also honed the skill of fomenting popular uprisings in order to install leaders it prefers. It does this by pouring millions of dollars into the country to support particular groups, bribe officials, finance publications, pay demonstrators, train insurrectionists, pay for media coverage, weapons, opinion polls, and so forth. Recently, it has used this skill to great advantage in three countries in rapid succession: Yugoslavia, Georgia, and the Ukraine. In each case, the result was that a procapitalist, pro-Western, neoliberal leader came to power.

In Afghanistan recently, we could see the ideology of elections at work in its starkest form. In a certain sense, it is perhaps true that the United States is interested in promoting democracy abroad, if democracy is defined as voting in an election for a leader. Evidently for many Afghans, this was the first time they had ever voted in a national election. Thus the seed was planted that democracy equals elections. Naturally, the candidate chosen by the United States won. The capitalist ruling class is skilled at manipulating elections and parliamentary democracy in general in order to stay in power and get what it wants. The United States is trying to do the same thing now in Iraq. Elections and parliamentary democracy provide a veneer of legitimacy for capitalists – something they need very badly, more so now than ever before, because they are losing credibility everywhere.

So how is it, in light of all this, that radicals continue to suffer such ambivalence about participating in elections? How is it that so many of us continue to be seduced by the lesser of two evils argument? It is said that voting only takes a few hours, so why not? Why

not try to use the election to make things a little better for ourselves? Actually, though, voting takes a lot more than a few hours (hours that could be spent setting up our local assemblies). We end up discussing and debating the candidates and the issues (or lack of issues) for months. And then after the election, we spend weeks analyzing what happened.

If the choice in an election is between an outright fascist and a regular ruling-class executive, the argument for voting is especially seductive. But it is naive to believe that a fascist regime already in power can be removed through an election, as was proved in the United States in 2004 when the fascist Bush regime easily and openly stole the election. Yet many people, including most progressives and even some anarchists, thought that it might be, or at least that it was worth a vote. I believed this myself, although I also simultaneously thought that the Bush cabal would never give up power. Doesn't this just show how deeply the ideology of elections has sunk in? Isn't it evidence that a strong identity has been established in our minds between elections and democracy? This is perhaps understandable for conservatives and liberals (and social democrats too), who actually believe in representative government. But for anarchists, who hold no such beliefs, it is more puzzling. It seems that most of us instinctively expect honest elections at least, even though we know that the whole electoral process is rigged from top to bottom, and that the government that comes to power as a result of the election will not be ours.

I have come to believe that we should take an uncompromising stance toward elections at all levels. We must reject elections not only on the city, state, and national levels but also in small groups and our voluntary associations. We should *never* elect leaders. Instead, we must fight consistently and vigorously for direct democracy. This is the way forward. This is the path to real freedom and democracy, and to a world without governing elites and ruling classes.

## 8

# General Comments on the Strategy

Maybe some general comments are now in order about the above-proposed tactics. Please note that all of these tactics are things that can be started right now by all of us as individuals or in small groups. They don't require us to build vast national organizations (let alone international organizations – something that is once more being frequently called for given the latest surge in the globalization of capital). They don't require vast resources, guerrilla fighters, or extraordinary bravery. Nor do they require us to give up our lives for a cause or deny ourselves the pleasures of life. These tactics don't require us to be super intelligent, widely read, or highly educated. They don't require us to adopt a party line or have a correct consciousness, nor to spend our lives building bureaucratic organizations like unions or parties. They don't ask us to petition the state or work for changes in legislation. (In fact, a good rule of thumb is that if a tactic requires changes in legislation drop it.) All that these tactics require is that we start creating enjoyable, quality lives.

You may notice also that many of the items listed above are designed to stop the ruling class from controlling what we think. This is in many ways the front line of the war. There are no longer any historical conditions, and haven't been for a long time, that prevent us from building a new social world. It is the consciousness-controlling weapons the ruling class has deployed against our minds that prevent us. They have managed to erase, for example, practically all knowledge of former anticapitalist struggles. Instead, they fill our brains with sports and media trivia. A top priority for an opposition movement must be to counter and neutralize these weapons so that we can learn to think for ourselves again.

Several of the items listed above are *acts of resistance* – for example, not voting, not watching television, or not becoming a boss. It is necessary to reject, refuse, and break with a host of small practices that support capitalist relations. It is mainly through such acts of resis-

tance that we can generate an opposition movement and a counterconsciousness.

Many of the items are intended to weaken and subvert the government and corporations. The first and easiest step toward weakening a government is simply to withdraw our support and declare our opposition. After that, we can start finding dozens of concrete ways to subvert it, including all those listed above. For example, we can increase our demands on the government, asking for more and more. The wealth is ours, after all. We can demand far more than the government can ever deliver. This puts the system under stress and opens up avenues for us to take action elsewhere. We can support tax resistance – a strategy that can't get far as long as a government is strong enough to impose heavy fines and prison sentences, but one that can perhaps lay the groundwork for later tax resistance on a massive scale. We can support draft resistance movements and generally discourage anyone from fighting in ruling-class wars. We can oppose corporations. We should join every anticorporate campaign we hear about. We can try to destroy corporations' credibility, expose all the tax breaks they get, expose all the government subsidies they receive, show how they never have to pay to clean up the messes they make, and reveal how they buy off the legislators. Once we have gotten over the idea that the government is ours, we can think of a hundred ways to weaken and subvert it.

The heart of the proposed strategy, however, is free association – in our neighborhoods, workplaces, and households. You may think that such associations will not be able to destroy capitalism, but you're wrong; there is great power in association. The capitalists will be scared out of their wits if the country starts to be covered with associations, in every neighborhood and workplace. Naturally, they will be scared only if these associations start taking direct action to monkey wrench the system and reappropriate power and wealth. If all we do is gab or throw a Christmas party at the office once a year (one big happy family), they'll have nothing to worry about. The enslaved populations of the capitalist world have been rendered harmless precisely because our traditional associations have been destroyed and we have been reduced to the pitiful condition of living as isolated individuals or in small nuclear families.

It's time to start associating again, not because of tradition, but because we know that's what we want. These associations will have to

be defended because they are going to be viciously attacked. Our main fighting and militancy should be saved for defending the new social arrangements we are creating, and not in attacking capitalist institutions directly. We must not forget that practically the entire world is embedded in capitalist relations and we are dependent on these for survival. If we destroy capitalist relations and structures before we have created for ourselves alternative means of survival we will die. So the emphasis has to shift to building the new world we want and then defending it from attack, even as we try to abandon, gut, and vacate capitalist premises and practices.

This proposed strategy has been criticized for not being militant, for withdrawing from confrontation with corporations and the state. This is a misperception, probably caused by this strategy's rejection of so many traditional tactics like demonstrations. But there is no way that we could create the free associations we want without confronting ruling-class power.

Another question raised about the proposed strategy is whether it actually adds up to the defeat of capitalism. Do the numerous tactics described above, most of which focus on what not to do, really do the job? How will capitalism actually be defeated? It's true that many of these recommendations are about what not to do. They are mostly about building an opposition culture. But the crucial three – about setting up workplace, neighborhood, and household associations – are positive steps, as are other ideas scattered throughout the list in chapter 7 such as setting up cooperative banks, community land trusts, neighborhood health clinics, local currencies, and so forth.

The decisive event in the overthrow of capitalism will be the shift of decision-making power from national legislatures and corporate boardrooms to neighborhood assemblies and worker-controlled projects. It is inconceivable that this could happen all at once everywhere. It will be a gradual process, but one that nevertheless could take place within a definite historical time period. First the assemblies have to be created and defended. Then more and more decision-making power has to be taken away from capitalist institutions (government, corporations, schools, etc.) and returned to local bodies. This will be slow at first, in scattered locales. But the process could gather momentum as it spreads to more and more communities so that later on, as capitalist structures begin to implode, the transfer of power and wealth back to neighborhood assemblies could be rapid and massive.



# 9

## Ways to Finish Gutting Capitalism

Having just reviewed steps that we can take *now* to begin gutting capitalism helps us realize how very advanced the final steps are, and how completely impossible it is to accomplish them without decades of preparatory work. Capitalism will have to be thoroughly weakened and on the verge of collapse before any of these final steps can succeed. The centuries-old demand by revolutionaries that workers “seize the means of production” is thus seen to be completely unrealistic. This is the last thing we do, not the first. By the time we are in a position to do this, victory will be assured; we will already be acting on a daily basis through our new social arrangements, we will already have reconstituted society.

In any case, four of the final ways to gut capitalism are: seize the land; seize the factories, shops, and offices; seize our residences; and stop paying taxes. Without taxes governments collapse. If we can weaken a government to the point where it is no longer capable of collecting taxes or defending property, seizing the land and the means of production as well as reproduction will seem anticlimactic.

As a final gesture, we should demolish the great architectural symbols of capitalism. Blow them up – the fortresslike banks, the domed capitol buildings, the great ugly skyscrapers. We might keep one or two as museum pieces or reminders of the nightmare world that once haunted our every hour. We’ll keep Manhattan, but evacuate it, blow up the bridges and tunnels leading into it, and seal it off. Then we can stand across the river and look over at it in wonder that we could ever have tolerated a ruling class that could have built such a horror. It will be a mausoleum for our darkest age.

# 10

## Further Discussion of Topics Relevant to the Proposed Strategy

### What Can Neighborhood Associations Do?

Plenty. As already pointed out, the mere fact of their existence, the mere fact that people *have assembled*, strikes a terrific blow at capitalism because by assembling we start overcoming the isolation and fragmentation on which capitalism so depends. Capitalists abhor all human relationships not fractured through commodity exchange and its supporting structures (e.g., hierarchical ties to government, corporations, schools, hospitals, and landlords). Witness the continuing assault on marriage and family ties, kinship being the last great reservoir of noncommodified relationships.

Neighborhood associations can begin conducting the war against capitalism. There are many ways to do this. They can: work closely with any employee associations in the neighborhood; encourage the establishment of cooperative households and worker-owned businesses; create a neighborhood-controlled fund in order to have some resources to work with; start to negotiate agreements with other neighborhoods; endorse and encourage all the various ways of gutting capitalism enumerated above; start a building fund for a meeting hall to be constructed as soon as money is available; begin to prepare themselves to become neighborhood assemblies with full decision-making power for self-rule; work out discussion and voting procedures within the assemblies; become skilled at working cooperatively and democratically; organize cop watches and try to make our neighborhoods safe; organize steps toward more self-sufficiency in electricity, heat, and food in the neighborhood; regenerate community; reestablish self-reliance in dozens of small ways instead of depending on state programs; organize resistance to corporate destruction in the neighborhood; and sponsor dances. The list goes on.

## What Can Employee Associations Do?

Plenty. Ditto the remarks above about the revolutionary significance of simply assembling. Employee associations can begin conducting the war against capitalism from within workplaces. The waters are murkier here, however, because of 150 years of disastrous union practices. So first of all, there must be *no outside bureaucratic organization* or salaried union officials, no dues or union halls, and no secret midnight motel meetings between corporate executives and union officials. Employees will struggle for the space, time, and right to meet at work, and until then we will meet in our homes or other co-opted spaces. Not a dime will be spent on union officials, offices, or buildings. Second, there must be *no contracts*. The fight must be conducted on a day-by-day basis – no promises, no deals. We want to get more and give less; that’s the sum of it. Our objective must be to work toward the day when we can seize the shop or plant, take it over, run it ourselves, establish a self-managed project, and stop selling our labor power. But this is the long-term aim. Our immediate goal is to demand more while working less. This will put a crimp in the rate of profit, the accumulation of capital, and hence capitalism itself.

For the millions of shops with thirty employees or less, one peer circle will cover the whole operation. In larger plants, there must be several or many peer circles, probably following the departmental lines of the enterprise. For example, in a newspaper plant with a thousand employees, there will be roughly forty peer circles (taking twenty-five as the average size). Printers, engravers, artists, editors, truckers, mailers, compositors, bookkeepers, photographers, and secretaries will all coalesce into peer circle meetings.

Imagine how corporate executives will shake in their boots when they realize that their entire workforce has organized itself into independent autonomous groups, that these groups are meeting and communicating with each other, that they are discussing what happens at the plant while generating demands and strategies, and that they are planning direct actions and are implacably hostile to management. Imagine how the ruling class as a whole will go into shock when they see entire cities covered with thousands of such groups in every factory, office, and store.

Employee associations must recover the knowledge that we are being ripped off, that capitalism is a system of theft, and that things

don't have to be this way. They must recover the knowledge that we have created this wealth and that it belongs to us. The associations can endorse and support in many ways the steps enumerated above for gutting capitalism. They can establish ties and cooperate with the neighborhood associations near their workplace. This is an essential step, for although traditionally syndicalists have thought that workplace councils alone could destroy capitalism, I believe that workplace struggles must be combined with the establishment of neighborhood assemblies (decision-making bodies). Together with household associations, we thus have a three-pronged attack that can succeed.

Needless to say, our autonomous employee associations will be violently attacked. Every effort will be made to destroy or else co-opt and neutralize them. Make no mistake about this. This is no picnic we're planning.

### **What Can Household Associations Do?**

Here the objectives are more limited. First of all, we want to try to reduce the cost of housing, and second, to relearn how to live cooperatively and communally in extended groupings. We need to keep in mind how we're being fleeced. To start with, the capitalists, as bosses, seize part of the wealth we have produced in unpaid wages. Then the capitalists, as government bureaucrats, seize a huge chunk of our wealth in taxes. Next as landlords, capitalists seize another big chunk in rent. Finally capitalists, as merchants through monopoly control, seize yet another massive portion with inflated prices. After this savage assault, there's little left for everything else.

So household associations are a vital part of our war to destroy capitalism. Getting control of housing is not as central as controlling workplaces but it is still vitally important. We must be moving toward the day when we can seize these residential properties.

Let's review what capitalists have done to us when it comes to residential living arrangements. They destroyed the dense warrenlike residences of our peasant villages and medieval towns. They have forced us instead to live in single-family houses or apartments. Then within each of these individual or small-family dwelling units, they installed a loudspeaker so that corporations and the state can talk directly into our homes (but we can't talk back).

Over the centuries, many steps have been taken to further guarantee that we will not associate with our neighbors (actually the whole of

bourgeois culture works in this direction). For example, in the small town single-family dwellings of the nineteenth century United States, there were front porches. In twentieth-century suburban tracts these are mostly gone. No one walks around the block anymore, stopping to visit with neighbors sitting on their porches. These individualized residences, in addition to destroying association, have a further advantage to capitalists in that they each have to be filled up with commodities – millions of refrigerators sold, millions of stoves, fans, beds, tables, and of course televisions and radios, and now DVDs and PCs.

Suburbia is surely the most socially destructive architectural development in history. But it has suited capitalists perfectly. That is why they built it, mostly in the last fifty years. In addition to being a depository for the hundreds of commodities capitalists want to sell, each little plot has to be kept up. Maintenance on the house, car, and yard consumes the bulk of the time left over from jobs, cooking and eating, and personal upkeep. The average suburban family spends more time mowing the lawn than it does in civic duties. Capitalists couldn't have found a more effective device for destroying community and depoliticizing the population than suburbia. The atomized household has served them well. Our household associations will be a direct threat to this key feature of capitalism.

### **How Can We Redress the Existing Imbalance of Wealth between Regions?**

The normal operation of capitalism over a five hundred year period has produced poor regions and rich regions, most notably on a global scale between rich northern countries and impoverished southern ones, but also internally within nations, such as between northern and southern Italy. The notion of an association of democratic autonomous neighborhoods has been criticized for not providing a way to redress these imbalances. Each neighborhood must start where it is, first by stopping the ongoing extraction of wealth and then by trying to recover some of the wealth already extracted. Critics want a much more rapid and forceful redistribution of wealth from rich to poor regions. This presupposes the success of either social democracy or leninism – that is, a strong central government in radical hands with the capitalists out of the picture. This has never yet happened, nor is there any reason to believe it ever will happen. So this hope of redressing the imbalances rapidly by force is unrealistic. Associations of free

peoples, however, could undoubtedly take strong measures to level things out and lift their impoverished members.

### **Provincialism versus Universalism**

Some years ago, I presented this scheme at a friend's class at the University of Massachusetts. A black student present immediately objected to the idea of community control, saying that he didn't want to be under the heel of a bigoted, racist majority in some small town. He had in mind, I guess, the role that the federal government has played in enforcing civil rights in the South. But just think for a minute. National governments are no less likely to be racist than local ones. In fact, this student was grossly misjudging the amount of protection blacks have received from the government. If anything, capitalist governments are the main creators and upholders of racism.

But there is a larger issue buried here. What right does any national elite have to impose its values and beliefs on any local community? What right do secular people have to impose their beliefs on religious people? What right do fundamentalist Christians have to impose their beliefs on everyone else? What right do the sandinistas have to impose their culture on the Miskito Indians? To ask these questions is to answer them. None. No one has any right to impose their way of life on others. Freedom means the right to live, act, speak, believe, and associate as we choose.

This whole debate between localism and cosmopolitanism, or universalism versus particularism, is a false one. It has arisen only because we have been living in hierarchical societies for at least four thousand years in which the ruling classes have usually pretended to speak for everyone. The bourgeoisie especially has been insistent that its views are universal, timeless, and true for everyone. If instead of class societies we had been living all this time in a world made up of associations of democratic autonomous communities, there would be no question of anything being universal. There would only be those values or beliefs adhered to by greater or smaller numbers of communities. We should not let abstract debates like this stop us from gutting capitalism and getting free. We will be able to solve ethical questions about our relations on a case-by-case basis as we come to them.

## **How Do We Get Back the Wealth Already Stolen?**

It's not difficult to imagine the reappropriation of wealth as long as we're talking about material things. We can seize land, factories, equipment, houses, and goods. What is puzzling is how we can seize the accumulated corporate assets deposited as credits in the world's banks. But perhaps this puzzle is not as difficult as it seems. This money represents claims on labor and goods. If it cannot be exchanged for these it is worthless. If we can contrive situations where this exchange can be blocked, then in a sense we have reappropriated this wealth by freeing ourselves from its future claims on our labor and products. Such a situation would exist if governments collapsed and with them the international monetary system. The money would be worthless then. But if this happened, the savings of working class people would be lost also. So we have to invent less catastrophic ways to render the money of the ruling class worthless. We also have to start getting our wealth out of ruling-class banks and currencies, and putting it somewhere safe. Further, we can create local currencies, reestablish barter in some cases, and have different kinds of currency for various purposes. If we can also establish a measure of self-sufficiency, there may be times when we can simply refuse to sell (our labor or products) in exchange for their currency. So if we can seize everything material and then render their credit worthless, we will have gotten everything. Most of that paper wealth is an illusion anyway.

## **Meetings**

For persons who have spent their entire lives in individual pursuits, it is understandable that they would find meetings tedious, even unbearable. After all, we are five hundred years deep in bourgeois culture. The bourgeoisie doesn't like meetings – or assemblies, congregations, associations, communes, tribes, gatherings, festivals, or jubilees. They hardly even meet themselves, except in their boardrooms and parliaments. (They do love “organizations” though.)

Yet meetings could be occasions when our true nature as social beings finds expression. It is through meetings that we will be able to create a new social world shaped by human intelligence. In our new civilization, meetings will be natural and normal events in our everyday lives in our households, projects, and neighborhoods. They will be joyous or at least enjoyable occasions, not the drag they are now

under inimical conditions.

But it is a long way from here to there. One look at the strategy laid out here must make even the most gregarious radical blanch. There are peer circle meetings galore as well as householdwide and projectwide assemblies, plus the meeting of the neighborhood assembly itself. This looks worse than it is. The project and household meetings will be just a regular part of running the household or project, like washing the dishes or keeping the books. As for the neighborhood assembly, how often will we have to meet once things are set up? The real trouble about meetings is not then, after we have won, but now, when we're fighting a war. How can anyone who is working full-time at a job find time for an employee association, a household association, and a neighborhood association? There are not enough hours in the day. Obviously, we won't all be able to fight on every front. We'll have to split things up. Remember also that many millions of us are *not* employed full-time. And what if we didn't devote so much time to the culture industry? Consider also that if we stopped wasting so much time and energy on strategies that fail, we would have a lot more time and energy to build associations that can destroy capitalism. As well, consider where we might take our pleasure. Couldn't it be an intensely pleasurable experience to demolish a ruling class whose practices are responsible for millions of deaths, stunted children, a polluted planet, decimated species, and worldwide misery? Wouldn't this yield personal satisfaction at least equal to that of going to a ball game or concert?

So let's first get rid of capitalism through our associations and then give ourselves time to decide whether a way of life built on frequent assemblies is pleasurable or onerous.

### **Thinking Strategically**

There is a long-standing and widespread confusion in radical social thought about whether consciousness is determined or not (variously known as the base/superstructure problem, the subject/ object duality, or the relation between being and consciousness). A critic of this book's strategy said that it presupposes an already-existing, widespread, anticapitalist consciousness. And since this critic didn't believe such a consciousness existed at present, where was it going to come from? He went on to say that perhaps if capitalism started to collapse and the survival of large numbers of people were at stake (ac-



tually, the survival of hundreds of millions of people is already at stake), perhaps then the strategy would catch on. The implication here is that radical consciousness is produced by historical conditions. This is a false way of looking at things. It leaves out the free, creative response people can make to their circumstances.

Fortunately, there is a clear way out of this muddle: think strategically. My critic did not seem to be aware that he was talking *about* history rather than acting *in* it. This is always the case for those with objectivist leanings. They are always standing outside history looking in, rather than making history as an active participant. When we have a project, when we are trying to do something (goal-oriented action), then this whole false dilemma of subject/object evaporates. We look at what we have to work with and what stands in our way, and we take it from there. And where did we get the idea for this project? We created it, out of the blue.

Marx pointed the way, long ago, when he wrote in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, "Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living." Unfortunately, this has been a difficult insight for radicals to absorb. They tend to forget about the first five words – "Men make their own history" – and instead remember only that our actions are circumscribed by the past. Even one of my favorite group of theorists, now coming to be known as autonomous marxists, but who I always called anti-Bolshevik communists or Western marxists, is guilty all too often of writing *about* the working class from the outside, rather than from the inside as strategists for abolishing wage slavery.

The funny thing is that this determinist approach is only applied to the working class, never to the ruling class, even by radical intellectuals. It is considered utopian for workers to imagine how we want to live and to set about creating such a life. But no one would ever think to say that the lawyers, plantation owners, and merchants who gathered in Philadelphia in summer 1787 couldn't do that. There is hardly a radical intellectual alive who doesn't hold to the idea that we can't say much *now* about the shape of the new society we want and who doesn't subscribe to the marxist ban on utopian thinking (which has done enormous damage to the anticapitalist struggle). But they would

never even think to say that about the constitution writers of 1787. For who can deny that not only did these gentlemen write down in detail a description of the institutional structures they wanted but they went on to set them up, and succeeded beyond their wildest dreams in shaping the social life of a whole nation for the next two centuries.

Let us finally, at long last, have an end to all the talk that we are nothing but the pawns of history. We cannot be only that even if we wanted to, but as long as we believe that we are, it hurts our chances for freedom. We must become *conscious* actors on the stage of history. This is the only way we can defeat our rulers, who act this way as a matter of course every day in doing the business of running and defending their empire. They constantly monitor opposition to *their* project, which is to accumulate capital, and take steps to counter it. They don't agonize much about whether they are historically determined or not. In this instance, and only in this instance, we should take a tip from them. We have to if we want to survive. We have to start taking charge of our own lives. So remember: think strategically.

### **Federation and Other Delusions**

Anarchists have long deluded themselves with the idea of federation that they have solved the thorny problem of how they can have both direct democracy and large-scale organization at the same time. It's a pat formula that they ritualistically repeat – "federated at the municipal, regional, national, and international levels." It's a grand illusion. Federation creates a hierarchy by using delegates (i.e., representatives) to form smaller and smaller decision-making units, further and further removed from the neighborhood. But to make it more palatable, this idea is garnished with three other illusions: mandated delegates, instant recall, and the separation of policymaking from administration. I believe all three ideas are flawed and are incompatible with direct democracy, and hence with anarchism, self-government, and autonomy.

The notion of a mandated delegate is a mirage because as soon as a meeting convenes, everything is open. The discussion of the issues redefines those issues. Sometimes, the change of only one word in a proposal can completely alter the proposal's meaning and impact. There is no way delegates can avoid exercising their own judgment on the issues once the discussion gets under way, no matter how detailed their instructions ahead of time. So the idea that mandated delegates

preserve the decision-making power of the neighborhood assemblies is an illusion. In short, I do not believe that delegates *can* be mandated.

The idea of instant recall is also an illusion. For recall to work, the people back home would have to be following the discussion as closely as if they were there themselves. They would have to have detailed, current knowledge of the issues as they were unfolding in debates among delegates. Even if everyone back home were watching the conference live on television (an impossibility), in order to exercise recall they would have to convene themselves in their neighborhood assemblies and debate whether or not a delegate had deviated from the mandate far enough to warrant recall. But if they are going to do this, if they have this kind of intimate knowledge of the issues and this kind of communication system, they might as well be making the decisions themselves directly, without bothering to go through the hassle of setting up a conference of delegates. A moment's reflection shows that the whole idea of recall is fallacious, but it has been repeated uncritically for decades by radicals.

Similarly, the idea of the separation between policymaking and administration doesn't make sense. Anyone who has worked on a project knows that all kinds of decisions have to be made constantly. It can be the most mundane decision and yet have profound policy implications. But unless a decision happens to come under scrutiny, and is discussed and aired, it may not be clear what its policy implications are. In other words, it's next to impossible to separate purely administrative decisions from policy decisions because almost any so-called administrative decision may be shown to have policy implications. The distinction is a false one. It is another illusion, a way of convincing ourselves that we still have a project based on direct democracy, when we do not.

In this book, I have adopted the practice of treaty making as a way of avoiding hierarchy and delegated authority. Delegates from various neighborhoods will get together to hammer out agreements. But these agreements will then have to be taken back to the neighborhood assemblies for ratification. The draft of a treaty may go back and forth between the neighborhood assemblies and the delegate conference for a long time. It will be a cumbersome process. Nevertheless, it will be direct democracy. Each neighborhood will keep all its decision-making power rather than delegate it.

If this proves unwieldy and impractical, then it might be better to

simply admit that we can't have pure direct democracy, and that we have to combine direct democracy with some form of delegated authority, in which case we ought to be examining social arrangements based on representative democracy. But I'm not willing to concede this. It would mean giving up on the possibility of autonomous communities and genuine self-rule. It would mean relinquishing our decision-making power. I reject as undemocratic the transfer of this power to representatives or delegates. I believe it will be possible for neighborhoods to negotiate all the treaties they need and keep all the power in their own hands.

We need to remember that the endless legislative work of contemporary parliaments in bourgeois democracies is mostly concerned with conflicts generated by capitalism itself, either to manage the class struggle between the rulers and everyone else, or to manage the conflicts within the ruling class. But in a free society, how much legislative work will there be? How many times will we have to negotiate a treaty to establish a telephone network or sewage system? Once the capitalist dynamic has been abolished (the struggle of all against all), and cooperation and mutual aid have been put in its place, there will be considerable, even extensive stability and continuity in social arrangements. Passing legislation is not going to consume our entire lives.

### **Individuality and Privacy**

A couple of people have objected to my sketch, saying that it stifles individuality and privacy. One of these comments came from someone who I know to be a fanatic individualist, so I didn't pay the remark much heed. But the other one came from a radical friend who said that he would not like to live in the kind of society I had imagined. Too cloistered, too claustrophobic. He too said that it would destroy individual privacy and individuality in general.

I have been puzzled by these comments. One of the main radical objections to capitalism is that it prevents individuals from realizing their maximum potential. Wage slaves are not free to nor do they have the resources (especially time, but also material wealth) to really be all that they could be. Capitalism is in fact not made up of individuals but of an elite and a mass. Those of us in the mass part of this duality are atomized, alienated, and isolated. We are mere units, commodities. We are not persons, unique and individual, in the true sense. Our

strongest links are to those who are oppressing us, to the bosses, bureaucrats, and bankers. We're lucky if we manage to salvage a few family relations and a circle of friends and acquaintances. Even if we have extensive personal contacts and memberships in a variety of voluntary organizations, we are still acting as atomized, alienated non-persons, not as true individuals. People who bemoan the "end of the individual" have got it just backward. Individuality has yet to be achieved. It is a goal of the revolution. It is possible only among free peoples; it is impossible among wage slaves. Individuality, like freedom itself, is a social achievement, not a personal characteristic.

Capitalism gives only the illusion of individuality. If you have money, you can live anywhere or do anything (as long as you don't try to live cooperatively, that is, or reject capitalism). The seemingly endless choices offered people by capitalists are possible only within the hierarchical and elitist framework capitalists have established. Choices outside that framework are savagely eliminated. So ultimately, the choices we have, no matter what our interests, are like the choice we have between Coke and Pepsi – it is no choice at all.

A true, rich individuality could only be achieved by a self-governing autonomous people. Each person would be deeply embedded in a multitude of social relations, a rich matrix of ties to other persons, each of whom was an equal member of a cooperative self-governing community. It is only through such ties that true individuality can emerge, not in this pitiful pretense of a life we have now.

As for privacy, we should be careful not to confuse privacy with forced isolation. Remember, one of the worst punishments dealt out in prisons is solitary confinement. I would happily trade a little privacy for a little conviviality. And I'm not worried about autonomous neighborhood, workplace, and household assemblies not allowing me to be me. I will for sure have more personal space there than I do here. Won't others in those assemblies want to have room to grow and express themselves? Won't they want to free up time, space, and resources to permit the wild explosion of creativity made possible by our victory, by our emergence finally into the "realm of freedom"?

## **Territories**

If nation-states disappear, and if land is decommodified so as to no longer be defined as property with a title that is registered with the state to facilitate its being bought and sold, will there still be other

territorial boundaries left? Will cities, towns, villages, and neighborhoods have borders? Cities and towns in the United States are at present incorporated by the state, giving them distinct territorial boundaries. These boundaries establish the territory within which the authority of the city or town government holds jurisdiction for things like collecting taxes, exercising police power, enforcing city ordinances, and providing services. Without larger states to incorporate them, could cities and towns have territorial boundaries? Would neighborhood assemblies draw territorial boundaries? I suppose they could, but it probably wouldn't make any sense to say that a neighborhood owns and controls the land on which it sits. The concept of ownership, certainly with regard to land (and the mineral deposits under it, the air over it, and the water and vegetation on it), will disappear along with the decommodification of land.

Many physical things do have boundaries, of course. Buildings have walls that separate the inside from the outside, and fields have perimeters or edges. The boundaries of highway, telephone, water, sewage, or natural gas systems might be established by tracing out the roads, phone lines (or satellite links), or pipes. Does the wind have boundaries, or sunshine? Well, some areas get more of these than others, so questions might arise as to who gets to use the sunshine and wind where it is most abundant. This is now becoming clear with wind power. It is now being said that there is enough wind power in the U.S. Midwest to supply electricity for the entire nation. If ownership can be claimed on the land over which this wind blows hardest, then even wind can be turned into a commodity, and it already has been.

I suppose even a river could be said to have boundaries, marked by its headwaters, tributaries, mouth, and delta. But since in a commodified world water runs through artificially defined territories imposed on the land by social definition, there often arise struggles over water rights. Who has a right to use the water (and even how much can they use)? These questions have to be worked out socially and politically. Within the social arrangements proposed in this book these questions will be worked out by negotiation among neighborhood assemblies. With the abolition of property rights, usage rights will take their place. Property is a social definition too, and the rights to it have been written into law by the ruling class to facilitate capital accumulation. But usage rights could just as well be settled in our directly de-

mocratic neighborhood assemblies.

If a swimming pool or a gymnasium exists in a certain area, who will get to use it? If there are to be any restrictions on usage at all, then usage rights could be determined by membership in the neighborhood assembly nearest to them, or by the treaty that had been negotiated for the construction and maintenance of those facilities, and not by residence in a certain territory defined by boundaries drawn by neighborhood assemblies, since no such territorial boundaries would probably exist.

The same goes for the construction and maintenance of all systems that cut across large areas of land such as roads, telephones, electricity, water, and so forth. These will be built and maintained by interneighborhood treaties worked out by the assemblies. To construct such systems usually requires the disruption of the land and those living on it. Traditionally, under ruling-class governments (governments that claim a monopoly of force within a certain territory), the land needed for these systems has simply been seized through the claimed right of "eminent domain." Under anarchy, in the absence of such authoritarian governments, all these questions will be up for discussion, debate, and mutually agreed on settlements.

Underground minerals pose an especially hoary problem because their extraction often involves severe damage to the surface land and the displacement of anyone living there. If military might cannot be brought to bear to evict the traditional inhabitants of that land, then what? Hard negotiation. If a neighborhood is sitting on top of a newly discovered rare mineral that practically the whole world (of autonomous democratic communities) claims it direly needs, then what? Hard negotiation. Cooperatively, democratically fashioned agreements. Mutual aid and sharing.

This question applies to our system of neighborhood assemblies too. If each neighborhood has an assembly, based on face-to-face democracy, to whom will the decisions of the neighborhood assembly apply? My solution is to claim that a neighborhood is defined socially rather than by territorial boundaries. That is, the decisions of the neighborhood assembly apply to the participants of the assembly. The neighborhood is defined by membership in the assembly, not by where a person lives. Naturally, broad and flexible definitions of membership will be needed that cover active members as well as inactive ones, guests, those with leaves of absence, temporary members, and

so forth. For example, possible nonparticipants such as children, senile seniors, or the mentally impaired who live in households comprised of persons in a given neighborhood assembly will be covered by the decisions of that assembly.

By and large, members in a neighborhood assembly will tend to live in the same geographic area. But since there are no territorial boundaries, membership in neighborhood assemblies may be somewhat jumbled in certain regions. That is, households existing side by side may belong to different neighborhood assemblies. Also, certain projects located in the geographic area where most members of a neighborhood assembly live might be controlled by interneighborhood treaties, rather than by the decisions of the neighborhood assembly that those projects happen to be next to geographically. Which projects and households fall under the jurisdiction of which neighborhood assembly is therefore defined socially by participation in the neighborhood assembly, and not territorially. Some projects might be staffed by persons from different neighborhood assemblies, but still be under the jurisdiction of a particular neighborhood assembly (the majority's neighborhood assembly probably). In other words, even though a project may be somewhat mixed, it need not always be governed by an interneighborhood treaty. Households, however, would probably not be mixed. Members of a particular household would tend to belong to a particular neighborhood assembly, and would thus fall under the jurisdiction of that neighborhood assembly. But even with households, there will surely be a need for considerable flexibility as regards membership.

This is why I argue that anarchy (true communism) can only be socially defined and has no territorial base.

## **Identity**

All the agonizing that marxists have suffered for nearly a century now over the nationalities question was so pointless. They could have saved themselves a heap of trouble if they hadn't excluded anarchists so completely from the political and intellectual arenas. There is definitely a problem here, but not the one they have perceived. Quite obviously, there is a nationalities question only when there are nations, or more precisely nation-states. If there is a Russian Empire, and within its borders exist a multitude of distinct peoples with unique languages, cultures, histories, and traditions, how can these peoples



be free and self-determined yet still be subject to the authority of the national government? They can't be. If the sandinistas are in power in Managua and setting policy for all of Nicaragua, what is the nature of their relations with the Miskito Indians on the Gulf Coast? Or what about the Basques and Spaniards, the Quebecois and English Canadians, the Scots and the English?

These are all nonissues under anarchy, which is a world full of autonomous communal peoples. If there were no ruling class, then there would be no pressure on local peoples to give up their own languages, ethnicity, and cultures in favor of those of the ruling class. There would be no King's English to be imposed on the lower orders to facilitate more efficient administration. There would be no national religion or hegemonic culture. Under the communists in China, distinct ethnic groups have been disappearing faster than ever before as a homogeneous national culture is imposed from Beijing. Regional dialects are disappearing from an already fairly homogeneous country like the United States. Similarly the world over.

But if every neighborhood, village, or small town were self-governing and autonomous, then what reason could there be for people to give up their own language and culture? That is, unless they just wanted to because they wanted to, say, assimilate (but to what?), learn a second language, or adopt certain items (ideas or things) because they liked them. But they would be under no compulsion to do so. They could change or stay the same, as they chose. Under such conditions, it would even become possible again for new ethnicity, languages, and cultures to emerge rather than disappear, which is about all they've been doing lately.

But wouldn't essentially the same problems reappear on the neighborhood level? They would, but with a difference. It's unlikely after all that every neighborhood or village will be homogeneous (or stay homogeneous). Even if areas are initially homogeneous, new identities can emerge almost overnight. A good example was the emergence in the late 1960s of gender as the primary identity for millions of young women the world over. An identity that had not been especially salient suddenly became so. I suppose something similar could happen in a decentralized world.

But on the neighborhood level, in self-governing free communities, the question of identity takes on an entirely different cast because of the already-achieved equality of power and wealth. Much of the

struggle of blacks has been to get the same civil rights everyone else had. Women have sought equal rights under the law as well as equity in pay and workloads. Old people have wanted to live with dignity and independence, and not be shoved off to die in some holding pen. In autonomous neighborhoods based on democratic decision making, cooperative labor, and shared wealth, all these things would be theirs as a matter of course. It's hard to see how identity politics as we have known it this past quarter century could even exist under anarchy. Identities in the neighborhood that would exist – that would surely exist – would devolve into the standard difficulty of majority/minority relations. There will be minorities on just about every issue. But will these minorities be based on race, gender, age, or language? I doubt it. They will be political or philosophical minorities.

One reason I'm so committed to deliberative assemblies is that they seem to offer us the best chance of overcoming distinctions that might be inappropriate to particular cooperative decisions. Through a process of discussion, we can discover whether a distinction really matters on any given issue. If gender is relevant to a particular issue, it can be factored in; if it is not, it can be factored out. Existing gender prejudices will undoubtedly influence the discussion. But perhaps open discussion in small assemblies will enable us to expose and defuse these prejudices. Thus, we can come to see whether race, gender, ethnicity, age, intelligence, beauty, articulateness, or what have you, is actually relevant to or has a bearing on any given issue in dispute that is up for discussion and decision. In this way, reasoning can be brought to bear on our collective lives. Our divisions will come to be based more on different takes (political, philosophical, and theoretical) on the issues than on identities such as race, gender, or ethnicity. Our identities will come to be based more on what we believe rather than on the color of our skin, the language we speak, our sexuality, the nation we reside in, or our age – in the long run, that is.

In the short run, we will still have identity conflicts. Naturally, we hope that the horizons of human tolerance for difference will keep expanding, and that many current conflicts over race, gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and so forth, can be eventually resolved (assuming the destruction of capitalism, that is) through general changes in cultural understanding and increased tolerance. But on the world scale, certainly there will always be differences in cultural identity, and rightly so. The more the better. After all, who wants to give

up their own culture, race, language, or ethnicity? Hopefully, these differences will not only be tolerated but cherished.

Nevertheless, not all identity conflicts can be resolved by increasing tolerance. What if a community of people emerged with the conscious identity of murderers and thieves, as perhaps has actually happened with the mafia (and has certainly happened with the capitalist ruling class, muted only by its absurdly transparent ideological dissimulation)? Is anyone going to argue that killing and stealing are really okay, and that this identity has a right to exist? Would any community tolerate murderers and thieves in their projects, households, and assemblies? Wouldn't they take steps to reform such people, or if that fails, to constrain or even expel them from their ranks?

But could they be expelled from the neighborhood? Probably. The freedom to associate implies the freedom not to associate. Otherwise this freedom is meaningless. I don't see how the right to expel persons from a neighborhood could be abolished and yet we could still have a social arrangement based on free association. And remember, there is no higher authority to impose laws to resolve the conflict in favor of one side or the other.

Free association provides a way out of this muddle for many identity conflicts short of outright crime. New identities and lifestyles are emerging all the time. Identities are not immutable or eternal. They appear and disappear like everything else. So people with shared beliefs and practices can form communities and live together, and leave others alone to live as they please. No one is stopping them. The world is a big place. There is room for everyone. It is only as the cancer of imperialism, and the nationalism that it has spawned, has metastasized to all corners of the globe, that the world has started to seem crowded.

We cannot expect, though, that every time a serious disagreement emerges in a neighborhood, a bunch of people will just pack up and leave to establish a new neighborhood elsewhere or move into another neighborhood where people already share their beliefs, or at least tolerate them. This kind of split will be feasible only in rare cases. Gender conflicts, for example, obviously cannot be solved on the social level by one sex moving out and forming a new neighborhood, not if the human species is to survive. Living in distinct neighborhoods is certainly a solution for many existing differences, though, since for the most part we already do. So we're back to the recognition that

disagreements are inherent to the human condition, and therefore to the unending contest over whose values, perceptions, and projects will win acceptance and prevail, and whose will be rejected and fade away.

Where intractable conflicts persist, I believe the solution lies with the principle of free association, which shows the beauty and genius of this way of arranging our social life. Under free conditions, will any group be able to impose its way of life on others? I suppose some majorities in some neighborhoods might try. But how far will they get? Wouldn't they need bureaucrats, police, superintendents, and lawyers? And where are they going to get these? Furthermore, could any minority in a neighborhood be denied participation in projects, households, and the assembly? Could they be denied their fair share of the cooperatively produced wealth? They couldn't – not if the neighborhood still wants to remain a member of the association. I don't deny that this is a thorny issue, however.

The long-running debate in Israel over "who is a Jew?" is an illustrative case in this regard. Certain orthodox Jews want a Jewish state peopled by Jews like themselves. This certainly excludes Palestinians and Christians. It also excludes even secular Israelis – that is, citizens of the present state of Israel who may once have been practicing Jews, in the religious sense, but no longer are. Are these secular Israelis Jews? Does Jewishness spring from citizenship in a Jewish state or from religious beliefs and practices only?

There is no solution to this dilemma within the framework of a territorial nation-state. Those who insist that a secular Israeli state solves the problem are simply missing the point and opting for one side in the dispute – for citizens rather than Jews. The problem is the state itself, with its citizens, and not whether the state defines itself as secular or religious. This issue can only be solved under anarchism, as the late-nineteenth-century socialist bundists in the Ukraine and the Polish Pale who were opposed to zionism realized. Unlike Marx, who thought the solution to the Jewish question was the disappearance of the Jewish identity in favor of a more universal human identity, these Jewish communists knew that their freedom could never be achieved by the ownership and control of a territory. They knew that they had to be free to live as they pleased – no matter where, and no matter what their identity – even as Jews.

True communism (that is, anarchism) can never be geographically

defined, but only socially defined. It has no territorial boundaries. Getting rid of the state of Israel (and all states everywhere) would free up the whole region (and the whole world) for an abundance of diverse, democratic, autonomous communities. Jews and Palestinians could live peacefully side by side in their neighborhoods and villages, as they did for hundreds of years before zionism and the state of Israel came along.

Under anarchism, diversity rules, not sameness. But diversity does not mean that every tradition will exist side by side in every neighborhood (although many neighborhoods might move in this direction); it means that there is room enough for every tradition. People who speak the same language will tend to live together. People with strict religious practices and eating regimens, or who share a history and culture, will tend to live together. Families will tend to live together. In this, there is sameness. But that the world will continue to possess thousands of languages and identities, rather than one imperial language and identity, is diversity.

### **More on Projects**

Project is a term I selected for any activity undertaken by more than one person – that is, all cooperative activities in the community. I picked this term because I want to overcome several unfortunate distinctions, particularly the one between economic and noneconomic activities. The category of economic stems from capitalism, and makes no sense outside that system. I also want to overcome the notion of civil society (which traditionally refers to all activities outside both the state and the economy/work). This distinction will also collapse once the state and capitalism are gone. A variation of the civil society idea is that of voluntary associations (as opposed to employment or civic duties). There will be no such thing as a voluntary association under anarchy because all associations will be voluntary, and there will be no separate sphere labeled “the economy” that you are tied to by force, on pain of starvation.

Thus, under anarchy, any activity that a group of people decides to undertake – whether it be a farm, a research project, a volleyball team, a restaurant, a theater, a film festival, or a factory – will be on an equal footing with all other projects. Some people may argue that of course the necessities of life come first. But I doubt if any neighborhood will be so stupid as to starve itself, or leave itself home-

less and without clothes, in order to have a symphony orchestra or a good swimming pool. And who defines what is really essential to life? Even within the realm of bare necessities there is certainly a lot room for variation in emphasis. Some neighborhoods may want to settle for beans and rice in order to have resources to make beautiful pottery or music, considering these things essential to their well-being. Other neighborhoods may prefer to have high cuisine rather than expensive cultural activities.

The point is, though, that if an activity requires resources, this project will have to be discussed and decided on by the neighborhood, and the resources then allocated to it. There will probably also be general resources earmarked by the community to enable individuals and groups to establish certain kinds of projects and preliminary experiments without a formal decision or endorsement by the neighborhood assembly. Otherwise, creativity as well as initiative might be stifled. Naturally, there will be no vast accumulation of wealth by individuals, like there is now, so that rich people can do any damn thing they please without having to seek anyone's endorsement or approval. This is precisely one of the main reasons the world is in such a mess. But I would hope that any neighborhood would be wise enough to build in plenty of mechanisms to facilitate and encourage individual and group initiatives in launching new projects.

### **More on Peer Circles**

Peer circle is just a phrase I invented to take the place of the more traditional radical term *council*, as in workers' council, which mostly comes out of the anarcho-syndicalist tradition and is quite closely associated with it. That's one of the reasons I wanted a new term: to get away from the idea that the revolution is just about seizing "work" (what we have to seize is decision making). Workers' councils have appeared in just about every revolution, in factories and offices, sometimes in universities and government agencies, and in a few cases in the countryside too. What happens is that workers inside a factory assemble themselves into councils (these are then "federated" within the factory), and then they seize the facility and run it themselves.

In my scheme, the peer circle is really a central social form, perhaps even more so than the neighborhood assembly, because the peer circle is where the real face-to-face discussion can best take place. It is strictly a deliberative assembly, though. Its sole purpose is to exam-

ine and discuss the issues and then vote to establish policy (within the project or household, not for the neighborhood as a whole, which is done in the neighborhood assembly). The peer circle is not a social gathering for any other purpose.

So this peer circle, or deliberative assembly, thus conceived should not be confused with what has come to be known as an affinity group. The affinity group was a widely used form in the movements of the 1960s. The form has reemerged recently, particularly during the Battle of Seattle in November 1999. In contemporary movements, affinity groups, as I understand them, have been formed primarily to enable people to take action – as for example, in street demonstrations – and for that purpose friendship and trust are needed. Eight members are thought to be a good size for an affinity group. But eight is way too small for a good face-to-face discussion in a deliberative assembly. Here, the needed qualities are not trust and friendship but critical and creative thinking, skepticism, rejection of both tolerance and intolerance in favor of a fierce independence of mind, enough minds to formulate differences, disagreements, and policy alternatives, all of which are essential aspects of freedom and democracy as well as sound policy formation. The best small group democracy that I have personally participated in usually had around twenty to twenty-five participants, sometimes as many as forty, or as few as fifteen. But if only eight people were present, the meeting was pretty much dead in the water.

I had originally pictured the peer circles as coalescing together to form the neighborhood assembly, but I later dropped that idea since votes are to be taken individually in the neighborhood assembly, not by a peer circle. That is, a peer circle will not vote as a unit. There was the additional problem that in interneighborhood projects, peer circles would be made up of members from different neighborhoods and hence different neighborhood assemblies. So as presently pictured, neighborhood assemblies are constituted by individuals living in the neighborhood (with the complication that the neighborhood is defined by membership in the neighborhood assembly, not by residence within a bounded territory). Peer circles are a way to break down large projects and households into smaller groups of approximately twenty-five people (but they could range from two to forty, if necessary) in order to have better face-to-face discussion and direct decision making.

As an example, let's take a large hospital with a staff of 250 persons. We have doctors, nurses, orderlies, lab technicians, radiologists, secretaries, bookkeepers, janitors, pharmacists, and so forth. It would make sense for the peer circles in the hospital to be organized along the lines of the division of labor, but this need not necessarily be the case, if another way seems preferable (by floor or department, for instance). Most of the discussion and decision making will take place in these smaller groups. Votes will be taken within peer circles, but tallied across all peer circles in the project (that is, the entire hospital staff). Tallying the votes will be easier now that we have computers, but certainly could have been done adequately before we had them.

For this system to work, a way will have to be found to set the agenda in a democratic way, according to the principles of direct democracy and the nondelegation of authority. And this has always seemed a pretty severe obstacle to overcome, although I think it can be done. What is to be discussed, the issues to be decided, are crucial matters, and are often the most politically charged ones. Setting the agenda cannot be left to a delegated body but must be decided on by everyone. Yet assuming that this problem can be solved, the hospital will be self-governed by this network of peer circles. Projectwide meetings (in this case, of the entire hospital staff) will be much less frequent (say, once or twice a year) as opposed to the more frequent meetings of peer circles (say, once a week).

If we became quite skilled at face-to-face decision making and competent at exercising this skill in larger meetings (which I hope we do), then the hospital might be self-governed more by meetings of the entire 250-member staff rather than by the smaller peer circles. This would undoubtedly require more frequent projectwide meetings. Originally, I had thought the projectwide meetings would set basic policy for the project, with the peer circles dealing more with day-to-day affairs. But it might be possible to make all the necessary decisions (on matters that require collective resolution) in more frequent (say, monthly) projectwide meetings.

This might be especially true of smaller projects. A project with only twenty-five people obviously doesn't need to be broken down into peer circles. This might hold true also for projects with fifty or a hundred people if the meetings skills are there. I still prefer to have peer circles in projects larger than twenty-five because the airing of issues and face-to-face discussion can be done so much better in



smaller groups (provided that these groups are linked up into a network, are considering basically the same issues, and have access to all the information they need).

Conversely, if we became skilled at making decisions quickly and democratically through a network of peer circles, perhaps we could dispense with the larger projectwide meetings. I tend to believe that the larger meetings would continue to be valuable and necessary in that they would expose members to a greater variety of opinion in a way that couldn't be done through even an excellent communication system among peer circles.

As I see them, peer circles will be a person's main link to the deliberative process, the place where they most frequently engage in self-government, decision making, discussion, debate, and so forth. In some projects, such meetings might even be daily, every other day, or weekly, depending on the situation. These meetings will become just a normal part of the project's activity, like any other function, such as bookkeeping, cleaning, or ordering supplies. They will not be seen as something separate. In our currently existing hierarchical society, decision making is separated from those who are actually doing the work. All decisions are made by the administrators, managers, and bosses. This is why it will seem strange for us to be doing this work; this is why holding meetings will seem unusual, or outside the work itself. But of course, decision making is an integral part of the work, and always has been. It's just that we haven't been doing it ourselves. So once we do start doing it ourselves, it will become natural and easy, just a normal part of our daily routine. It also seems unlikely that peer circle discussions will be strictly limited to those issues immediately relevant to the project; rather, they might widen into discussions of issues currently being debated in the neighborhood at large.

There is some ambiguity about the relations between peer circles, households, and projects. A household might be considered a project, but I've separated it out because of its distinctive residential character. This is where we live after all, and where many of our loved ones, friends, and family members live, where we eat most of our meals, where we might have been educated (if we grew up in such a household), where we get basic medical care, and so forth. Whereas projects are activities we go out to, except of course for those persons whose main project is in the household, such as teachers, cooks, or nurses. (I'm obviously talking about the larger expanded household

I've described in this book and not a single-house co-op). So it would be onerous and just too much if persons who go outside the household to participate in projects (most of us) are expected to participate in a peer circle in that project as well as a peer circle in the household.

In my projection, therefore, only persons who do not go outside the household for a project but who stay in the household on a daily basis will form peer circles in the household. This way, everyone will be a member of just one peer circle (leaving aside the problem of persons who work in two or more projects outside the household). Thus, any given person will have their fairly frequent peer circle meetings to self-govern their project, an occasional projectwide meeting, an occasional householdwide meeting, and the neighborhood assembly meetings (which also will be fairly infrequent, except right at the beginning when the new social forms are being established and the basic agreements hammered out).

This may seem like a lot of meetings, especially to persons embedded in the currently dominant extreme individualist outlooks and behavior patterns. We have never been a self-governing people, so we are frightened by the prospect, frightened by the effort it will take to make decisions collectively, because this work has always been done for us by our rulers. For the most part, we presently lack decision-making skills. We also lack confidence in our ability to assume responsibility for governing our own lives, and we perceive the time and energy needed to do this as a burden rather than as liberation. The false distinction between work and leisure is deeply ingrained in us – a separation made possible only in a hierarchical society where the basic framework is established by the rulers, so that when we are not at work we are free to do our own thing, as long as doing our own thing does not challenge the established order.

Once we get going and get things set up, and once we have improved our meeting skills, however, we will be able to reduce both the length and frequency of these meetings. Plus the meetings themselves will become easy and even enjoyable; they will become convivial social occasions. Indeed, they will become just a normal part of our lives, like eating or sleeping, playing or studying. And our disagreements will become less critical and momentous. With our basic lives secured, through cooperative labor and mutual aid, our disagreements will not often be life-or-death matters as they are now under capitalism. It will not often be the case, as it is now, that a

wrongly chosen path will lead to a life-threatening catastrophe. It is because our lives are currently threatened and insecure (and have been for a long time), it is because our lives are under direct attack by our rulers and we are forced into a vicious fight for our very existence, that everything seems to be so urgent and serious. This extreme tension carries over into everything we do, including our meetings. If there were no oppressive ruling class, the social world would be a much calmer place.

A calm social world is still down the road, though. For now, and especially as we attempt to set up our assemblies, we are going to come under attack, much more so than we already are. The rulers will try to bust up our assemblies; they will try to co-opt them. But this is nothing new. The ruling class has been attacking everything we've tried for the past five hundred years. The authoritarians among us will also be trying to get the assemblies to federate into national structures, thus destroying local autonomy.

### **On the Matter of the Size of Households and Neighborhood Assemblies**

A critic of my proposal said that my size estimates for households and neighborhood assemblies were way off. She thought that 25 would be more appropriate and realistic for households (not 100-200), and 250 for neighborhood assemblies (not 1,000-2,000). I don't think the size of households really matters all that much. The size of these can vary a lot, as far as I'm concerned. You will recall, though, that by household I mean a really extended grouping, not a single-family residence or even a housing cooperative. I picture it more as a minicomunity. The household should be large enough for it to make sense to have a birthing room, machine shop, recreational facility, laundry, and communal kitchen. I start from what I envision might be built from scratch – namely, a large complex of buildings, all interconnected, with the above-mentioned facilities and living quarters for different kinds of family groups. I am picturing something like a small manor in the Middle Ages, or one of those large households in ancient Greece or Rome with an expansive courtyard surrounded by family rooms and workshops. I recently visited a large convent in Oaxaca that was built like this, with communal, residential, and workrooms built around a courtyard. It surely houses at least 200 people, probably more. But of course we will not be building from scratch, or at

least not very much, not at first. It will be a matter of combining existing structures. The existing physical plant will probably determine, for the most part and for the foreseeable future, the size of households.

Twenty-five people is not at all the kind of households I have in mind. You could house 25 people in a large house. One large apartment building has a lot more than this number. Perhaps size is not the key question; rather, it's what a household does. Is it large enough to assume some elementary educational responsibilities, basic health care, building maintenance, some recreation, child care, communal cooking, workshops, and so forth? I had envisioned these expanded households as a way of rearranging, in the long run, our everyday residential lives. But these residences would not correspond to families or even extended families. From this point of view, I don't think 100 or even 200 is too many. But because of the absence of the appropriate architecture, we'll probably have to start with much smaller households. This doesn't affect my scheme seriously one way or the other.

The question of the size of the neighborhood assembly probably represents a more serious issue. A size of 250 is more like a block association than a neighborhood assembly. The smaller the neighborhood assemblies are, the more of them there will be, and the fewer resources each one will control, making more interneighborhood agreements necessary. My figure was set by what I thought was the upper limit of possible democratic decision making for people all in one room. New England town meetings can be quite large, and they work okay. I once lived in a midwestern town that had a large auditorium built in a circular manner that held nearly 6,000 people. I have personally participated in business meetings in this building (filled to capacity) that were conducted in a democratic fashion, using Robert's Rules, but that nevertheless involved lots of participation and debate by many people, as well as a thorough airing of the issues in an orderly way, with everyone following along and with votes taken. This is probably the upper limit, though, as regards size. But I can imagine meetings of 1,000, 1,500, or 2,000 working quite well, especially given that there will be great advancements made in our decision-making skills. It's possible that the image that has been emerging lately in the global justice movement, from the Direct Action Network and other groups, of small affinity groups using so-called consensus

decision making, has taken us in the wrong direction and clouded our vision of how more permanent deliberative assemblies will work.

My critic seemed to think that even 250 was too large. She argued that "when you have a group this size, certain people begin to completely dominate the discussion, while everyone else listens." But this can happen in a group as small as eight just as well. The eradication of informal hierarchies is not really related to size (at least up to a certain point). A lot of good work is currently being done on precisely this: the nuts and bolts of deliberative assemblies, and the explicit procedures and practices needed to avoid informal hierarchies and ensure direct democracy. With improved meeting skills (direct democracy skills), we will be able to block authoritarian patterns from ever emerging, both in small groups and much larger meetings. The biggest problem with large neighborhood assemblies now is that we simply don't have the physical facilities for them. And until we do, we'll probably have to start with smaller assemblies. But I see no inherent difficulties, from the standpoint of democracy or lifestyle, in larger assemblies, and I see a number of advantages. Of course, I'm not trying to engrave anything in stone. I doubt if there are any hard-and-fast rules on these questions. I can imagine communities arranging themselves in any number of ways.

To my mind, all that is absolutely essential is that we be self-governing through deliberative assemblies based on direct democracy, with no authority delegated to representatives and with intercommunity needs being met through negotiated treaties. The main reason for wanting to avoid delegating decision-making power to representatives is not that people thereby hand over their power to others and create a decision-making elite, although this is bad enough. It is not that they are thereby no longer "autonomous individuals," for there is no such thing. Rather, it is that they bar themselves by this action from participating in the discussion of the issues. They forfeit their natures as thinking persons and instead hand over this function to others.

### **Organic versus Deliberative**

One critic of my scheme complained that it "had too many institutions" and "was bureaucratic." What she wanted was an "organic" society, implying, I think, that direct democracy is bureaucratic. On the contrary, direct democracy, in small face-to-face assemblies, is

precisely the antidote to bureaucracy, not its manifestation. Bureaucracy occurs when people abandon their meetings in favor of electing officers or representatives to make the decisions, thereby creating a decision-making elite.

Actually, my image of a new social world is beautifully simple compared to other things that are being proposed – like Michael Albert's scheme or proposals for federated structures of workers' councils – and certainly compared to what exists now.

The call for an organic society shows a resistance to making things explicit, or to conscious deliberation as a way of making decisions and setting up social arrangements. There are even philosophers who reject the very idea of a deliberative society because they think it is too rational, and they do not believe humans are rational animals. My critic perhaps was simply objecting to the idea of having meetings at all, viewing them as bureaucratic, a criticism that probably reflects her orientation toward individualism. Many contemporary anarchists like to keep decision making informal. Things are just supposed to happen, organically. In my experience, most such informal processes have embedded, hidden hierarchies.

Traditional archaic societies were organic in a sense, but they still had rules, norms, and customs, since humans are intensely cultural creatures who require customs (rules, norms, or laws) in order to live. It's just that these customs had grown up over long periods of time and had become embedded in tradition – traditions that were nevertheless enforced by real-live persons in the present; that is, most archaic societies tended to have informal hierarchies, although in general they were more egalitarian than the social forms that replaced them. Given our stage of history, the interconnectedness of the world, the speed of change, and so forth, there is no way we can return to the organic societies of the past that lived according to customs built up slowly over centuries. Our only choice is whether someone else will determine the customs by which we live or whether we will do it ourselves. If we do it ourselves, we will need deliberative assemblies. I just don't see how we could arrange our social lives without them.

This critic also felt that my scheme was "too cold" and suspected "that it had been conceived by men." I thought that at least one thing the feminist movement of the past quarter century had succeeded in doing was eradicating the stereotype that men are rational whereas women are emotional. Apparently I was mistaken. I complete reject

the false duality of reason versus emotion. Everyone has both reason and emotion, whether they like it or not. It's possible that she meant something else by cold, but this seems the most likely interpretation. She was probably referring to the deliberative aspect of the proposed social forms, to the fact that people assemble together to make decisions. She might have mistakenly thought that this involves only reason, whereas in fact any argument made in an assembly in favor of or opposition to a proposal also inevitably involves emotion.

Moreover, her desire that people "discuss their feelings and be very emotionally close" may not be as progressive as she thinks, given that mainstream culture is riddled with psychobabble, sensitivity training, encounter groups, and endless counseling, most of which functions to keep our attention focused on our own inner psyches and character flaws rather than the structures of power and wealth that oppress us.

### **The Threat of Individualism**

I believe there is no greater threat (other than capitalists themselves) to the success of the revolutionary movement for freedom than the rampant individualism that seems to be everywhere, including inside the anarchist movement. This threat is far greater than that posed by the fast-vanishing remnants of the now thoroughly discredited leninist vanguard party or other authoritarians. It's not surprising but is deeply disturbing and disappointing that this virus has infected our movement. Rugged individualism, after all, is a hegemonic trait of U.S. culture. You would think that anarchists would know better, but many don't. They have fallen victim to the myth of the autonomous individual, embracing as their own the very thing that has been imposed on them by capitalists – the world of atomized and alienated individuals. They have not managed to escape the specious individual/society dichotomy. Both these terms are mere abstractions. There is in fact no such thing as an individual, any more than there is such a thing as a society or a collective. Humans are intersubjective creatures. We are deeply social and cultural animals. We come into being and exist through interaction with others like ourselves. Our language is also intersubjective and cultural. We could not even live or talk without culture. But individualists do not see this, or else they simply deny it. What they see is a world full of completely separate autonomous individuals who can go their own ways and do their own thing,

independently of all others if necessary. They think that each person is the ultimate “authority” and is “sovereign.”

This explains why they hate meetings. In their widely distributed pamphlet *Fighting for Our Lives*, Crimethinc has written, “Don’t sit endlessly in meetings, meeting about when you should be meeting to discuss how to conduct your next meeting.” For these people, decisions taken in meetings infringe on the alleged sovereignty of the individual, and thus democracy is a dirty word. They believe that since there are no gods or masters, each of us can make our own rules and do whatever we want. There is no morality other than the one each person invents. They think that “the root of anarchism is the simple impulse to *do it yourself*” (from *Fighting for Our Lives*). It’s hard to think of anything *further* from anarchism than this. Anarchism has been a cooperative endeavor from the get go.

Jason McQuinn, founder and editor of the magazine *Anarchy*, has written, “The anarchist idea has an indelibly individualist foundation upon which its social critiques stand, always and everywhere proclaiming that only free individuals can create a free, unalienated society.” This is not true. Classical anarchism recognized that any freedom that exists for anyone is a social creation. Freedom is, or could be, an attribute of a social order (a configuration of social relations); it is not, nor could it ever be, a trait of one person. Thus, the idea that there can be such a thing as a “free individual” is nonsensical. McQuinn’s confusion is apparent. He sees the “individual” and “society” as separate things. He evidently thinks that first you must have an aggregate of these so-called free individuals, and then these people will set up a free society. This is not the way it works. He remains trapped in the false abstractness of the individual/society duality.

The new left had a strong current of individualism, which got labeled “anarchist” at the time, because of the prevailing leninist orthodoxy. The new left was chock-full of people who believed in the maxim “Do your own thing.” This was not anarchism, however, but liberal individualism. Individualism and authoritarianism are two sides of the same coin. The new left was eventually rent asunder by the collision of these two wrongheaded tendencies. There was also a genuine anarchist current in the new left, but it was poorly articulated and went largely unnoticed.

This is an issue that is badly splitting and damaging the contemporary anarchist movement in the United States. The individualists



(primitivists, post-left anarchists, green anarchists, and Crimethinc) are quite anachronistic. They have regressed beyond even Hegel and Marx to a theory of society as an aggregate of autonomous individuals, using Max Stirner as their bible. It is somewhat understandable for certain nineteenth-century anarchists, like Benjamin Tucker, to have succumbed to individualism. After all, that was before Marx's early manuscripts had even been published. It was before Bakunin had been thoroughly absorbed. It was before anthropology, social psychology, pragmatism, and the Frankfurt School. There is absolutely no excuse now, however, for any anarchist tendency not to understand that humans are social creatures and intersubjective beings. Yet the individualist anarchists in the United States make this mistake.

The individualist current in the contemporary anarchist movement seems to have trouble handling abstractions in general. In addition to not getting past the abstractions of individual / collective, this current has gotten hung up on at least four others: civilization, organization, work, and the left. It has launched vociferous attacks on all four of these abstractions – one of the most idiotic things I've ever witnessed. The damage and confusion being caused by these campaigns is truly unforgivable. I hope someone does a job on all this nonsense soon.

### **Civil Society**

This concept has a long history, beginning at least with John Locke and Adam Smith, and moving on down through G.W.F. Hegel and Alexis de Tocqueville to contemporary writers like Benjamin Barber and John Keane. It has gained prominence lately because of its use by both the Zapatistas and global justice activists.

I don't like the concept of civil society and never use it. Nor am I inclined to adopt it just because it has become fashionable. An idea like this could only have emerged in an already fairly well-developed capitalism, wherein governance had been seized by politicians and bureaucrats, and work had been separated out from the rest of life and labeled economic. What was left over was called civil society. And this is still explicitly recognized by contemporary civil society theorists like Barber, for example, who writes that "there is a place for us between big government and commercial markets." He simply accepts as a given the continued existence of the state and capitalism.

Some people claim that the concept is being used differently now by global justice activists, but my reading of essays and documents

from this movement does not persuade me that they're right about this. I see precious few direct attacks on the state. It seems to me that most of these activists are closer to a liberal such as Barber, and simply accept the distinction between state and civil society (instead, the abolition of this dualism should be one of the objectives of a revolution).

But why use an abstract term like civil society at all? Why waste time arguing over its meaning? There are ways of expressing ourselves in the best of both the communist and anarchist traditions that are far superior to this. Why not use these? Better yet, why not just describe concretely, in everyday language, the social forms we want and then set about creating them?

### **Courts, Crime, Rights, and Law**

In my 1970 "Draft Constitution for our Post-Revolutionary Society" (unpublished), I envisioned local courts composed of about twenty persons selected by lot from the community with limited non-repeatable terms of service, no professional judges or lawyers, no superior regional or national courts, and of course no supreme court. I still think that this is pretty much on the mark.

We have to realize that questions of crime, law, and rights will take on a completely different character in an association of democratic autonomous neighborhoods. There is no such thing as an objective definition of crime, a universal law, or an inalienable right. So these matters are in fact conceptually the same as majority/minority disputes within neighborhood assemblies.

In fact, the neighborhood assembly might simply adjudicate disputes itself, or at least some disputes. I can also imagine, however, that a number of neighborhood assemblies might strike an agreement to convene a court to do this. I can even imagine a regional court convened in this fashion. This would have the advantage of putting some distance between the neighborhood where the dispute took place and the persons who are judging it. This can be helpful in some cases. The point is that the neighborhood assembly will define what crime is and decide how to deal with it. It's the same with law (if there is any) and human rights.

Take, for example, the notion of so-called international law, a phrase that we have heard a lot in recent years. International law is actually just the collection of treaties that have been ratified by various

governments such as the Geneva Conventions, the Nuremberg Judgments, or treaties on torture or land mines. But in the absence of a world government with police and armies, the treaties have no teeth, except morally. So even those governments that have ratified the treaties ignore them at will. Does the idea of a “law” have any meaning in the absence of the means of violence (arrests, imprisonment, fines, executions, armed invasion) necessary to enforce it? Oddly enough, this situation is comparable to the one that will be faced by an association of neighborhood assemblies.

Take another example: the so-called Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This document, whose primary author was Eleanor Roosevelt, was adopted by the United Nations, and thus according to the U.S. Constitution, became the law of the land in the United States, as it also did in other UN member states. As it happens, the declaration is totally incompatible with capitalism and the system of nation-states. So the declaration is universally ignored by all governments.

To get another bead on this, let’s consider the question of animal rights, children’s rights, and gay rights. In recent decades, minorities have mobilized to argue and agitate for these rights. In the case of children and animals, since they can’t argue for themselves, it is a group of adults who are asserting these rights for them. Others, probably the majority in each case, ridicule the notion that animals, children, and gays and lesbians have rights at all. So it’s clear that the assertion by someone of a right is a political struggle between those who want it and those who deny it.

This is true even for something like murder. Capitalists obviously don’t believe they are criminals when they murder, and they engage in the practice on a massive scale – assassinations, bombings, starvation, death squads, slaughters, poisonings, and so forth. They advance arguments justifying these actions. They have also not considered it a crime to kill workers in their factories and mines. But now we have a worldwide movement that is trying to define these actions as crimes. An international court has been established by a treaty to judge these cases. Of course, it has no enforcement powers, but it will nevertheless be able to bring some moral pressure to bear. (The United States has refused to sign on.) But leaving capitalists aside, it is commonly thought that anyone has a right to kill in self-defense. Yet this too is disputed by committed pacifists.

The point is that all these things – crime, law, rights – come down

to a struggle between some people and others, between minorities and majorities. And this is the way it will be in our neighborhood assemblies. There will be no state, no supreme court, to decide the issue, picking one side or the other. We will have to work it out ourselves.

I'm not sure how much of the vast canon of law built up over the centuries by governments and their courts will prove useful to free peoples; I suspect very little. I would hope that whatever rules we feel we need to make to help arrange our lives together will be kept to the absolute minimum, and be made as simple as possible. The problem of gaining compliance with them is no different than getting compliance on any other decision taken by the neighborhood assembly, and we can follow basically the same procedures.

### **Further Studies**

A full-scale scholarly critique of representative government, drawing on both theoretical and historical works, in defense of direct democracy, is urgently needed. A few books and numerous Web sites are labeled "direct democracy," but by this is meant referenda and television voting, not face-to-face participatory decision making in local assemblies. For such a central concept to be so poorly fleshed out and defended theoretically is embarrassing. It would make a good project for someone.

The same can be said of the idea of abolishing money. This has long been a central tenet of anarchist thinking, but there is virtually nothing of substance written about it that I know of, although a group in France has recently organized to pick up on the work of Marcel Mauss in order to explore the ins and outs of a gift economy. The lack of work in this area is also embarrassing, and would make a good project for someone.

Equally urgent, in my view, are better answers to the question, "What do we want?" Fortunately, at long last, a lot of good work is being done on this topic. The scheme I've outlined in this book for how we might want to live is one person's contribution to this effort. More contributions are needed. I hope to do a more thorough survey of the various attempts to imagine a free society soon. Many of the books now appearing, however, are written by progressive populists, global justice activists, and others who are not exactly on the same page as anarchists, although such books contain many useful ideas and insights.

# 11

## Some Comments on the Literature

### Expanding the Autonomous Sphere: Andre Gorz

It is necessary to distinguish the strategy I have been describing from one proposed by Andre Gorz (See, for example, his *Critique of Economic Reason* [London: Verso, 1989, 250 pages]) that sounds similar in many ways but isn't. Gorz has done a lot to refocus our attention on the liberation from work, and for this he must be thanked. But I cannot agree with the solution he advocates. Gorz divides the social world into heteronomous and autonomous spheres. He wants us to free up more and more time for the sphere of autonomous activity, but he wants to indefinitely keep the heteronomous sphere, the sphere of economic calculation, "the sphere of economically rational commodity activities," in other words, the sphere of capitalism, which he calls industrialism.

Thus, Gorz has abandoned any desire to destroy capitalism completely; he just wants it to control less and less of our lives. He wants us to start spending less and less time in waged work until it becomes a negligible part of our lives. With the rest of our time we can do whatever we want, but his description of this autonomous activity sounds suspiciously like the leisure activities in a commodity culture, or even worse, like subsistence labor. Unlike my proposal, which also calls for pulling time, energy, and wealth out of capitalism, his does not seek to eventually destroy capitalism but rather leaves it intact together with the state, which will administer a "social wage," another feature of his plan. At a time when capitalists are busy dismantling the welfare state, it seems somewhat misguided to pin one's hopes on a state-administered guaranteed annual income.

Nor does Gorz face up to the fierce resistance capitalists will put up to anyone trying to escape wage labor. Keeping millions of people unemployed or on the dole (if they're lucky) is an essential feature of the wage slave system, and it always has been. Gorz's proposal therefore presupposes that radicals have gotten control of the state appar-

tus and have succeeded in instituting shorter hours along with a whole array of other proposals, including the social wage. It will never happen.

Gorz characterizes proposals like mine as "fundamentalist anti-modern or pre-modern." He thinks they are nostalgic, and that they seek to return to precapitalist times. But the desire for an association of democratic autonomous neighborhoods does not mean that these neighborhoods will be completely self-sufficient (or even mostly so), isolated, and separate, like manors or villages in the Middle Ages. They will not be autonomous in the material sense; they will be autonomous in that no one will govern them. They will be self-governing. There will obviously be enormous networks for interchanging goods, probably more than there are now, but this circulation will serve human need not capitalist greed. And it will be intelligent. We won't be eating lettuce and tomatoes shipped in from across a continent, but food that can be grown or made locally. And if people in the South still want to eat wheat and potatoes, and people in the North still want to eat avocados and bananas, we'll attempt to figure this out through our neighborhood assemblies.

The association of autonomous neighborhoods we are talking about is not a regression; it is an advance. It represents a higher level of civilization than will ever be possible under capitalism. People seem to think that if it weren't for the profit motive humans would never do anything brilliant, never invent labor-saving machines, never produce more than they immediately need. This is absurd. Capitalism is now nothing but a fetter on the creative genius of the human species. The so-called wonders of capitalism will look positively shabby beside the truly marvelous creations of free peoples.

### **Libertarian Municipalism: Murray Bookchin**

It is necessary to distinguish the strategy I'm proposing from the libertarian municipalism of Murray Bookchin. (For an exposition and references to the relevant Bookchin texts, see Janet Biehl, *The Politics of Social Ecology: Libertarian Municipalism*, [Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1998, 187 pages].) Bookchin's hostility to workplace organizing goes way back. Already in his 1968 essay "The Forms of Freedom," published in his *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, he sketches his rejection of workers' councils in favor of popular assemblies. But at least in that essay he still recognized that workers' councils are a "revolu-

tionary means of appropriating the bourgeois economy." Over the years, this role for workers has disappeared. In Bookchin's essays on libertarian municipalism beginning in 1985 (although most of the themes were present much earlier), work, workers, and workplaces have all but vanished, and his strident rejection of anarcho-sindicalism has intensified. A recent essay published in *Left Green Perspectives* (January 2000) reasserts once again his belief that worker-managed workplaces and cooperatives cannot be part of a revolutionary strategy. The whole stress is on getting popular assemblies, yet Bookchin wants to do this by winning elections in local municipalities!

I do not believe that we could turn the existing town governments into assemblies based on direct democracy even if we won the elections (and I do not even believe in elections). They are too intimately linked with state and federal bureaucracies. I think we have to bypass the existing municipal governments and strike directly for neighborhood assemblies. By itself, this would never succeed. It has to be combined with the struggles for workplace and household assemblies. As discussed earlier, mine is a three-pronged approach. You have to fight for direct democracy and self-rule everywhere (even in the existing multitude of voluntary organizations and nonprofit corporations). The neighborhood assembly will be the supreme decision-making unit, but it cannot just be created out of the blue, separately and in isolation from everything else (the rest of social life).

In Bookchin's proposal, it is not clear at all how these liberated municipalities are even going to get control of "the economy" (a category that I reject, as noted earlier), although that is an objective of his plan. He never mentions anymore seizing the means of production at the point of production. Production is to be taken over by towns. But he never explains how. In his strategy writings, he rarely talks much anymore about cooperative labor as a foundation for a free communal life (although this theme is present in his earlier theoretical writings). Nor does he talk much anymore about abolishing wage slavery. He rarely talks about money, markets, or trade. Domestic democracy, and hence reproductive freedom, is not part of his strategy either.

One reason, among others, why he rejects workplace struggles is his long-standing identification of the proletariat with industrial workers. It is surprising that such an erudite man could have made such an elementary error, but there it is. Naturally, if the working class is now just a tiny minority operating the rapidly disappearing industrial facto-

ries, rather than a class that encompasses practically the entire population of the planet, then there obviously can't be much of a role for it in making a revolution.

This body of work by Bookchin is long on philosophy but short on concrete details. The actual proposal is usually summarized in one short paragraph, enmeshed in pages of theorizing. It's a heavy theoretical load to hang by such a thin thread. Here is a typical example from "The Meaning of Confederalism" (*Green Perspectives*, No. 20, November 1990):

What, then, is confederalism? It is above all a network of administrative councils whose members or delegates are elected from popular face-to-face democratic assemblies, in the various villages, towns, and even neighborhoods of large cities. The members of these confederal councils are strictly mandated, recallable, and responsible to the assemblies that choose them for the purpose of coordinating and administering the policies formulated by the assemblies themselves. Their function is thus a purely administrative and practical one, not a policy-making one like the function of representatives in republican systems of government.

That's it! Then back to the philosophizing. Back to expositions on the meaning of citizenship (a concept that is perhaps too closely tied to the nation-state and representative democracy to be useful any longer). And this is thought to represent direct democracy. My apologies, but I don't think so.

On the other hand, a lot of his philosophizing is helpful in clarifying the meaning of decentralized social arrangements. He is certainly correct to focus on the local popular assembly as the cornerstone of a free, democratic, autonomous social life. Moreover, most of the limitations of a strategy based solely on worker-managed workplaces, which Bookchin calls attention to, are correct.

As I argued above, in and of themselves, worker-owned workplaces can never overthrow capitalism. Thus, seizing the means of production can never lead by itself to the overthrow of capitalism or the establishment of a new social world. We also have to seize decision-making power in general away from the ruling class and relocate it in our neighborhood assemblies, abolish labor as a commodity, and get out of markets based on commodities made for profit.



Bookchin has thrown out the baby with the bathwater. It is so sad that such a scholarly anarchist, for all his voluminous writings as well as widespread reputation and following, could have latched so doggedly on to this badly flawed strategy, one that could never succeed in a million years.

### **An Imaginative Utopia: *Bolo'Bolo***

*Bolo'Bolo*, by P. M. (New York: Semiotext(e), 1985, 198 pages) is a marvelously creative work. It shows what can be thought up by an anarchist with a vivid imagination. Everyone who is interested in building a decentralized world of free communal peoples should read this book.

That said, one is forced to recognize that this scheme is riddled with contradictions. It is based, typically for an anarchist, on federation. Yet somehow this doesn't constitute hierarchy in P. M.'s view. In addition to the bolo (neighborhood), P.M. projects these other units: towns, counties, regions, and the world. There are assemblies on each of these levels with certain powers and responsibilities. P. M.'s assumption that these assemblies will not get out of control is a little too facile for my taste. For instance, P.M. writes that "a planetary assembly and its organisms can only do what the participating regions let them do." Well, in this scheme, lower-level assemblies and bolos do control the resources, so maybe this will be true, but it still worries me.

This book is perhaps best described as a detailed account, in advance, of customs and traditions that might evolve over a long period of time in an anarchist culture. But to present them like this all at once makes them seem almost as if they have been legislated. Bolos will do this; bolos won't do that. Every traveler will be granted three days of hospitality by any bolo. No one can be expelled from a bolo. Damages caused by fights (an accepted way of resolving personal conflicts) must be paid for by the contestants. Inside bolos, there can't be any rules – yet the whole book is loaded with rule after rule, many of which would most probably have to be enforced somehow. But how? We're going to have state-of-the-art hospitals, advanced communication systems, well-kept roads, all maintained by compulsory labor if need be (that is, if there aren't enough volunteers) – each bolo supplying a certain number of compulsory labor hours every year. Hold on a minute. Can't we do better than this? I certainly hope so.

There is also the flaw that in P. M.'s view, our current misery is caused not by capitalism but by the planetary work machine. This is a novel way of saying it, I guess, and is refreshing for a while. But ultimately, it is unacceptable. It reduces our understanding and causes us to misidentify the enemy. It's foolish to jettison the knowledge gained from centuries of scholarly analysis of and militant resistance to the historical social order known as capitalism for the sake of a few poetic phrases. Let's face it. We live under capitalism, and there is no getting around it.

### **Realistic Utopias: Ralph Miliband and Daniel Singer**

Here are two brilliant, committed radicals, both highly educated and deeply knowledgeable, but who nevertheless suffer a failure of imagination when it comes to getting out of capitalism and getting free. They can't seem to shake loose from the nation-state. Their cases illustrate the profound tragedy we suffered when marxists drove anarchists out of the revolution and succeeded in keeping them out for over a century. Both men come from strong marxist backgrounds, although certainly neither of them could be considered an orthodox marxist; indeed, they each have done a lot to create a radical politics relevant to our own times. Even though marxists themselves believe that communism is a stateless society, that idea has receded so far into the background that it has no current relevance for them in their anti-capitalist struggles. As a consequence, the best they can picture is a "realistic utopia" (a phrase used by Singer), by which they mean a utopia that can actually be achieved given present conditions. And for them that means working through the state – which is what these two radicals propose.

In *Socialism for a Sceptical Age* (London: Verso, 1994, 221 pages), Miliband presents an admirable summary of the case against capitalism, and an equally admirable summary of socialist aspirations in general – the struggle for democracy, equality, and social control over the economy, are ideas that most radicals can agree with. But then the problems begin, the most important of which is that Miliband still believes that these ideals can be achieved in a state. He thinks completely within the nation-state framework. He is well aware of the historical failure of social democracy in Europe. In fact, he analyzes one of the most striking recent examples of such failure: the government of Francois Mitterand in France. Mitterand came to power with

widespread public support, respectably radical intentions, and a majority in the government. He got nowhere. His program of reforms was blocked by the ruling class. He was thwarted. So Miliband is aware of both the intense resistance that capitalists can throw up against any serious attempt to change the system and the many weapons they are able to deploy. But he doesn't give up on the strategy. He still thinks it is possible for socialists to win control of a government through elections, and then use the state to overthrow capitalism and establish socialism. He devotes one long chapter, "The Politics of Survival," to discussing various things that a socialist government might do to ward off attacks by the ruling class, stay in power, and get to socialism. (Communism, in the original sense of a stateless society, seems to have disappeared from his vision.)

Singer's recent book, *Whose Millennium? Theirs or Ours?* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1999, 295 pages) advances similar themes. But for him it is not merely possible to use the state but necessary (although he does keep the traditional, ultimate goal of dissolving the state, eventually). A state is needed to fend off the capitalists' "terrible attack, including flight of capital, trade restrictions, boycotts, and possibly, more violent means," which is sure to come. A state controlled by radicals (communists and socialists) is essential to defeat this counterrevolution and engineer the transition from capitalism to socialism.

These are completely unrealistic strategies. They are not realistic utopias; they are pipe dreams. It has long puzzled me how some revolutionaries can continue hanging on to the two-stage strategy – first capture the state, and then establish communism by abolishing the state (and capitalism) – in the face of the overwhelming failure of this strategy through nearly a century of experience now, first in Russia and Eastern Europe with leninism, then in Western Europe with social democracy, and finally all over the colonial world in national liberation struggles. These long historical struggles have proved beyond any doubt that it is impossible to get to true communism – that is, a stateless society, or anarchy – by getting control of a state. What does it take to discredit a strategy? Why don't we be really realistic and admit that we have no choice but to try another approach?

## Utopistics: Immanuel Wallerstein

In his new book *Utopistics: Or, Historical Choices of the Twenty-first Century* (New York: New Press, 1998, 93 pages) Wallerstein offers some modest proposals for a different social world. Wallerstein coined the word utopistics because he wants us to remember that he is not proposing utopia:

Utopistics is the serious assessment of historical alternatives, the exercise of our judgment as to the substantive rationality of alternative possible historical systems. It is the sober, rational, and realistic evaluation of human social systems, the constraints on what they can be, and the zones open to human creativity. Not the face of the perfect (and inevitable) future, but the face of an alternative, credibly better, and historically possible (but far from certain) future.

In this light, Wallerstein proposes several things. First, he advocates "the erection of nonprofit decentralized units as the underlying mode of producing within the system." These are nonstate-controlled nonprofits such as hospitals. Second, with regard to equal access to education, health care, and a guaranteed lifetime income, Wallerstein says that "it should not be difficult to place all three of these needs outside commodification, to be provided by nonprofit institutions and paid for collectively. We do this now for such things as water supply, and in some countries, libraries." Third, as for preserving the environment, he notes, "We must require all production organizations to internalize all costs, including all costs necessary to ensure that their productive activity neither pollutes nor uses up the resources of the biosphere." There are a couple of other ideas too, such as proposing "a truly democratic set of political institutions," and keeping money out of politics so that there will not be "financial imbalances between competing points of view."

Are these proposals really historically possible? Wallerstein has done as much as anyone to analyze the two-stage strategy and show why it failed, and how it could not have succeeded. He is also aware that we face a terrible enemy: "The privileged are inevitably better informed and thereby socially smarter than they have been. They are also far wealthier, and they have far stronger and more effective means of destruction and repression than they ever did before." So aren't they going to try to block these proposals from being adopted?

And how will that be countered?

Elsewhere in this small book, Wallerstein records his observation that a deep-seated rejection of state structures is now a worldwide phenomenon. Some years ago, in an essay on strategy, he recommended placing unmeetable demands on the state and "overloading the system," and ceasing "to be terrified at the political breakdown of the system." Here, in these utopistic proposals he doesn't actually say that a state would be needed for them, but he doesn't say it wouldn't be. Yet wouldn't the capitalist nation-state have to be abolished before you could internalize production costs or have a guaranteed lifetime income arranged through a nonprofit organization and paid for collectively, or have production done mostly in nonprofit enterprises? Isn't the very distinction between profit and nonprofit corporations a legal artifact of capitalism itself?

And "a truly democratic set of political institutions" can mean almost anything. It describes my proposed social arrangements as well as many others. Are we going to try to keep bourgeois democracy but cleanse it of capitalists? If it's true that the world's peoples are in the process of rejecting state structures, like Wallerstein claims, then isn't the proposal for a world of autonomous communities actually more realistic, more historically possible, than his utopistic ones? Isn't anarchism implied in his call for "the erection of nonprofit decentralized units as the underlying mode of producing"?

### **A Cooperative Commonwealth: Frank Lindenfeld**

Lindenfeld's short essay manages to capture, in refreshingly concrete terms, the main themes of the cooperative movement. (See "The Cooperative Commonwealth: An Alternative to Corporate Capitalism and State Socialism," *Humanity and Society*, Volume 21, Number 1, February 1997, pages 3-16). He believes that the seeds of a cooperative commonwealth are already present in the existing worker and consumer co-ops, community development financial institutions, and barter networks. These need to be increased in number. Then they should "forge linkages . . . to form second order co-ops and federations," according to Lindenfeld, who contends that "as networks of cooperatives and democratically managed organizations proliferate, they may reach enough of a critical mass to transform the entire society into the cooperative commonwealth." But this will not happen, he maintains, without "a broad scale coalition of anti-corporate people's

political organizations. Such a political thrust is needed to challenge the entrenched power of the transnational corporations and open them up to democratic control by their employees, as well as to modify the legal and tax framework to make it more friendly to cooperatives." In other words, we are going to legislate capitalism away!

But at least Lindenfeld hates capitalism and wants to get rid of it; at least he's somewhat aware that there is an enemy out there with entrenched interests. He grossly underestimates, however, the power and resources of that enemy. This becomes clear a little later as he begins to enumerate the standard social democratic wish list: "a constitutional amendment to keep corporations from claiming rights guaranteed to material persons"; "an absolute ban on corporate contributions to political parties, political action committees, and candidates"; "the provision of government social welfare benefits such as regional or national health insurance and a guaranteed minimum income combined with a progressive tax system that transfers income from wealthy families and corporations to those less fortunate"; "tax incentives to promote employee ownership and control"; "the charter or continuation of corporations only if they provided for substantial employee ownership and control"; and so forth.

Sure, why not? Let's just keep Congress, the courts, the federal and state bureaucracies, and elections, but get control of them through a new populist movement outside the two parties, as is happening already, claims Lindenfeld, "in the Green Party, the Alliance, the New Party and the Labor Party." Then we can change the laws to make a cooperative commonwealth possible, all the while keeping the capitalists at bay with other new laws. Wonderful plan. Except that it will never work!

### **Participatory Economics: Michael Albert**

(See *Looking Forward: Participatory Economics for the Twenty-First Century*, coauthored with Robin Hahnel. Boston: South End Press, 1991, 153 pages.) The most glaring, god-awful mistake in this scheme is that Albert keeps the capitalist categories of economy, production, worker, and consumer, and proceeds to outline a social order based on these bad notions. For all his talk about vision, not much of it is in evidence here. You would think, following Albert, that the main purpose of life is to produce and consume. This is a highly materialist vision that he has conjured. It is also individualistic (in spite

of councils galore). To his credit, he did try to at least imagine a way out of capitalism, out of commodity markets, out of profit taking. It's just that he is so far off the mark.

He has each of us making out an annual list of all the goods we think we are going to need in the coming year. We then submit the list to a "neighborhood consumers' council," where the list gets meshed with everyone else's, and then added to similar lists drawn up by the ward council, the city council, the county council, and so forth, on up through the state and region to the national consumer council. Similar lists are generated from the production side, from workers' councils as well as regional and industrial council federations. (He presumes federation throughout, no questions asked.) All the lists are then crunched through the computers of his iteration facilitation board, where everything is ironed out, resulting in a planned economy, but without planners, according to Albert.

This has got to be the sorriest proposal in the history of utopian literature. Albert uses all the right words – councils, self-management, participation – good ideas taken from the radical movement. But here they get morphed into a world-class monstrosity. It's as if he has embraced capitalist society in toto, but then tried to make it participatory. Money is kept, but it is not regular capitalist money; it is instead "accounting money" and it works differently, he says. Prices are kept, but they are not regular capitalist prices; they are "indicative prices," and they too work differently. Jobs are kept, but they are now "balanced and complexed." Labor time is kept as a measure of value, but now it's okay because with balanced job complexes, "accounting money income thus equates to *real* socially average labor hours." Wages are kept, now called remuneration, and based on effort. There is an employment facilitation board to help workers find jobs, and a household facilitation board to help workers find homes. There are also production facilitation boards, consumption facilitation boards, and updating facilitation boards, as well as the above-mentioned iteration facilitation boards.

Albert has perverted a good radical concept, participatory democracy – which had been refurbished and relaunched by the new left – by fusing it with the capitalist concept of economics. It is only under capitalism that certain human activities come to be labeled economic and are forcibly separated out from the rest of life through the practices of wage slavery and commodity markets. Humans do many

things: make love, have babies, grow food, build shelters, make clothes, fashion tools, compose music, play, dream, talk, write, and investigate. Is a symphony orchestra economic? What about a research center, a health clinic, or a baseball team? Are these economic? Only in a world of commodified labor, where you have to have a job in order to have an income. Outside such a world, it is completely false to label some activities or projects as economic, as production, and others not, or to think of anything as consumption. Even worse is to try to build a whole social order on these distinctions and then to think of this as liberation. On the contrary, the reason a revolution is needed in the first place is to get rid of this false separation of work from life, art, fun, and dreaming.

Among the many things missing from Albert's utopia (or perhaps I should say dystopia) is any feeling that this is a new civilization we want to create, a new social world, with free association, restored communities, local control, joyful living, sanity, cooperation, direct democracy, mutual aid, discussion, fun, and dancing. Instead, what we get is the same old tired civilization, except an even more tedious version. It is still an acquisitive society. It is still a world of products. We are still actors in an economy. We work; we get paid; we buy goods; we calculate, measure, bargain, produce, and consume. If this is a new world, how come we are still being called workers? There is a horrible graphic in *Looking Forward* of a big computer. Scattered around the computer, at widely spaced intervals, are individual desks, each with a monitor linked by a cable to the central computer. Behind each monitor sits a person, busily typing in their consumption requests for the coming year. Who the hell wants to live in a society of producers and consumers?

### **Globalization from Below: Jeremy Brecher, Tim Costello, and Brendan Smith**

Astonishingly, considering that Jeremy Brecher wrote *Strike!* as a young man, this book is not anticapitalist. (See *Globalization from Below*, by Jeremy Brecher, Tim Costello, and Brendan Smith. Boston: South End Press, 2000, 164 pages.) *Strike!* was thoroughly anticapitalist, and was written in the tradition of the mass strike theory of Rosa Luxemburg and the spartacists as well as the workers' councils theory of anarcho-syndicalists and council communists. In contrast, *Globalization from Below* does not contemplate the destruction of



capitalism, let alone the abolition of the state, not even in the long run. In this book, Brecher and his coauthors have regressed to the mainstream sociological cant of social change, social conflict, and social movements, and to the old liberal theory of countervailing power. Sadly, I believe this book nevertheless expresses the prevailing conceptual framework among the so-called antiglobalization protesters of recent years.

The following paragraph from *Globalization from Below* expresses in a nutshell what Brecher, Costello, and Smith think is going on:

In response to globalization from above, movements are emerging all over the world in social locations that are marginal to the dominant power centers. These are linking up by means of networks that cut across national borders. They are beginning to develop a sense of solidarity, a common belief system, and a common program. They are utilizing these networks to impose new norms on corporations, governments, and international institutions.

These movements are "composed of relatively autonomous groupings," typically though not exclusively NGOs, but also on occasion unions, churches, local social movements, intellectuals, and so forth. The authors adopt a phrase from an article in the *Economist* to describe this phenomenon. They call it an "NGO Swarm."

The picture here, then, is one of masses of people organized into special-purpose organizations and single-issue campaigns who network on a global scale, and thus supposedly acquire the power to impose changes on the existing ruling-class institutions. "The movement's unifying goal," the authors claim, "is to bring about sufficient democratic control over states, markets, and corporations to permit people and the planet to survive and begin to shape a viable future." They argue that "the principal strategy of the movement for globalization from below has been to identify the violation of generally held norms, demand that power actors conform to those norms, and threaten the bases of consent on which they depend if they fail to do so." It is foolish to think that the State Department, General Electric, or the World Bank can be democratized. What is not part of this picture is any thought of dismantling states, markets, or corporations and replacing them with authentically democratic social arrangements. (Thankfully, dismantling states, markets, and corporations *is*, however, in the pic-

ture for a significant minority of today's protesters against corporate globalization, although this doesn't seem to have been noticed by these authors.)

This is a startlingly reformist book, and as with most reformism, is deeply naive. The authors do not fully perceive or understand the true nature of the enemy we face. Having failed to take into consideration the imperatives of a system based on profit taking, they fail to realize that many of the reforms they seek to impose are incompatible with that system, or that in its current phase, the system is incapable of accommodating these reforms without self-destructing, and consequently, contemporary capitalists will fanatically fight these reforms because it is a matter of survival for them.

These theorists of globalization from below, however, do not perceive this. They think these reforms can be imposed, through protests and the withdrawal of consent. This is where their use of mainstream sociological categories has gotten in the way. Although they use the term global capital occasionally, they are not really aware of capitalism as a historical system, but are rather merely talking abstractly about "established institutions" and "the power of the powerful." They claim that such power "is based on the active cooperation of some people and the consent and/or acquiescence of others." They believe that this power can be challenged by the withdrawal of consent. "Social movements can be understood as the collective withdrawal of consent to established institutions." This may be true on an abstract level and in the long run (although apartheid in South Africa survived for half a century after the vast majority hated it). But in the here and now, since they lack any concrete knowledge of what the actual imperatives of contemporary capitalists are (for their continued survival as capitalists), our theorists are led to make wildly romantic demands.

Long lists of these demands are presented in their "Draft of a Global Program." They want to "end global debt slavery"; "invest in sustainable development"; "reestablish national full employment policies"; "end the despoiling of natural resources for export"; "end the domination of politics by big money"; "democratize international trade and financial institutions"; "establish a 'hot money' tax"; "encourage development, not austerity"; "make global markets work for developing economies"; "establish a Global Economy Truth Commission"; and on and on. All this is going to be accomplished by a global network of autonomous groupings and NGOs, working through existing

governments, corporations, markets, and international financial institutions.

I don't think so. An NGO swarm cannot reconstitute society. Nor can it nix capitalism, or even fix it – which is really all it seems to be aiming for. Globalization from below, as described by Brecher, Costello, and Smith, is a badly flawed conceptualization of the struggle for liberation.

### **The New Populism: Ralph Nader**

Nader, a nationally known figure for the past several decades, has recently become the most well-known advocate of the new populism, especially since his presidential campaign in 2000. But there are other prominent voices: Jim Hightower, Molly Ivins, Kevin Danaher and Medea Benjamin (of Global Exchange), Lori Wallach (of Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch), Gore Vidal, and many others. There is now also a twice monthly newspaper out of Iowa, the *Progressive Populist*, which publishes columns by many of these activists. Of course, there are many other publications and writers, but I will take Nader as representative.

There is hardly anything sweeter than listening to Nader bash corporations (for his writings in general, see *The Ralph Nader Reader*. New York: Seven Stories Press, 2000, 441 pages). It is so good to be hearing this again, after the long, stifling counterrevolution that settled like an ozone-alert smog over the country for a quarter of a century after 1968. (Hightower's daily commentaries are a special delight too.) Nader has an exhaustive knowledge of U.S. law, the Washington, DC scene, and civil, labor, and consumer rights as well as the dirty tricks of U.S. corporations. He is also consumed with an inspiring moral passion. But sooner or later, in almost every speech, he will move on from listing the many crimes of corporate America to praising small farmers, mom-and-pop corner stores, and the small businesses of Main Street. And then you realize that Nader is not against capitalism per se but only against giant corporations and the control they have come to exercise over U.S. life, including Congress. That's why he keeps insisting that we have to build a new citizens' movement to recover our democracy, to get back to the democracy we used to have.

Nader sees no problem with the U.S. Constitution or the American republic as it was originally founded. He just thinks that this has

been stolen from us, and he wants us to seize it back from its usurpers. And so he ran for president, joining the effort to build a new progressive party and recapture control of Congress, and thereafter get money out of politics, reign in corporations and their lobbyists, protect labor and consumer rights, and in general enact the progressive agenda. And that is why in August 2001 in Portland, Oregon he launched the Democracy Rising grassroots citizen initiative, which he hoped would then be able to accomplish all these things.

But there are some fallacious beliefs at work among these new populists, including Nader. The most serious is the belief that we can go back to small-scale capitalism. We can never go back to small-scale capitalism, and this populist desire to do so shows that populists don't understand how capitalism works. The ever-increasing concentration of capital is an inherent feature of the system. The big fish eat the little fish. This dynamic stems from the endless fierce competition among capitalists for markets and profits. It is not accidental, nor merely the result of bad judgment or corruption, that small-scale capitalism gave way to monopoly capitalism. Capitalists had to move in that direction in order to survive, and for a system based on profit taking to continue functioning. So this central plank of the new populism is based on an illusion.

A second fallacious idea is that we used to have a democracy, but that it has been stolen from us, mainly by giant corporations. There was never a real democracy in the United States. It has been a capitalist society from day one. There has always been a ruling class here, starting with rich merchants in the North and the plantation owners in the South, who were later joined in the mid-nineteenth century by industrialists. Their control has never been seriously threatened, except for a few years during the American Revolution, when the lower classes surged into the arena briefly. The appearance of average people on the stage of history was quickly contained, however, and ruling-class control was solidified and stabilized in the U.S. Constitution of 1787. So all this talk among populists about recovering our democracy is just another illusion.

A third fallacious idea is that we can fix things by capturing control of Congress. But as I have argued elsewhere in this book, we can never get to a real democracy – that is, to direct democracy – by capturing the government. A bourgeois representative democracy like the one existing in the United States will never be able to transform itself

into local, autonomous, direct democracies. In fact, the U.S. Constitution was written precisely to prevent such direct democracies from emerging. So if our objective is to establish a real democracy, it makes no sense to build a progressive party to try to capture control of Congress.

A fourth illusion is that we can restore the welfare state. The vicious, worldwide, sustained capitalist attack on public welfare, on everything public in fact, is not just because capitalists are evil and greedy (they are that, it's true) but because this offensive has been necessitated by the need to maintain profit levels in order to keep the system of capital accumulation intact and functioning. Capitalists had no choice if they wanted to continue living off profit. (They do have a choice, of course: they could stop living off profit, ditch free enterprise, and help change the world.) The populist belief that we can somehow restore public welfare within a capitalist system is another grand illusion. The welfare state phase of capitalism is long gone. The only way we can achieve general well-being at this point is to get rid of capitalism completely and build a truly democratic world, one not based on wage slavery and commodification. This is why, although I enjoy listening to Nader's rants as much as anyone, they are for me ultimately disappointing. I know that the reforms he wants are based on a serious misdiagnosis of what ails us.

### **Inclusive Democracy: Takis Fotopoulos**

*(Towards an Inclusive Democracy: The Crisis of the Growth Economy and the Need for a New Liberatory Project, by Takis Fotopoulos. London: Cassel, 1997, 401 pages.)* I didn't discover Fotopoulos until several years after the main text of *Getting Free* was written. His approach is the closest to mine (or mine to his) that I have yet seen in contemporary anarchist literature. He believes in direct democracy, promotes both workplace and community assemblies, and most unusually, outlines a radical epistemology to undergird the whole thing. He describes a voucher system that would facilitate exchange within a community without relying on the market or money.

So I would like to use this opportunity to call attention to his work. In addition to *Towards an Inclusive Democracy*, over the past ten years or so he has written a remarkable series of lengthy essays on a variety of topics such as revolutionary strategy, post-modernism, education, parecon, ethics, and so forth. This body of work presents a

vision of anarchy, the philosophy behind it, and a strategy for achieving it that are more thoroughly examined, in more detail, than by anyone else I'm familiar with. I urge everyone to study his work.

I do have a few disagreements with his approach, however. For one thing, he has not overcome the mainstream divisions of social knowledge, and is therefore always talking about economic and political spheres, as separate things, as economic democracy and political democracy. He also leaves households completely out of the picture. This is a serious oversight to my mind. He hasn't really solved (any more than I have) the problem of the circulation of goods among communities, except to say that this can be arranged through contracts. He believes in founding an international political party, not to seize power, but to agitate for his inclusive democracy vision of revolution. Fine. But wouldn't we be better off with many parties as well as artists, musicians, filmmakers, and journalists all agitating for anarchy? Should we all join one membership organization (party)? I don't think so.

Most seriously, perhaps, he believes in participating in existing local elections. He wants revolutionaries to win these local elections and then set about dismantling the electoral system that brought them to office, establishing in its stead a system of municipal assemblies. I've always thought that this was a dishonest approach. We'd have to lie about our intentions in order to get elected. We couldn't come right out and say that we are going to dismantle the government once we are in power. And even if we did lie, after a case or two of this, towns would wise up and become aware of our real intentions. As I noted earlier, I don't think we can get from existing town governments to local assemblies through the electoral process. We have to strike directly for neighborhood assemblies based on direct democracy. Electing leaders through elections is definitely something that we should firmly denounce and reject.

## Postscript – March 2007

More than a decade has passed since this book was first begun in 1996. During this time a whole new phase of the anticapitalist struggle has come and gone (in the United States, that is). The big upsurge in activism in the United States that began with the demonstrations against the World Trade Organization in Seattle in November 1999 has already dissipated. For several years thereafter there was intense activity across the left, much of it of anarchist inspiration. But by late 2004 it had already started to fizzle out. The events of 9/11/2001, the failure of the massive, worldwide demonstrations on February 15, 2003 to stop the U.S. invasion of Iraq, the stolen U.S. elections of 2000 and 2004, and the horrific death and destruction being inflicted on Afghans and Iraqis, all had a dreadful impact on the morale of the revolutionary movement.

Perhaps it is just as well that I procrastinated for so long in getting the printed edition of this book out. The book may resonate better with activists now than it would have a few years ago. For it is surely evident now to just about everyone that a major rethinking of revolutionary strategy is necessary. I'm still hoping that my book can contribute to this task.

So how does the proposed strategy look in light of recent revolutionary struggles? Well, I've been tremendously heartened by the appearance of neighborhood and popular assemblies in major revolts in Algeria (2001+), Argentina (2001+), Bolivia (2000+), and Oaxaca, Mexico (2006+). The most recent uprising, in Oaxaca, beginning in June 2006, is enormously significant. Oaxacans tried to replace the entire governmental apparatus in the state with a network of popular assemblies. I think this is probably unprecedented in revolutionary struggles, at least since the Spanish Revolution. Poland, in 1980-81, was covered with worker, student, and farmer councils, but these were never intended to replace the state apparatus. The revolt in Oaxaca thus breaks new ground.

Popular assemblies also played a central role in winning victories in the spectacular revolts in Bolivia – the so-called water war in Cochabamba in 2000 and gas war in 2003 centered in El Alto, as well as the general uprising in May-June 2005. Bolivians used a variety of tactics in these social struggles in addition to popular assemblies – road blocks, strikes, encampments, pirate radio, building occupations,

the shutting down of airports, and mass demonstrations. However, it was the existence of popular assemblies that proved decisive, it seems to me. Take the case of El Alto. This city of 800,000 has a long history of grassroots organization growing out of the miners' unions and the tradition of village councils that migrants from the countryside brought with them into the city. The city is organized into 600 neighborhood councils. The councils run the city.

As it happens, the city sits astride the main supply road into the capital city of La Paz, which gave those in revolt a unique leverage not available to most protestors. Because the people of El Alto were socially organized into councils they could effectively block this road for extended periods of time. This in turn put some teeth into their mass marches and demonstrations. It is doubtful that the marches alone could have unseated the President or have won the gas war.

In Oaxaca, to cite a contrary case, ten mega-marches failed to get rid of Governor Ulises even when combined with a host of other strategies through six months of struggle. Moreover, really massive marches, rallies, and encampments failed to prevent Felipe Calderon from stealing the 2006 Mexican election away from Lopez Obrador, the real winner. This failure, however, was at least partially caused by Obrador's deliberate dampening down of the protests and his failure to carry the struggle to the next level.

It might be argued, in fact, that the ruling class is more successful at using mass demonstrations to overthrow governments than is the left. Beginning at least with the CIA-organized massive marches and rallies in Iran in 1953, without which it is doubtful that Mossadegh would ever have stepped down, mass demonstrations have been used frequently by capitalists to help overthrow unfriendly governments, most recently in Yugoslavia, the Ukraine, and Georgia.

However, they failed to unseat Hugo Chavez in 2002 because millions of ordinary Venezuelans organized mass demonstrations to neutralize those organized by the capitalists. Also, in Eastern Europe it is generally conceded that massive demonstrations brought down all the communist single-party dictatorships in rapid succession at the end of the eighties, mostly without much violence.

Overthrowing governments, of course, can't get rid of capitalism or establish anarchy. Yet, that's the very most that mass demonstrations can do, regardless of whether it is a left-wing or right-wing government that is overthrown. So why would we anarchists advocate a



strategy that doesn't get us what we want even if it succeeds? There certainly are benefits to be had from getting rid of especially oppressive regimes, of course, but abolishing capitalism is not one of them.

So all in all, considering this balance sheet on mass demonstrations, I believe that my assessment of the strategy in Chapter 5 still stands. I continue to be dismayed by the deep, worldwide attachment to mass demonstrations. I believe that the enormous resources that have been devoted to demonstrations all over the world during the past ten years have accomplished very little. The unprecedented worldwide mass mobilizations involving millions of people on February 15, 2003 to protest the impending U.S. attack on Iraq failed utterly to stop that war. Nor have all the hundreds of protest demonstrations since then stopped the war. The extraordinary, unprecedented, massive immigrant rights mobilizations in the United States around May Day 2006 accomplished almost nothing. All the global justice demonstrations against ruling class institutions over the past ten years can be credited with hardly any significant changes.

We must break our addiction to mass demonstrations. We don't have the luxury of wasting so much time, energy, and money on a tactic that accomplishes so little. Comprehensive socially organized noncooperation is what is needed not mass demonstrations.

The issue of guerrilla war has been raised again because the Iraqis have taken up armed struggle against the occupation of their country by the United States. There is near unanimity across the left that the United States has lost the war in Iraq. The guerrilla campaign had hardly started before Tariq Ali, for example, declared the guerrillas victorious, and he is still claiming they are victorious four years later even though the U. S. is still there.

Was I wrong then to claim as I did earlier in the book in the section on "Guerrilla Warfare" that the United States had learned how to defeat guerrillas? Some readers may be inclined to think so. I am more skeptical, however. I think Iraq is a perfect example of the willingness of capitalists to destroy entire societies in order to get what they want. The U.S. has no intention of ever leaving Iraq. Those massive military bases that it has built are there to stay. It's risky to make predictions, of course, and I hope I'm wrong, but it seems to me that the United States has successfully accomplished its goals in Iraq. It has secured the oil, established a puppet government, destroyed Iraq as a strong and viable nation, built the permanent bases it wanted,

stole billions of dollars of Iraqi funds, established a textbook neoliberal economy, and stopped Iraq from selling its oil in euros instead of dollars. Also, it is now in a much stronger position to attack Syria and Iran, and it has intentionally generated sectarian violence which is destabilizing the entire region according to plan. Yet it has only lost 3200 soldiers so far in four years of war, which is a remarkably low rate of fatalities. The Pentagon is surely well pleased. But the stakes for U.S. imperialism are extremely high in Iraq. I believe that the U.S. will resort to more and more vicious measures to stay there.

Nevertheless, it is certainly possible that all this could be reversed. If the Iraqis somehow manage to unite, that is, if the Shias and Kurds join the resistance, they may be able to make it simply impossible for the U.S. to stay even in its walled-off Green Zone and isolated, heavily fortified bases. Also, the technology of war may have changed recently in favor of guerrillas with the introduction of very effective, shoulder-fired anti-tank and anti-helicopter missiles. It's not just the occupying army that must be relatively secure from attacks but corporations too. If U.S. and U.K. corporations cannot do business in Iraq safely, then all those new neoliberal laws on the books won't make a bit of difference.

So what if the United States *is* driven out of Iraq? Well, it will certainly be better for Iraqis not to have their country occupied by a foreign power. But does this necessarily vindicate the strategy of guerrilla warfare? The strategy will have succeeded in overthrowing the puppet regime and expelling the occupiers, and in that sense my claim that the U.S. has learned how to defeat guerrillas will have been proved wrong. But what were the costs of this victory and what were its end results? You may recall that I also said in my earlier section on guerrilla warfare that it is a form of leninism and that leninism has been thoroughly discredited as a strategy for overthrowing capitalism and getting to real communism. We must judge guerrilla warfare by whether it helps us get to anarchy and the free society. It does not and it can not. The guerrillas, if victorious, will simply become the new government (i.e., the state) and they will define all those who oppose them as counterrevolutionaries.

Moreover, when guerrillas start killing people and blowing up buildings, this opens up the arena for the covert operations and death squads of the occupiers. Soon, nobody can tell where the violence is coming from. Ruling class death squads can be used to pit one ethnic

group against another, one religion against another, even one class against another. The resulting death and destruction can be truly horrific, as has been proved in Iraq. I find it dismaying that when it comes to the issue of armed struggle the dedication of most anarchists to the principle of prefigurative politics (wherein current behavior must resemble what will be desired in a free society) gets tossed to the wind.

The contrast between the resistance movements in Iraq and Oaxaca could not be starker. Oaxacans firmly rejected armed struggle. They succeeded in marginalizing those who advocate it and those who occasionally engage in it with Molotov cocktails, homemade rockets, and the like. Because of this they have been able to clearly identify who is doing the killing, namely, the government and its henchmen. The government has not been able to use death squads to get Oaxaca's various ethnic groups to fight each other instead of the ruling class. The loss of life has been miniscule, compared with Iraq. In Oaxaca, in six months of struggle there are fewer than two dozen confirmed deaths (but with perhaps as many as seventy still missing). In Iraq, hundreds of thousands have been killed, and millions driven into exile. Plus, Iraq has been totally destroyed. The situations, of course, are hardly comparable. The Iraqis have suffered a far more vicious attack. Nevertheless, I believe that if the Iraqis had adopted a strategy of massive socially organized non-cooperation instead of guerrilla warfare, things would have turned out very differently for them.

On a more general level, what is the state of the revolutionary movement in the United States? It's nothing to crow about, that's for sure. The liberal anti-war movement is practically nonexistent. Progressive populists have dead-ended themselves. (Well, what can be expected of people who still believe in representative democracy and are not actually against capitalism but only giant corporations?) There's one good thing though. The sectarian, vanguard, marxist left is moribund, at long last. We should count our blessings.

And so we come to anarchists, the only revolutionaries left in the country (not counting the neoconservatives who have actually made a revolution – as traditionally defined – and taken over the country). Anarchists, alas, are badly split. The movement (in the United States only) is in danger of being taken over by people who espouse a new, vulgar version of individualist anarchism which bears scant resemblance to historical anarchism (namely, post-left anarchists, primitiv-

ists, so-called green anarchists, and Crimethinc). Social anarchism is increasingly swamped by the rhetoric of this new ideology, with its fanatic individualism, its nihilism, its hatred of civilization, and its hostility to organization, the workplace, the left, and democracy (even direct democracy). These individualist anarchists are undoubtedly sincere, committed revolutionaries. One thing I like about them is their total, absolutely uncompromising rejection of the existing society. It's just that their social philosophy is so badly flawed, as is the revolutionary strategy that stems from it. Whether these two tendencies can ever be reconciled remains to be seen.

Perhaps it hardly matters, though, because we anarchists of whatever stripe continue to pour our lives into organizing demonstrations, keeping infoshops open, putting on book fairs, holding conferences, doing prisoner support work, engaging in single-issue campaigns, doing food charity work, running websites, and publishing books and magazines. These things are all admirable and help keep a culture of resistance alive, and maybe that's all we can do for now. But they do practically nothing to take power away from the ruling class. When will we actually get around to that?

The United States, of course, is surely the dreariest place on earth as regards revolution. But elsewhere in the world things are looking up for anarchy and the struggle for liberation. Progressive movements are alive all over Latin America. The World Social Forum continues to thrive. Significant local battles have been won, like the water and gas wars in Bolivia. Bottom-up, grassroots initiatives are taking place everywhere. Some marxist-leninist parties, even, are abandoning the goal of seizing state power. The veneer of the U.S. Empire has been completely stripped away. It's possible that we are in the midst of a sea change in world consciousness, as hundreds of millions become aware that representative government does nothing for them, that all war must be stopped, and that a world organized solely for profit-taking is insane not to mention deadly.

Finally, there is a huge topic I haven't even mentioned in this book, namely, the twin crises of global warming and peak oil, crises that will be so severe as to possibly render this entire book moot. Whether humanity can come out of these with a free society or merely with barbarism (or even alive) is something I doubt that anyone can answer now.

# **Appendix**

## **Draft General Agreement for an Association of Democratic Autonomous Neighborhoods**

We, as free peoples, have arranged ourselves socially into democratic autonomous neighborhoods. We are self-governing, through our neighborhood assemblies. We recognize no authority over us other than our own self-legislation and treaties that we have negotiated with other neighborhoods and voluntarily bound ourselves to. We have negotiated many such treaties covering the distribution of goods and particular projects, such as regional hospitals, telephone networks, research facilities, community parks, and large factories, which by their very nature are transneighborhood undertakings. In this more general treaty, this general agreement, we seek to establish a larger *association of democratic autonomous neighborhoods* to stabilize a world composed of free communal peoples and to promote the democratic autonomous way of life. Neighborhoods that have not founded assemblies for self-governance obviously cannot join the association since only such assemblies can sign the pact.

As signers of this general agreement, we agree to abide by the following principles and practices:

### **Voluntary Agreement**

Signing the general agreement, by our neighborhood assembly, is entirely voluntary, but once agreed to, it binds us to abide by the principles and practices indicated.

### **The Right to Withdraw**

As self-governing neighborhoods, we reserve the right to withdraw from this association, and thus void our promise to abide by its principles and practices, if we come to the conclusion that it no longer serves our interests. This also means that we forfeit any advantages that our membership in the association might have brought us.

### **Nonaggression Pact**

We agree never to organize a military force to invade other neighborhoods.

### **Nonterritorial Basis for Neighborhoods**

We agree that land is not a commodity that can be bought or sold, and therefore cannot be owned either. That is, we reject the concept of ownership as applied to land (and other resources; see next point). This means that our neighborhoods actually have no territorial boundaries. They are socially defined, through membership in neighborhood assemblies.

### **Shared Resources**

Similarly, we reject the idea that natural resources can be owned, bought, or sold. They can only be shared. Thus, a neighborhood that is sitting on top of a rare mineral, for example, that is needed by many other communities, cannot be said to own that mineral or sell it to its own advantage. This resource can only be shared, through equitable and reciprocal treaties regarding its development and use.

### **Cooperative Labor**

Human labor is not a commodity, and cannot be bought or sold. We therefore agree that all neighborhood and transneighborhood projects will be cooperatively and democratically conducted.

### **Treaties**

We agree that final decision-making power rests with neighborhood assemblies. As such, all transneighborhood needs and projects must be met by negotiating treaties with other neighborhoods and not by setting up regional congresses staffed by representatives (or what amounts to the same thing, by sending delegates to regional councils), with the power to make laws that can be imposed on neighborhoods. That is, there is no power higher than a neighborhood assembly.

### **Treaty-Negotiating Facilities**

To the extent that expensive communication networks and regional assembly halls become necessary for efficient treaty negotiation, we agree to pay our fair share of the cost of building and maintaining such facilities.

## **Direct Democracy**

We agree that our assemblies – in the neighborhood, our projects, our households, and all special-purpose associations – shall be governed by direct democracy – that is, by face-to-face discussion and voting by all members, without representatives. If on occasion, it is thought necessary that a project be directed by one person or a few, this change, for this particular project and a prescribed time period, can only be made by the neighborhood assembly itself.

## **Social Arrangements within the Neighborhood**

The commitment to direct democracy and cooperative labor implies at a minimum, besides the establishment of a neighborhood assembly for self-governance, democratically and cooperatively conducted projects as well as households. Naturally, there will be considerable variation from culture to culture in the actual shape and workings of such social entities. But it's hard to see how a neighborhood could eliminate them altogether and still remain free. In any case, this is the standard to which this association is committed.

## **Membership in the Neighborhood**

As neighborhood assemblies, we agree to try to strike a balance between the right of others to select their place of residence (to choose where they will live) and our own right to choose whom we will associate with. We agree that as a general rule, our neighborhoods will be as completely open as possible, while still reserving the right to exclude and expel persons from our assemblies. Of course, with the disappearance of the buying and selling of land and residential properties, and universal money and the world market, no one could just move into our neighborhoods without first gaining admission to a household, and hence to project and neighborhood assemblies. They would have no way to feed, clothe, or shelter themselves. We agree to establish traditions of hospitality and admission that are civilized, fair, and equitable.

## **Voting Procedures within Our Assemblies**

We agree to invent voting procedures for our assemblies that enhance direct democracy and self-rule in our neighborhood. There is no hard-and-fast rule about or easy resolution of the majority rule versus consensus quandary, nor any magic formula for majority/minority

relations. Consensus voting, which strives for the largest-possible majority on any given issue, will probably be the norm (as opposed to simple majority rule). But we will not limit ourselves to this. We will aim for a good mix of consensus, majority rule, and other procedures as seem applicable, all the while realizing that a minority ultimately cannot be forced to abide by a majority decision that it strongly opposes. Neighborhood assemblies are therefore obliged in practice to always strive to win a minority's willingness to go along with a decision, at the very minimum. Otherwise there can be no cooperatively undertaken projects. But minorities must also realize that it is a rare occasion when they can simply pack up and leave (or force the majority to leave). The occasions where we can each go our own way are few in comparison to those in which we must reach collective decisions in order to survive (or to do most anything). So minorities too are under pressure to compromise and reach mutually acceptable decisions. No one ever said that democracy was easy, only that it is the only way we can be autonomous, free social beings in control of our own destinies, to the extent that this is possible at all in a universe without certainties.

### **The Products of Our Labor**

We agree that the products of our cooperative labor are not commodities and cannot be owned, bought, or sold but will be equitably shared among all members of the neighborhood. Every member has a right to a fair share of this wealth, in return for a fair share of the labor needed to produce it, as defined by the neighborhood assembly. We recognize the problem of freeloaders and will deal with it through a variety of social constraints, including ostracism if need be, or as a last resort, expulsion, although we do not anticipate that this will be a huge problem. In instances where we produce more than we need, we will create networks of swapping and gift giving with other neighborhoods for the interchange of these goods.

### **Relations with Neighborhoods That Haven't Joined This Association**

Our association is incompatible with a world organized into nation-states. We therefore seek to dismantle and destroy nation-states. The more neighborhoods there are that join our association, the more likely we are to win this struggle. But obviously, this will not happen



all at once. There may even be neighborhoods that never join. Naturally, we seek to spread our way of life and protect it from attack. Hierarchy and anarchy are natural enemies. But unlike hierarchy, there is room within anarchy for great diversity. Tribal peoples, for example, may prefer to keep their customary governing arrangements, based mostly on kinship and other traditional forms of authority, rather than change over to deliberative assemblies based on direct democracy. There is no reason these peoples couldn't exist side by side with anarchic communities (in fact, they already do in some places). Neighborhoods that have not converted over to cooperative labor and self-governance but are instead still embedded in the (hopefully rapidly disappearing) capitalist labor market and commodity culture also may not want to join. As the world of free communal peoples gains in strength, however, and the world of atomized commodified individuals weakens, these neighborhoods will be in something of a bind. It will be harder and harder for them to hang on to their profit-oriented culture and practices in a world of increasingly decentralized, democratic, cooperative anarchic communities. Nevertheless, unlike capitalism, anarchy (face-to-face democracy) is not something that can be imposed. Yet it is something that can be defended from those who seek to destroy it.

# Recommended Reading

A quick way to get an overview of left libertarian and progressive populist literature (including an abundance of anarchist and antiauthoritarian items) is to browse through the AK Press catalog, published annually. The 2004 edition, for instance, was 215-pages long, printed on letter-sized paper, in fairly small type. The entries are annotated. In general, AK's catalog is a fairly massive compilation of materials currently available from many dozens of publishers and activist groups, although it is by no means complete. The largest section in this catalog is nonfiction, but AK also distributes works of fiction as well as audio and video materials. AK Press also distributes its own, more strictly anarchist publications. The catalog can be acquired from AK Press, 674-A 23rd Street, Oakland, California 94612.

For those who need a leg up now, I've listed below 70 classics. Among the many names not included are: Julius Martov, Hannah Arendt, George Sorel, Elisee Reclus, Karl Kautsky, Louise Michel, Jean-Paul Sartre, Dorothy Day, Nestor Makhno, Alexander Herzen, Walter Benjamin, Raya Dunayevskaya, Irving Howe, Raoul Vaneigem, Sidney Lens, Jack London, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. With the Internet, it is now relatively easy to find references to works by these authors, either by plugging into the big library catalogs (like the WorldCat), bookseller databases (like Barnes and Noble or Amazon), or used book networks (like the Advanced Book Exchange). I have listed these titles in rough chronological order in order to convey a sense of historical time. It's important to have a feel for who wrote when.

Next, I list 181 contemporary books (beginning in the 1960s, mostly, but with a few older books thrown in). I have divided this into two parts: 89 books that are most immediately relevant to the social philosophy undergirding this book, and then 92 other works that I can recommend. These titles are arranged alphabetically by author.

Finally, I provide a brief list (by no means comprehensive, and in no particular order) of journals, magazines, newspapers, and newsletters that are worth examining.

## A Brief List of Classics of Radical Social Thought

(arranged chronologically, roughly)

- Winstanley, Gerrard. *The Law of Freedom and Other Essays*. [1640]. Edited by Christopher Hill. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973.
- Paine, Thomas. *The Thomas Paine Reader*. [1772-1805]. New York: Penguin Books, 1987, 536 pages.
- Storing, Herbert J., editor. *The Anti-Federalist: Writings by the Opponents of the Constitution*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1981, 374 pages.
- Wollstonecraft, Mary. *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. [1792]. New York: Prometheus Books, 1992, 206 pages.
- Godwin, William. *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and Its Influence on Modern Morals and Happiness*. [1793]. New York: Penguin Books, 1985, 825 pages.
- Spence, Thomas. *Pig's Meat: The Selected Writings of Thomas Spence, Radical and Pioneer Land Reformer*. [1793-1803]. Nottingham: Spokesman, 1982, 192 pages.
- Fourier, Charles. *The Utopian Vision of Charles Fourier: Selected Texts on Work, Love, and Passionate Attraction*. [1803-1829]. Boston: Beacon Press, 1971, 427 pages.
- Owen, Robert. *A New View of Society and Other Writings*. [1812-1820]. London: Everyman Library, Dent & Dutton, 1927, 298 pages.
- Thompson, William. *An Inquiry into the Principles of the Distribution of Wealth*. [1824]. New York: Burt Franklin, 1968, 600 pages.
- Proudhon, Pierre-Joseph. *Selected Writings of P.-J. Proudhon*. [1840-1865]. New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1969, 276 pages.
- Tristan, Flora. *The Workers' Union*. [1843]. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983, 159 pages.
- Marx, Karl. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*. [1867]. New York: Vintage Books, 1977, 1141 pages, volume one.
- Marx, Karl, and Frederick Engels. *Selected Works*. [1844-]. New York: International Publishers, 1969, 800 pages.
- Bakunin, Michael. *Bakunin on Anarchy: Selected Works by the Activist-Founder of World Anarchism*. [1842-1875]. Edited by Sam Dolgoff. New York: Knopf, 1972, 411 pages.
- Morris, William. *Political Writings of William Morris*. [1878-1894]. New York: International Publishers, 1973, 248 pages.
- Morris, William. *News from Nowhere*. [1890]. New York: Penguin Classics, 1993, 480 pages, with other writings.
- Lafargue, Paul. *Right to Be Lazy*. [1883]. Chicago: Charles Kerr, 1989, 128 pages.
- Bellamy, Edward. *Equality*. New York: Appleton, 1897, 412 pages.

*Recommended Reading*

- Labriola, Antonio. *Socialism and Philosophy*. [1897-1899]. St. Louis, Telos Press, 1980, 223 pages.
- De Cleyre, Voltairine. *Selected Works of Voltairine de Cleyre*. [1890s, 1900s, mostly]. New York: Mother Earth Publishing, 1914, 466+ pages.
- De Cleyre, Voltairine. *The First Mayday: The Haymarket Speeches 1895-1910*. Orkney, UK: Cienfuegos Press, 1980, 53 pages.
- Malatesta, Errico. *Errico Malatesta: His Life and Ideas*. [ca.1900-1925]. Compiled and edited by Vernon Richards. London: Freedom Press, 1965, 309 pages.
- Parsons, Lucy. *Lucy Parsons: Freedom, Equality, and Solidarity: Writings and Speeches, 1878-1937*. Chicago: Charles Kerr, 2004, 183 pages.
- Magon, Ricardo Flores. *Dreams of Freedom: A Ricardo Flores Magon Reader*. Edited by Chaz Bufe and Mitchell Cowen Verter. Oakland: AK Press, 2005, 420 pages.
- Landauer, Gustav. *For Socialism*. [1911]. St. Louis: Telos Press, 1978, 150 pages.
- Kropotkin, Peter. *The Conquest of Bread*. [1913]. New York: Benjamin Blom, 1968, 298 pages.
- Kropotkin, Peter. *Kropotkin's Revolutionary Pamphlets*. [1927]. New York: Benjamin Blom, 1968, 307 pages.
- Kropotkin, Peter. *Words of a Rebel*. [1885]. Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1992, 292 pages.
- Bourne, Randolph. *The Radical Will: Selected Writings 1911-1918*. Berkeley: California University Press, 1992, 548 pages.
- Luxemburg, Rosa. *Selected Political Writings*. [1898-1919]. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971, 441 pages.
- Goldman, Emma. *Red Emma Speaks: An Emma Goldman Reader*. [1910s, 1920s, mostly]. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1996, third edition, 464 pages.
- Berkman, Alexander. *Life of an Anarchist: The Alexander Berkman Reader*. [1912-1936]. New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1992, 355 pages.
- Jones, Mary Harris. *Mother Jones Speaks: Speeches and Writings of a Working-Class Fighter*. [1897-1930]. New York: Pathfinder Press, 1983, 724 pages.
- Kollontai, Alexandra. *The Workers Opposition in Russia*. [1921]. North London: Solidarity, 1971, 70 pages.
- Pankhurst, Sylvia. *A Sylvia Pankhurst Reader*. [1907-1952]. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1993, 248 pages.
- Cole, G. D. H. *Guild Socialism Restated*. [1920]. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1980, 224 pages.
- Gorter, Herman. *An Open Letter to Comrade Lenin: A Reply to 'Left-Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder'*. [1920]. London: Wildcat, 1989, 41

*Recommended Reading*

- pages.
- Lukacs, Georg. *Political Writings 1919-1929*. London: New Left Books, 1972, 257 pages.
- Lukacs, Georg. *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*. [1923]. London: Merlin Press, 1971, 356 pages.
- Korsch, Karl. *Marxism and Philosophy*. [1922-1930]. London: New Left Books, 1970, 159 pages.
- Breton, Andre. *What Is Surrealism? Selected Writings*. [1920s-1960s]. New York: Monad Press, 1978, 389 pages.
- Reich, Wilhelm. *Sex-Pol: Essays 1929-1934*. New York: Random House, 1966, 378 pages.
- Gramsci, Antonio. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*. [1929-1935]. New York: International Publishers, 1971, 483 pages.
- Horkheimer, Max. *Between Philosophy and Social Science: Selected Early Writings*. [1930-1938]. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993, 426 pages.
- Maximoff, Gregory Petrovich. *Constructive Anarchism*. [1930]. Chicago: Maximoff Memorial Publication Committee, 1952, 152 pages.
- Nettlau, Max. *A Short History of Anarchism*. [1932-1934]. London: Freedom Press, 1996, 406 pages.
- Dewey, John. *The Political Writings*. [1888-1950]. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1993, 248 pages.
- Weil, Simone. *Oppression and Liberty*. [1933-1943]. Amherst, MA: Massachusetts University Press, 1973, 195 pages.
- Du Bois, W. E. B. *Black Reconstruction: An Essay Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880*. [1935]. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001, 776 pages.
- Pannekoek, Anton. *Lenin as Philosopher: A Critical Examination of the Philosophical Basis of Leninism*. [1938]. London: Merlin Press, 1975, 132 pages.
- Pannekoek, Anton. *Workers' Councils*. [1948]. Oakland: AK Press, 2003, 219 pages.
- Mattick, Paul. *Anti-Bolshevik Communism*. [1935-1967]. White Plains, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1978, 230 pages.
- Rocker, Rudolph. *Anarcho-Syndicalism*. [1938]. London: Pluto Press, 1989, 166 pages.
- Bloch, Ernst. *The Principle of Hope*. [1938-47, 1953, 1959]. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986, three volumes, 1420 pages.
- Marcuse, Herbert. *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory*. [1941]. New York: Humanities Press, 1954, 440 pages.
- Macdonald, Dwight. *The Root Is Man*. [1946]. Brooklyn, Autonomedia, 1995, 187 pages.
- Goodman, Paul and Percival. *Communitas: Means of Livelihood and Ways of*

### Recommended Reading

- Life* [1947]. New York: Vintage, 1960, 248 pages.
- Orwell, George. *Nineteen Eighty Four*. London: Secker & Warburg, 1949, 314 pages.
- Orwell, George. *Animal Farm*. [1945]. London: Secker & Warburg, 1995, 180 pages, illustrated.
- Orwell, George. *Homage to Catalonia*. London: Secker & Warburg, 1938, 314 pages.
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